

Hate Crimes

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Skyland Lodge area, where the women said they planned to set up camp. Family members said Williams and Winans were scheduled to leave the park three days later, on May 27.

A Park Service spokeswoman noted that the murders most likely took place on or just before Memorial Day weekend, a time when the park is crowded with visitors. She said hundreds of people, including visitors on day trips, employees, and campers were in the section of the park where Winans' and Williams' bodies were found.

At the time of the murders, those who set up campsites in areas of the park away from

facilities such as lodges and picnic areas were asked to obtain a "back country" permit, which records their names, addresses, and itineraries inside the park. The registration system is voluntary.

In addition, park officials do not record the names or license numbers of those entering the park by car along the Skyline Drive, a winding highway that runs through the middle of the park, from end to end. There are dozens of places where people can walk into the park along its boundaries.

According to a website that compiled articles and information on the murders, their mur-

der was far from being an "isolated incident." Reports by the Associated Press and the Washington Blade indicated there have been at least four other double-slayings on park land in Southern Virginia since 1986. One of those four involved another female couple who, like Winans and Williams, were found with their throats cut and wrists bound.

In October 1986, the bodies of two athletic women, also in their 20's, were found with their throats slit on federal property known as the Colonial Parkway near Williamsburg, Virginia. There were no signs that the women had struggled against their killer(s) and no sign of drug or alcohol use. Their bodies were fully clothed and there were no signs of sexual assault.

The three other "isolat-

ed" double-slayings each involved a man and a woman, who were found murdered in somewhat similar circumstances in the eastern Virginia area in 1987, 1988, and 1989.

The Human Rights Campaign said that the FBI Uniform Crime Reports for 2000 – the latest year for which statistics are available – showed that overall serious crime decreased slightly nationally, and the Crime Index at its lowest level since 1978, while at the same time, reported hate crimes have continued to rise and increased 2.3 percent from 1999 to 2000.

Reported hate crimes based on sexual orientation have more than tripled since the FBI began collecting statistics in 1991, and comprise 16.1 percent of all hate crimes for 2000 at 1,299. Hate crimes based on sex-

ual orientation continue to make up the third highest category after race and religion, which make up 53.8 and 18.3 percent, respectively, of the total, 8,063. For 2000, the greatest percentage of hate crimes took place in a residence or home or on a highway / road / street / alley, according to the FBI.

FBI statistics give only a glimpse of the problem. It is widely recognized that hate crimes on the basis of sexual orientation often go unreported due to fear and stigmatization. Additionally, federal reporting of hate crimes to the FBI by state and local jurisdictions is voluntary, resulting in no participation by many jurisdictions each year. ▼

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community can't expand their vision beyond the end of their own noses, it's time to re-evaluate the purpose of your publication ... which is still Burlington-centric and narrowly focused as evidenced by the marathon writing by the new editor in the April issue.

Brian Hunt
Townshend, Vermont

We are always looking for writers from everywhere across the state. If you would like to volunteer to cover events in Windham County, we'd welcome your contribution. And just for the record, last month we had contributors and subjects from Chittenden, Franklin, Washington, Rutland, and Windsor counties. – EB

Rebuttal to a Response

This letter is in response to your response to the letters you printed with regards to the Yolanda "phallus" picture in the March issue. Unless I read wrong, neither of the men whose letters you printed ever mentioned completely eliminating sexually suggestive content from your paper. I'm sure there wouldn't have been such a backlash had the photo spread been on an interior page of the paper, rather than on the back page where I'm sure at least one unwitting gay person opened it in a public place and displayed it to someone who otherwise would not want to see it. It's unfortunate that OITM chose not to admit their placement error and rather chose to place judgments on faithful readers who simply felt compelled to express their discomfort. In a community which bends over backwards to be inclusive of everyone's differences in the area of sex (when I came out, we were just GLB; now

we're GLBTIQA and counting) it's very interesting how selective we can be when dealing with differences of opinion.

Thank you.
David Horn
North Troy

More Phallic Mail

I cannot believe what I read in April's Letters to the Editor. Mr. Castaldo and Mr. Kletecka's letters were something I would expect from conservative straight WOMEN living in Oklahoma or Utah. But incredibly it came from two gay MEN from Waterbury! Their tirades were nothing more than elitist, puritanical, protect our children, hetero-kiss-ass, Uncle-Tom-apologist B.S. These Phylis Schlaflys of the Green Mountains should do more inquiring on the "dildo-clad drag queen" before they critically judge OITM. I suggest we read OITM's Statement of Purpose. Thus it was perfectly legit for the paper to print the photo for several reasons.

