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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of *Out in the Mountains* is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgendered people, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, insight, and affirmation. We also see OITM as a vehicle for the celebration of the culture and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

EDITORIAL POLICY

We will consider for publication any material which broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of *Out in the Mountains*. This paper cannot and will not endorse any candidates or actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered persons. We reserve the right not to publish any material deemed to be overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, xenophobic, or homophobic. Writers' guidelines are available on request. All materials submitted must include a name and a contact number. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

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letters

A Different Jane Doe

Yes, at first it was weird for me to enter an ASO [Aids Service Organization] and see gay-related brochures and posters, mostly this was because it was new to me [Another Side of Aids, May 2002]. At no time was I unwilling to have my children to see them though. I have always felt that I want my children to have a well-rounded education about life and I feel that the homosexual community is part of the picture too. I was never ashamed when my children asked questions about the things they saw, I was only ashamed when that sometimes I didn't know the answer to the questions they were asking because I was untaught.

The only time I have felt uncomfortable around people is when they are slobbering all over each other in public. To me it doesn't matter if they are homosexual or heterosexual, I think that there are things that people should do in private. I can only speak for myself but in my ASO, there are posters that reflect both gay and straight communities.

After reading the article I looked around the ASO office as we are commonly too busy to be aware sometimes and realized that yes there are some posters that some might find offensive. However, to my knowledge, nobody has ever said a negative comment about one yet and the ASO has received several positive comments. Might be because there is such a mix of them.

I agree with the issues [Jane Doe] brought up that sometimes it does feel that HIV is put into categories of women or homosexuals. However I don't think that I want another category "for straights only" created either. I wish we could all come together and support each other without these categories. I guess that would be way more than we could expect, though.

Being an HIV+ straight person myself, yes, I wish that there were more support for the straight community than there is at this time. I would love to be able to meet more straight people that are dealing with the same issues that I am. However, I also need to point out that I feel very connected to the gay community. I feel honored that they have accepted me and treat me with friendship, love, and understanding just on the basis of who I am.

This amazes me as I have not always felt this way about the straight community. I find that the homosexual community is a lot slower to be judgmental about others. Maybe this is because they know what it feels like to be judged. At first I felt like the outsider, now I consider most of the homosexual community that I am acquainted with to be my extended family. They have supported me through tough times and happy times and they are always there for me. Is this enough for me? I don't know the answer to that one, but for now I guess it is.

If I was to meet someone that I could share my life with that would be wonderful. But at this point I would need to have that person accept who I am and my homosexual acquaintances too. It is hard because people are not open and willing to accept a partner that is HIV+. I guess I like to look at things two ways and I wonder how accepting I would be of an HIV+ partner if I was HIV-. I know that I would accept the HIV+ but I could not say if I would agree to being their sexual partner or not because I have never walked in their shoes.

Another Vermont Straight HIV-Positive Woman.

[Name withheld by request]

Thanks for writing from another point of view. -EB

Shenandoah Murders Deserved Attention

Julie and Lollie on the front cover of OITM [Federal Hate Crime Indictment, May 2002]. How many years later? When the tragedy was just breaking in the headlines and our hearts that summer, Pride Day was nearing, as well as the next deadline for our paper. Despite the tragedy and anguish and calls for something – any gesture, NOW! TODAY! IT HAS JUST HAPPENED! DON'T YOU SEE?! – our brothers were unmoved. There would be no moment of silence at Pride to mark the loss. No flag at half mast. No, that wouldn't do [they said]. 'Too political' actually. Imagine!

And the paper did carry something. Eventually. Front page! Halfway down. Not lead story.

That was to be reserved for Matthew [Shepard].

