

Taking Names

GLBT Groups Are Tracking Those Who Hate Us

BY EUAN BEAR

Burlington – Dorothea Brauer is usually a cheerful soul in her job as the director of LGBTQA Services at the University of Vermont. Two things get her steamed: administrative foot-dragging on issues of protecting human rights (see “Silenced Minority,” March, 2005, *OITM*), and anyone threatening the lives of the students she is charged with assisting.

At last month’s Translating Identity Conference, a protester appeared to do just that. Michael Sweeney stood outside the University’s Billings Student Center carrying a large cardboard sign. On the sign, according to those who witnessed it, were a photo of Ethan Fechter-Leggett, the vice-president of Free to Be, which sponsored and presented the conference, and a message reading, “You might be here now, but you won’t be for long.” Another transman’s photo was on the poster as well. The photos were reportedly obtained from images posted on the World Wide Web.

Another man, John Long, was identified as the protester at the Queer Liberation Army’s “Kiss-In” demonstration on the Church Street Marketplace on Valentine’s Day. The sign he held read “Queers + Meth = AIDS = Death.” Brauer has two emails from Long, one sent to the QLA before the demonstration, and another sent afterward, to the weekly publication *Seven Days*. The first he signed “D.T.Q.” Dot Brauer says it means “Death to Queers.” *Seven Days* declined to publish the letter it received, but sent it to the QLA, who shared both letters with Brauer in response to her call for information on potential threats to members of the LGBTQ communities. Members of the QLA include students and faculty at the university.

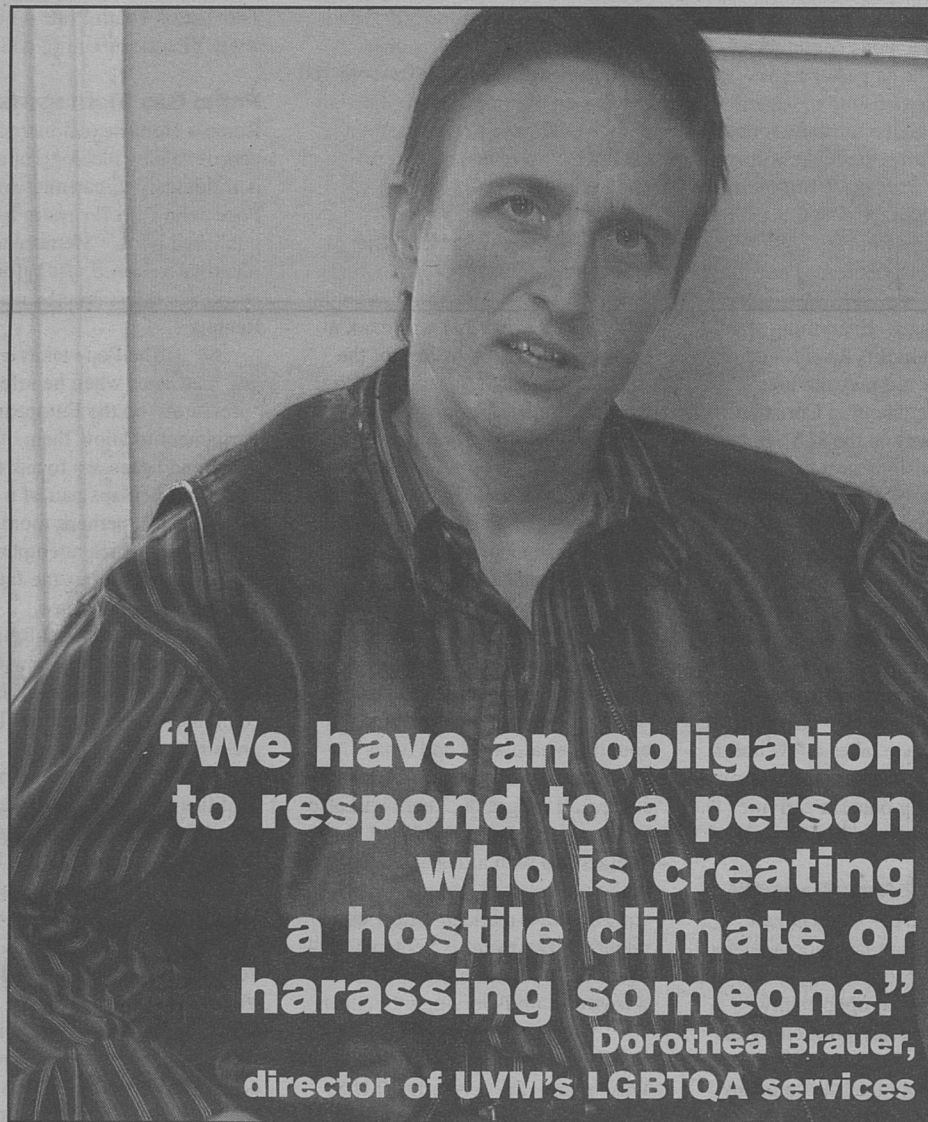
Long has two public access television programs on Adelphia cable – *How Do You Like Me Now* and *Kartoon Klonopins* – where he has broadcast such things as a drawing of Hillary Clinton with a buzz saw between her legs. The access channel’s board last month declined to remove or censor the violent content of the shows when teachers and parents objected to his broadcast of hostage beheadings by Iraqi insurgents. According to R.U.1.2? Queer Community Center staff member and long time lesbian activist Peggy Luhrs, Long pinned a “nasty” cartoon drawing of her and another woman to her house a few years ago. “I didn’t feel good with him knowing where I live,” Luhrs said. “But

