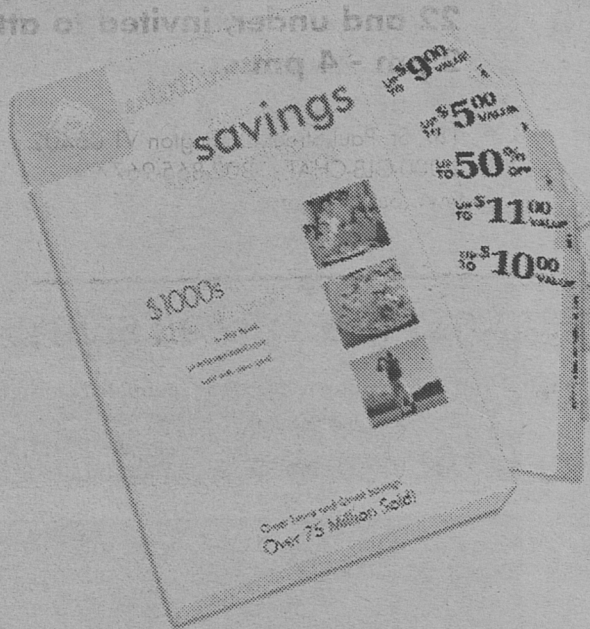


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## Views: Dignity and Indignation

America is a funny place. We're expected to be experienced in everything without having practiced it first. We're asked to know things before we have been taught. We use gimmicks and sex to advertise everything, and yet we fear sex more than almost anything, since it signifies actual commitment and feeling in reality, while in advertising it signifies beer and cars.

We fear intimacy. We fear loss of control. And most of all, we fear honesty — from ourselves, and from the world. We have come to a state in which honesty is not expected, but we still desire it — we expect more from other people than we are willing to give ourselves.

All of these components make for a swiftly ticking bomb. Anything could set it off, from the small liberal bumper

**charis boke**

the bonds and create little bits of society acceptable to their own existence. Gay people hang around with other gay people and get indignant in discussing the "stupidity" of the religious right. Those anti-abortion activists from Wisconsin get together and get freakin' furious that people won't turn over to the belief that abortion is wrong.

And I get indignant

**Everything starts from within — I think I'll choose to keep my dignity and give up my indignation.**

sticker on the car next to you, to the appearance of a man in farmers' clothes in a fancy restaurant, to perhaps a President getting immorally elected. Being indignant is a quality most valued in today's society: being a part of a group that believes things, that knows that they are in the right (or the left), a group that provides a person with a base of reasoning to fall back upon.

For instance, a sector of radical religious people may believe firmly that we are evil incarnate and must be washed from the face of the earth. Obviously, we outside the group don't believe that of ourselves. So that gives both groups — the religious and 'the others' — something to be indignant about. Wonderful!

Walking away from an encounter with someone whose beliefs are diametrically opposed to mine always gives me a kind of satisfied disgust: "I sure showed them. My logic and reasoning are so much better than theirs. It's clear that I am the morally higher person." In actuality, the other person is probably saying this, too.

It's a hard habit to break, needing that little bit of indignation. That's why people still form the groups, still make

when the person in front of me goes ten miles under the speed limit, and it's obvious to me that they're *trying* to piss me off, and I begin to stereotype the person in the car in front of me — they're old, I think, they're from Massachusetts, they're just learning to drive.

We're angry. Do we have to be? We could walk around with smiles on our faces all day if "those people" would start doing things the way we want them done. But everything starts from within — I think I'll choose to keep my dignity and give up my indignation. One person at a time, we can take away anger in our little world by not being sucked into America's standard of indignation.

It's up to us. ▼

*Charis Boke represented Vermont at the Youth Poetry Slam Nationals, will attend UVM this fall, and lives in Burlington.*