

# “Cheney-ed” Freedom

By JOEL NICHOLS

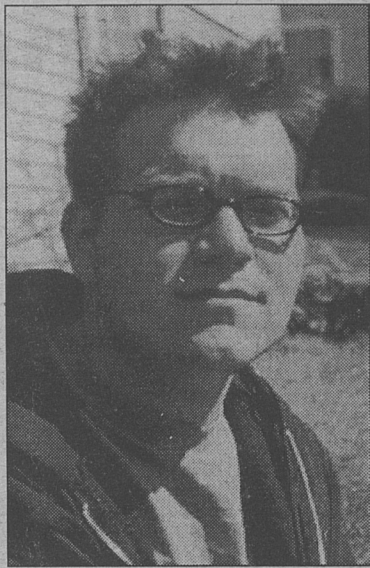
In a bookstore this weekend, I looked through the latest issue of *Out*, with its cover story, the Out 100, a listing of the top gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and allies for the year. I don't have a lot of faith in the list, mainly because Howard “Gay Marriage Makes Me Uncomfortable” Dean was listed as one of our top allies last year and the gubernatorial candidate actually committed to issues of queer Vermonters, progressive Anthony Pollina, was absent.

This year, it's worse. Lynne Cheney, second lady of the United States and conservative academic crusader, has made the list of allies. She is considered to be a leading ally to queer Americans because of her personal support of her lesbian daughter.

I didn't want to believe it. After all, Cheney is the woman who tried to stamp out all National Endowment for the Humanities funding for anything politically correct or progressively revisionist when she was the Endowment's Chairwoman in the early 1990's. She is also one of the leaders of a group who has called for limitations on freedom of speech at colleges and universities since the September attacks.

This group, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, founded by Cheney and Senator Joseph Lieberman in 1995, issued a list of university professors and administrators whom they see as anti-American and the “weak link in America's response [to the attacks].” Even the president of my own college, who is hardly liberal, let alone progressive or even anti-American was criticized for saying that injustices in American society can lead to hatred around the world.

Let's not forget that Lynne Cheney all but denied her daughter Mary's queerness during the 2000 campaign. She extolled the virtues of her married daughter's husband and quaint, normal family and failed to mention Mary's girlfriend of several years or her career in gay marketing for Coors. Now that she has perhaps come



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clean about still loving her daughter who just happens to be a dyke, I'm supposed to consider her an ally? What about her conservative politics?

Lynne Cheney exemplifies the kind of American that makes my stomach turn. She, a well-educated, rich, white woman whose blind patriotism and obedience to our society leads her to condemn all criticisms of the government. It is precisely now, when the U.S. is undertaking the drastic measures of a war, that the most questions and harsh critiques should be formulated.

Personally, Cheney has used the time since the attacks to emphasize how important it is that U.S. curricula be based on American history and civilization and not on multicultural education and a world understanding. As a queer who learned little more than the story of dead, white straight men in high school, I can't agree with her. Cheney's version of American history is not the one that children should be learning.

There should be more to being queer in American than just sleeping with someone who has the same kind of genitalia as you do. It is important to be part of a movement that encompasses everyone who is oppressed and refuse to integrate into a racist, sexist, and classist society.

Gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transpeople, and other queers should be taking to the streets to ensure that First Amendment Rights are protected. We should be demonstrating against the war in Afghanistan and refusing to support the American government in its quest to dominate the world's oil supplies. Never forget that this is the same government that does not give queer Americans the same basic rights and freedoms as all Americans, whether protection from attack or spousal tax benefits and immigration rights.

Why isn't there a statement from the so-called “Human Rights” Campaign denouncing the fact that about 1100 people of Arab descent are being detained without evidence in connection the 9-11 attacks? These 1100 people just happened to live in the same cities as suspected terrorists did, to frequent the same places, or to have the same skin color and religion. It is high time queers in this country forgot about trying to be exactly like their flag-waving neighbors, armed, married, and surrounded by a picket fence, and started fighting back.

*Joel Nichols studies German at Wesleyan University. He grew up in Brandon, Vt., and is a loud, angry queer.*

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