he’s been around a long time without having done anything too violent.”

According to SafeSpace Program Coordinator Hannah Hauser, Long burned a rainbow flag at the Transgender Day of Remembrance last November. “Burning a flag is ‘You could be next,’” Hauser said. “‘Death to Queers’ is very specific. Free speech is not the same as hate speech. It

easier to be alert for repeat troublemakers, and that officers share such information at roll call. She recommended that event organizers pass along names of known anti-gay protesters when they apply for their permits.

Brauer has received other materials she has identified as potentially threatening from Michael Johnson of Fairlee,



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**Dorothea Brauer,
director of UVM’s LGBTQA services**

sends a message to the community: ‘you should be afraid.’”

Both Long and Sweeney are known to the Burlington Police, according to Mary Ann McAllister, the police department’s victim advocate. But, she added, the police can do nothing until a crime occurs. She said that now that the same officers patrol the same areas, it’s much

Vermont. Publishing in “The Geopolitical Strategist,” Johnson argues, among other assertions, that the homosexual agenda is a Stalinist plot that led to the rise – and ultimate defeat – of Nazism in Germany and will destroy the United States as well.

“The gay community does not recognize that it will be double-crossed, ambushed, and undergo a bloody slaughter

that will be directly proportional to the degree of its successful advancement of the homosexual agenda,” Johnson writes in a commentary from volume 20, number 3, dated in October of last year.

“What raises flags is when they take action to interfere with others’ lives, and how important [opposing LGBTQ] is to them, how much they feel like they are ‘saving the world,’” Brauer explained. “Using Ethan’s photograph crossed over a line. We have an obligation to respond to a person who is creating a hostile climate or harassing” someone.

Lluvia Mulvaney-Stanak is no stranger to hate mail. The co-director of Outright Vermont says the agency has received plenty. “Our archive project is just getting started, so I can’t exactly tell you how many boxes. But it’s not so much the amount but the intent of these letters,” Mulvaney-Stanak said.

She said that each time a gay event makes national news, a fresh crop of hate arrives via letter or email. When Gene Robinson was ordained as an Episcopal bishop in New Hampshire, “we got a ton of hate mail.” Nonetheless, Mulvaney-Stanak said, Outright Vermont “is not feeling more threatened than usual.”

Switching to her Queer Liberation Army persona, Mulvaney-Stanak said that anti-QLA protester John Long “is on our agenda.” The QLA’s strategy, she said, is “to ignore, to not engage, or to incorporate protests into our street theatre. We want to do a lot more as the weather gets warmer, and nobody ever wants to play the role of ‘hate.’ But if we have a volunteer ...”

The QLA’s other strategy is to document incidents. The organization sent their information on John Long to SafeSpace.

Asked whether they have any free-speech qualms about tracking and reporting on anti-gay protesters, Mulvaney-Stanak said no. “The difference is the intent. These people are not like people protesting for peace, or equal rights or even pro-choice for abortion. Those [protesters] are not advocating anything hurtful, they’re not using words like ‘evil’ or being hateful. They’re not being threatening.

“There’s a big difference,” Mulvaney-Stanak continued, “between someone who says ‘Death to All Queers’ and someone who says ‘Leave the Bible Out of the Classroom.’” ▼

SafeSpace documents incidents of public harassment and hate-motivated incidents as well as public and private violence and sexual assault. Contact them at 802-863-0003 or www.safespacevt.org.