

# letters

## Christians for LGBT Justice

Thanks for your affirming mention of the various church groups that marched in the rainy Pride parade on July 9 (editorial, August 2005). You correctly note that these groups pride themselves (pun intended) on being "open-minded, open-door churches...that came to bear their banners as witness to their support of lgbs..."

Unfortunately, later on the editorial makes an unqualified reference to "Christians" screaming that marchers would go to hell.

Those of us *Christians* in "open-minded, open-door" churches believe deeply that our commitment to lgbt justice is true to the very core of our Christian heritage. We believe that in their exclusion of lgbt people — or anyone else — closed-minded, closed-door churches are failing to follow Jesus' teaching and practice. The folks who stand on the sidelines to protest our celebrations of Pride are many things: determined, vocal, and effective in their manipulation of the media. In their private lives, they may be people whose faith is rich and deeply meaningful to them, who take scriptural mandates quite seriously. But when they are beating queer folk into the ground — physically or spiritually — they are failing to live up to the central tenets of the faith; and in that sense, in that moment, they are not being "Christian."

Our entire community stands to benefit from the work of Christians who put justice and love at the center of our belief and practice. Just as we each struggle with internalized homophobia when it rears its head, we must also refuse to concede that homophobic doctrine is part and parcel of the Christian faith. To use "Christian" as a synonym for "homophobe" is to give our oppressors a lot more moral authority over us than their actions warrant.

**The Rev. Elizabeth M. Stedman**  
Burlington

*Elizabeth Stedman is a recently ordained deacon in St. Paul's Episcopal Church.*

## Thanks, Peg

Thanks for publishing Peggy Luhrs' remarks on Pride Day. It's so refreshing to read someone who still speaks the truth and doesn't mince words. And who hasn't been burned out or overwhelmed by the enormity of the struggle.

**Mary Schwartz**  
Bakersfield

## Proud of Pride

Way to go on your inspirational coverage of this year's Pride Celebration, in both Euan Bear's editorial and also Gabrielle Celeste's article.

You reminded me of the fanciful, practical, emotional, political, strategic, and whimsical reasons why we need Pride, year after year. Pride strengthens us. It builds a sense of community. It helps us raise issues, speak our minds, have our voices heard, and simply have fun. And frankly, we are in no danger of having too many opportunities to celebrate with our family of queers and allies.

With a tiny budget, the Pride Committee did a tremendous job, and I thank them for their work. You've done us proud.

**Jason P. Lorber**  
Burlington

*Jason P. Lorber is a member of the Vermont House of Representatives.*

## Future Apology?

It is ironic that the Republicans have finally confessed to their racial divisiveness for the last 30+ years, and apologized to the NAACP for it now. They continue to spread hatred and fear towards gay people. Will it take them another 30+ years for them to figure out they are wrong again?

**William Stosine**  
Iowa City, Ia

## Community Support

As a longtime former Vermont resident, I read with interest your article titled "Anti-Gay Church Evicted From Library" (*OITM* July, 2005). You are fortunate in Burlington to have your communities' support of this.

Compare this to what is hap-

pening in my neighboring Hillsborough County, Florida where in June *this year* the Hillsborough County Commission voted five to one to bar county agencies from recognizing or participating in Gay Pride Month or any events that portray GLBT people in a positive light. In Hillsborough, library exhibits featuring lesbian and gay authors and books with gay themes have been ordered removed from display in the wake of the new policy. To add insult, this decision was upheld at a subsequent Commission meeting in July with the Commissioners not allowing a single person to speak out in protest. Hillsborough County, as you probably know is home to Tampa — and includes both winning Stanley Cup and Super Bowl teams as well as many wonderful cultural and recreational events.

More information is available on this issue at the Equality Florida website [www.eqfl.org](http://www.eqfl.org) where you can voice your disapproval to the politicians responsible for this action.

**Bernard Rivard**  
St. Petersburg, FL

## Bras & Breasts

As a woman who is very involved with the VT Susan G. Komen affiliate and whose husband was diagnosed with breast cancer a year ago, I found this article very interesting. In all my readings on BC, which is much more than the average person but of course nothing compared to medical specialists, I have never come upon this. I suggest that this article should get national exposure in more mainstream publications. Since there are so many unanswered questions concerning the cause of BC there are plenty of unproven theories out there that get a lot of attention and rightfully so. In my opinion, this theory needs more press.

**Marlene Skulnik**  
Dorset

## Calling All Males

Thank you for writing last month about SafeSpace's efforts to start a Queer Survivor Council. One of the reasons we are excited to help create this group is to increase the number of diverse people and voices

working to end violence committed against and within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community in Vermont. At SafeSpace, we are deeply committed to working to end all forms of violence against all people, which includes men who have been abused as children, men who have been battered by their partners and men who are victims of hate crimes. One of the myths operating in our culture, that SafeSpace is working to dismantle, is that only men are perpetrators of violence and that men are not victims of abuse. We know that this only creates incredible barriers for men to access help and safety, but it also keeps men out of the movement to end violence.

At SafeSpace we believe violence, whether in a relationship or family, whether sexual or emotional, in the form of discrimination or hate, is not a woman's issue. Nor is violence a men's issue; violence is a human issue. I

am writing this letter to *OITM* to put a special call out to all male-identified readers. We need your unique and valuable voice in our queer anti-violence movement in Vermont; please consider getting involved in SafeSpace!

We need men who are survivors and men who are allies. We need you to join the Queer Survivor Council, the SafeSpace Board of Directors, to volunteer as an Advocate, an Education/Outreach volunteer, and/or a Fundraising volunteer. Although half of the survivors calling our Support Line are male identified, the vast majority of the staff, Board and volunteers are female. We know this needs to change.

For more information about volunteering at SafeSpace, or to sign up for the next Volunteer Training starting September 17, please call Connie at 863-0003.

**Kara DeLeonardis**  
SafeSpace Executive Director

## At Witt's End

## Leah Wittenberg