First, the photo was taken at the Winter-is-a-Drag Ball in Winooski. The annual fundraiser serves two important purposes – raising money for Vermont Cares and for the community to come (in or out of drag) to shake off the Mid-Winter blues. The Ball has contests, comics, bands and singers. One singer is Vermont's own celeb-extrordinaire – Yolanda, who has given so much through her spirit and music. The 'dildo' is nothing more than a prop she uses for comic relief. It makes us LAUGH!

Let's not forget that transsexuals and drag queens play a big part of our community. No matter how 'outrageous' they are. If it wasn't for them starting the riot at Stonewall, none of us would enjoy

our freedoms today.

From the Log Cabin Republicans to the Radical Faeries, OITM is a voice and celebration for Vermont's LGBT community. And yes, John and Chuck, most "reputable, professional" gay men I know love sex, porn and cock, and couldn't give a damn what Sheltra and her ilk think about our Fab Diverse community!

Michael S. Luna
Jericho

As I read the recent April 2002 issue of OITM I am shocked, SHOCKED, at the letters condemning the photo of Yolanda at the Drag Ball proudly sporting his/her massive strap-on. My reaction to the photo was just the opposite. It made me smile. It made me laugh. It brought back wonderful memories of an enchanted evening at the 2002 Drag Ball. And it made me miss Yolanda, an activist entertainer who has been such an intrinsic part of our Burlington community and who has left us for the bright lights of New York. May he/she find fame, fortune and love in the big city.

As for those in our community who complain that children may see this photo or that right wing bigots may use this against us as ammunition, these are probably the same people who think the gay pride parade is "too gay" and who want to hide, if not outright ban, the sight of fairies and drag queens and leather studs and those members of our community who do not fit the mold of what a "socially acceptable" homosexual is. We are not all the same. And we are not all "just like everyone else."

OITM has the right, and the duty, to represent all members of our community. I thank you for providing the forum to do so. I hope this paper will continue to foster and

showcase the diversity within our community. And to those who object to the Yolanda photo, I have one thing to say. Lighten up and have some fun!

Sincerely,
Richard Thorngren
South Burlington

I feel that I must respond to the verbal queer-bashing that occurred on OITM's Letters page last month in the form of letters from John P. Castaldo and Chuck Kletecka. While Mr. Castaldo and Mr. Kletecka state that they are offended by drag queens and penises, I must admit that I am offended by self-loathing and internalized homophobia. I am especially offended when the parties involved feel inclined to throw their queer-fear calls for censorship out at the rest of us in the name of protecting "the community" from Nancy Sheltra and TIP.

Drag queens, bull dykes, and leather fags started the Stonewall Revolution and we would all do well not to forget that simple beautiful fact. Those of us whom Mr. Castaldo and Mr. Kletecka would cast aside as pornographic and outrageous are the very people who have stood on the front lines of this movement for decades. "Professional gay men" reap the benefits of our radical queer commitment to individuality, affirmation of positive sexuality and the freedom to express ourselves.

The penis-clad drag queen in question, Yolanda, has achieved more in her career as an artist and activist than most of us could claim in a dozen lifetimes. Her work has inspired thousands to live more freely and positively. She has volunteered hundreds of hours with people living with HIV and AIDS, at the transgender support group, Genders R Us, at Faerie Camp Destiny and with young

people at Outright Vermont. Yolanda, like thousands of beautiful freaks before her, is willing to stand on the line at great personal expense and under constant threat of violence to demand the right to individual and collective freedom. Her work, and the work of thousands of other radical activists, makes our lives possible.

Yolanda's giant penis mocks the notion that all gay men are defined solely by the size of their endowment, and celebrates our ability to transcend categorization and truly become radical queers. If Mr. Castaldo and Mr. Kletecka wish to be defined solely by how closely they approximate Nancy Sheltra's vision of what society should be like, that is up to them. I want no part of it.

I want to live in a world where freaks run rampant, where sexual diversity is celebrated, where rules are continuously broken and where queers are not afraid of what Nancy Sheltra might think of them if there happens to be a drag queen on the back page of the newspaper.

As Yolanda sings, "We are angels, struggling to be human." That goes pretty well with another notable revolutionary, Jimi Hendrix, who sang out "Let Your Freak Flag Fly!"

Next time, Euan, put that sassy drag queen right up on the front page – above the fold.

Yours in Pride and Revolution,
Christopher Kaufman aka Pippin,
The Radical Faerie
Burlington and Grafton

Thanks to all for expressing their opinions. Now let's move on. – EB