

→ letters

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Clergy Requirements: Yes or No?

In "Moving Marriage Forward," March 11, you state, "The bill, which would adjust Vermont's marriage law to be gender neutral, also makes it clear that no clergy would be required to sanction any same-sex marriage." This is followed by a quote from Beth Robinson, who says, "We really are saying churches are free to do as they choose to do."

I can't help but wonder, is clergy required to sanction mixed-sex marriages?

BILL DUBAY
Seattle, WA

Dear Bill:
Thanks for your question. Clergy are not required to sanction mixed-sex marriage, and the bill pending in the Vermont Legisla-

ture makes it clear that same-sex marriages are no different. The suggestion that eliminating the discrimination in civil marriage would or could impinge upon the rights of clergy who oppose marriage equality is simply false.

BETH ROBINSON
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Middlebury, VT

Being Out

"To live is so startling it leaves little time for anything else."

— Emily Dickinson

Just when I think I've got some things figured out, something comes along to challenge my position. I thought I was pretty comfortable with my lesbian identity. I thought that working that out was old hat; the agonies

of figuring it out and coming out was all in the past. In Brattleboro, where I live, I'm known as a Lesbian poet. I was out to everyone at the AIDS Project where I worked for many years. All my friends, both homo and hetero know I'm lesbian. I thought that what was once the burning central issue in my life, was now only one thing about a complex being known as me.

Then I stumbled upon a book called "Never a Dull Moment:

Teaching and the Art of Performance" by Jyl Lynn Felman. In one of the classes Ms. Felman teaches called "Harmonies and Tensions, a Course on Blacks and Jews," a participant talks about the Star of David she always wore around her neck. She told the class how, "depending on the context - whether or not she felt safe as a Jew - she tucks her Jewish star inside her clothes...or tucks it out." This took my breath away. Suddenly I was thinking of the pink triangle I own. I don't wear it all the time. Could it be I only wear it where I feel safe as a lesbian? And, if so, where was that? Definitely at poetry readings where I can expect a primarily lesbian turnout. Certainly at AIDS events such as World AIDS Day. Absolutely while participating in a Pride March.

But I don't wear it to events out of state that are not GLBTQ friendly. I had to face the truth. I don't feel safe as an out lesbian everywhere in this country. I can see that the filtering down from the fight for civil rights via marriage has penetrated my unconscious. I am aware, how could I not be, of the many people who simply hate us. This is obvious at any open forum that includes gay issues. Most people are passionate, but polite whichever side of the issues they believe in. But there are those far right people who rant and rave and condemn us all to hell. As a rational being, I have been able to ignore this knowing from whence it came. But psychologically, it has made me feel vulnerable and endangered. Within me is a woman who feels it necessary to look over her shoulder on dark nights, to be careful where she states her

views in unknown places, to seek out allies and like-minded people in order to stand tall.

I was with a group of women, all over 60 years old, this weekend. I asked them when and if they ever wore the pink triangle. A woman who lived in Montpelier and attended the open meetings around civil unions said most of those who testified were dignified and respectful, but there were a handful full of hatred. There are still some Take Back Vermont signs around today. This obviously was a source of wonder and fear. Another talked of being careful not to self-identify while hiking the Appalachian Trail, because of the two women who had been killed while hiking it. Another talked of feeling uneasy while touring the southern states. One younger friend talked of wearing a DYKE sign, and wearing it everywhere to face up to her fears. All worried about the constant attack by right-wing Christians and the Catholic Church.

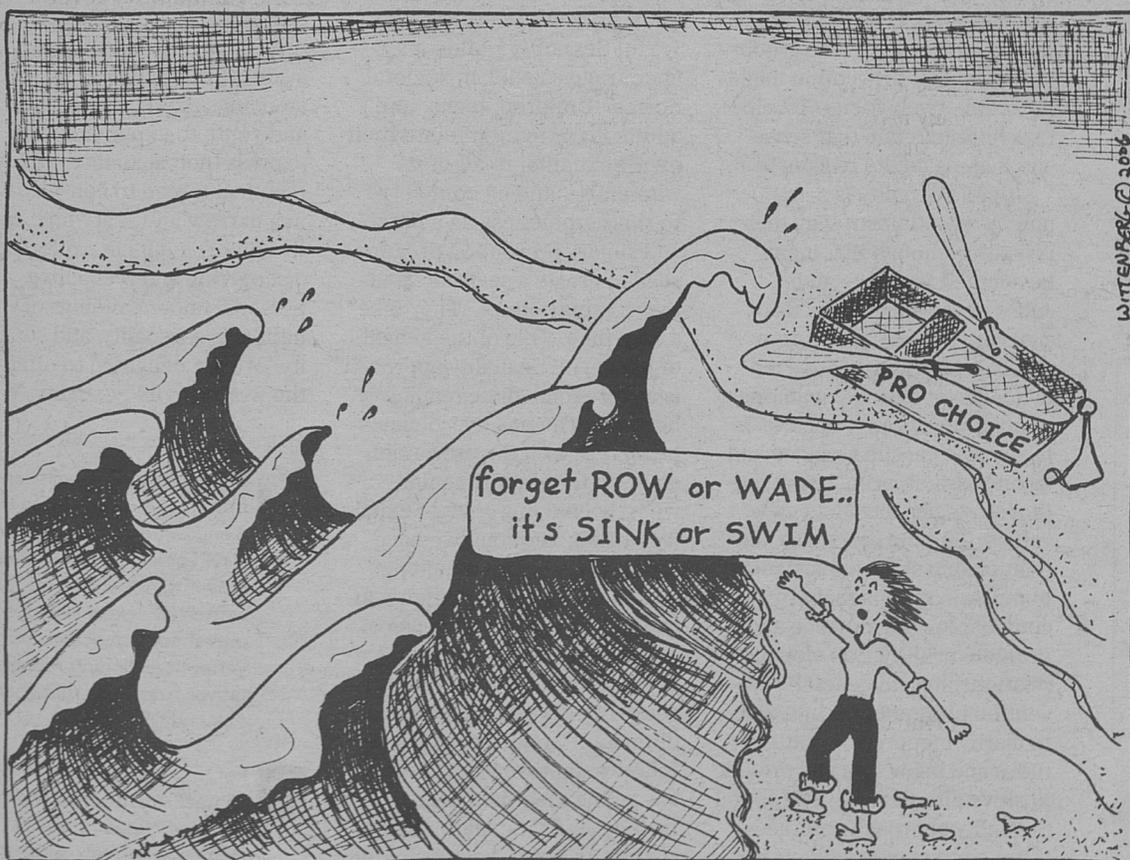
Thinking about this has made me aware that we who identify as gay publicly have a special joy in speaking up and being visible. But I'm wondering about the psychological price. Those who choose to speak up and speak out, our heroes, need a place to share the emotions, both good and bad, that are evoked by it. It's a dialogue we need to include in all our gatherings. We certainly know what it has been like to be invisible. Now we need to keep talking about what it means to be visible.

LYNN MARTIN
Brattleboro

→ OPINIONS WELCOME

Do you have something you'd like to say to OITM readers? Have an opinion about a burning issue? Did you especially like or disagree with something we printed? OITM welcomes letters to the editor! Send your opinions, ideas and suggestions to editor@mountainpridemedia.org, or mail to Editor, OITM, P.O. Box 1122, Burlington, VT 05402.

WITT'SEND BY LEAH WITTENBERG



Anti-Abortion Forces Make Waves