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Statement of Purpose

The purpose of Out In The Mountains [OITM] is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender 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 transgender communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

Editorial Policy

We will consider for publication any material that 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, as a non-profit organization, cannot and will not endorse any political candidates. We reserve the right not to publish any material deemed to be overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, xenophobic, or homophobic.

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editorial

It's War, and It's Personal

If we weren't sure before, we can be certain now. Last month President Bush declared another war. When I read about a \$1.5 billion welfare reform effort to promote marriage, I know in my heart that the Administration is planning to use that money against me and my partner, and against you and yours. Since when does President Bush care about low-income people and their relationships? Why not \$1.5 billion towards education? Job training? Decent housing? Millions of 'low-income' people are living in squalor and Bush wants to send them to marriage counseling?

How will the \$1.5 billion really be spent? One take is that Bush will use the program as an excuse to go to African American churches in poor neighborhoods and create sound bites about the sanctity of marriage – between a man and a woman.

This, they say, will give Bush some of the African American vote and place a wedge between traditionally Democratic black and gay voters. Another take is that the program is a bone tossed to the far right to reconfirm Bush's undying (if unspoken) support for the Federal Marriage Amendment. Either way, let's not forget that just last August, Bush said, "I believe marriage is between a man and a woman, and I believe we ought to codify that one way or the other and we have lawyers looking at the best way to do that."

I don't really care whose spin on this proposal is correct. \$1.5 billion to promote marriage? If even a portion of this funding can be used to subliminally advertise for a constitutional amendment exclud-

ing gay and lesbian access to marriage rights, this is war. And we need help.

As demonstrated here in Vermont just four years ago, we must gather the support of all our friends and family, whether liberal, conservative, progressive, or apolitical, and prevent the White House from breathing life into this poorly disguised initiative. Reverend Martin Luther King said "groups tend to be more immoral than individuals," so let's get personal. This is not Human Rights Campaign vs. Focus on the Family. We do not have hundreds of millions of dollars to out-shout the Traditional Values Coalition and the Eagle Forum but, for free, we can appeal to each and every person we know. Daily, we have opportunities to change the tide when we tell those people we work with, live near, study, play and pray with, that we are gay and lesbian and that we are in devoted, loving, incredibly normal and unthreatening relationships. Get personal.

My partner's folks are, religiously and politically, about as far right as two people can be. For many years, my partner stayed away from her family for fear of their judgment about her "lifestyle." To this day, her parents strictly interpret the Bible and are the perfect candidates to oppose anything resembling gay marriage. Yet her folks don't just tolerate us. They actively support our relationship. You see, the issue is personal now. As soon as we gave them a chance to know us, we stole them away from the conservative right. We disarmed them. Somewhere deeper in their souls than any preacher or politician can reach, they have

seen that our love does not diminish or threaten their own. Our union is not a threat to the sanctity of theirs. They are happy for us.

Thirty years ago, Harvey Milk called on us to come out, knowing that this would provoke bigotry and hatred. "The blacks did not win their rights by sitting quietly in the back of the bus. They got off! Gay people, we will not win our rights by staying quietly in our closets ... We are coming out to fight the lies, the myths, the distortions! We are coming out to tell the truth about gays!"

This war cannot remain all about strangers, those ungodly and promiscuous people who live in distant cities. It is easy to hate a stranger. We must make it personal. If we speak out once for each dollar that Bush wants to spend against us, the message will be deafening: we are not the enemy.

In his letter from a Birmingham City jail, Reverend King wrote, "We know that we will have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people." Good people, do not go down in silence, please. ▼



Susan McMillan
Assistant Editor

Happy Birthday OITM!

This issue marks the beginning of the 19th year of publication for *Out in the Mountains*, a respectable record in the history of gay newspapers. It also marks the completion of two years under my editorship.

In those two years we have brought you 135 different writers, lesbians, gay men, trans folk, and allies; young, adult, middle-aged, and old; news, personal stories, profiles of everyday wonderful queer people, health issues, laughter, and lots of opinions.

We've worked through changes of personnel and format, reduced budgets, and flagging energy. And the good news is we're still here.

Despite a national economic downturn, loss of national ad revenues, format-changing and cost-cutting, we are putting out

a well-respected and award-winning monthly newspaper with volunteer writers and donated graphics. By ringing the alarm bell soon enough, we had a chance to turn things around, with your help and support.

As a result of intense fundraising, a grant from the Unity Project, and serious cost-cutting, we broke even for 2003; or, as Board President Dan Brink puts it, "We've achieved sustainability." Our income for 2003 was \$30,000 below what had been budgeted – and believe me, there were no frills in that budget – no cell phone, no tape recorder, no camera, not much office overhead. But we managed to close out the year just barely in the black. We're not giving up any time soon, thanks to you and our hard-working volunteers – who write, draw, photograph, organize, proofread, paste-up, pack-

age, sort, mail, deliver, plan, monitor, budget, ask for donations, hold fundraising events, write grants, maintain our website, answer mail and more.

We still need your help, your dedication, your time and energy, and yes, your money. But mostly, right now, it's your time and your inspiration that are most important. We need volunteers for our board of directors between now and June, when at least three of our five current board members will be leaving. More transitions are coming, and with your help and some new energy on our board and on committees, we'll look forward to celebrating our 20th year. ▼



Euan Bear
Editor