Nat Michael Underhill

I can only speculate that too many of us have learned too well that women are 'always' victims, so these murders may not have had the shock value of Matthew Shepard's later beating and death. In 1996 the issue following June was a combined July-August issue, which may have contributed to the sense of "eventually." Women's lives matter – there should be no double standard. -EB

The Church and the Queers

I agree that there's a problem with the mainstream media coverage of the scapegoating of gay men by the Catholic right [Editorial, June, 2002]. But the problem is not their failure to rebut the imagined link between homosexuality and pedophilia. Almost all the reports I've seen do that reflexively – it almost goes without saying. Instead they refuse to address the issue at its core and move on, treating homosexuality like a hot potato.

The problem is that there is a link between homosexuality and the crisis in the Catholic Church, or more specifically between the Catholic doctrine on homosexuality and the crisis. At least some of the abuse involves adult men: seminary students and aspiring priests like Paul J. Marcoux, who was in his 30s at the time of his alleged sexual assault by a bishop. I have yet to see reliable statistics on the ages of the victims, but at least some were in their late teens and twenties. If, as some suggest, 20-50% of priests are gay, it's not too surprising some of these would act out and break their vows of celibacy. Of course it IS still abuse of power when a priest molests a student or a bishop molests an aspiring priest, but it's not pedophilia.

As I see it, the Catholic doctrine on homosexuality contributes both to the prevalence of gay men in the priesthood and to their abusive behavior. In some ways the official Catholic doctrine is more liberal than [that of] some Protestant denominations. For a decade or so the Church has accepted the existence of homosexually oriented people; it therefore does not endorse reparative therapy. Yet gay people are expected to remain celibate, because sex outside marriage is a sin, and the church doesn't accept gay marriage.

Priests, like gay men [within the Church], are also expected to remain celibate (though for them it's a choice). Some young gay men, confronted with the Catholic doctrine that requires them to remain celibate and teaches that sex with those they love is a sin, take refuge from the pressure to marry by joining the priesthood. Some of them fail to repress their sexuality. Is it any wonder closeted and repressed priests who believe their desires are "objectively disordered"

become psychologically damaged? Is it any wonder when they harm others? It seems to me the crisis in the Catholic Church – or at least part of it – is directly caused by the anti-gay doctrine. Out, happy, well-adjusted gay men (priests or not) don't abuse boys – or other men (unless of course that's what they're into, but that's another topic).

Of course that's not what the right-wingers like Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls and Catholic League President Bill Donohue think.

That's the issue I'd like to see raised more in the mainstream media AND in the gay press. We throw the baby out with the bathwater when we claim only that pedophilia does not equal homosexuality. Of course it doesn't, but that doesn't mean that there's no connection between the Catholic anti-gay doctrine and the current crisis in the Church.

Kevin Moss

Montreal / Middlebury

Thanks for a thoughtful response. -EB

America Could Be Better

Dear David Reid Lowell, I write in response to your criticisms of my April column, "The True Colors of the American Flag" [Proud to Be an American, June, 2002] I want to clarify my argument and address the issues you brought up in your own piece. First, I reiterate my central point: be careful with displaying the American flag because (along with freedom, liberty, and the American way) slavery, oppression, and inequality seem to be just as much a part of America. I agree completely that this country is great and far better than many other nations. Our freedoms are numerous and benefits wonderful, but the fact that certain groups remain privileged over others stains life here. I'm thankful that my first amendment rights let me write what I think, but I'm not naive enough to believe that everyone in this country is treated according to the Constitution.

Men are favored over women for jobs and higher pay, blacks receive more than their share of police harassment and have far fewer opportunities than whites, and straight people have special rights that gays don't. I don't mean to draw an absolute parallel between being a racial, ethnic, or religious minority with being gay; they are fundamentally different identities and suffer different forms of prejudice. Instead, I draw attention only to the fact that people suffer at the hands of others.

In addition, I take issue with any criticism that strays from my writing or arguments. My youth, self-esteem, or socio-economic status (which you have clearly perceived incorrectly) are not what is at issue in my column, my ideas are. If you care to level a well-argued critique that can convince me that the war in Afghanistan actually helps humanity, or that all Americans have the same opportunity regardless of race, sex, or appearance, please contact me at janichols@wesleyan.edu.

Sincerely,

Joel Arthur Nichols
Brandon