

➔ letters

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Identity and Orientation Separate Issues

This is in response to Lynn McNicol's call for a new way of describing ourselves (*OITM*, June '06). I agree that neither the alphabet soup of "LGBTIQQA" nor "queer" serves us well. Part of the problem is that we're looking at two aspects of personality - sexual orientation on the one hand, and gender identity and expression on the other - that don't necessarily have anything to do with each other. Most LGBs don't identify as transgendered, and some transsexuals consider themselves completely straight within their preferred gender. It would be good if our terminology recognized this distinction.

A second issue is that the gay or lesbian/bisexual/straight model is inadequate and outmoded. It assumes that there are only two sorts of people to be attracted to, and two sorts of people to be attracted. This is fine if you consider yourself a conventional man or woman and take it for granted that the rest of the world also fits into one of those two categories.

However, anyone who reads this newspaper even occasionally knows that there are many genders, and many ways of expressing them. The G-L/B/S model breaks down when confronted by relationships in which one or both partners are transgendered and/or physically ambiguous.

The L-G/B/S model has its usefulness and is well entrenched, but I'm hopeful that as we recognize its limitations, and the transgendered and intersex communities gain recognition, more accurate and practical terms will emerge.

EVAN LAWRENCE
Cambridge, NY

Big Tobacco Won't Give Up

As the coordinator of the Coalition for a Tobacco Free Vermont, I work with certain realities everyday in the course of my work. I know that in spite of Vermont's excellent Tobacco Control Program, smoking rates for queer youth and adults in Vermont are much higher than the state aver-

age. I also know that for small nonprofits in Vermont, operating budgets are tight, grants are scarce, and valuable work sometimes cannot continue because the funds just aren't there to support it. Finally, I know that despite claims to the contrary, the tobacco industry has not changed. Big Tobacco continues to market new highly addictive, death- and disease-causing products to Vermont adults and youth every day, and they continue to fight tobacco control legislation in Vermont, every time it comes up!

I am not surprised to hear that RJ Reynolds has been targeting *Out in the Mountains* as a desirable place to advertise its products. In fact, despite *OITM*'s commitment to not accept advertising dollars from big tobacco to date, RJ Reynolds continues to ask *OITM* over and over again to place their ads in its pages. And why wouldn't they? With high smoking rates, Vermont's queer community represents a lucrative market, and *OITM* is a respected source that the queer population trusts. And, even scarier, since *OITM* is a valuable resource that is distributed to colleges and youth programs, big tobacco could access an impressionable and already at risk youth market by advertising in *OITM*. Studies show that youth are much more responsive than adults to tobacco marketing.

The Coalition for a Tobacco Free Vermont understands *OITM*'s struggle to secure sustainable revenue sources. And we applaud *OITM* for declining to accept tobacco industry dollars to date. The tobacco industry spends an estimated \$100,000 per day in Vermont to market their products - roughly six times that of Vermont's tobacco control program budget. Big tobacco companies like RJ Reynolds invest significant resources to determine who their key markets are and where they should spend their advertising dollars. This is why they continue to approach *OITM* even though it has repeatedly declined their offers in the past!

Targeting small, local media is yet another way that big tobacco gets around increasingly strict regulations around tobacco advertising. And, these companies are turning to new, more 'creative' advertising schemes like sup-

porting the Miss Teen-America pageants, developing new youth-oriented products like fruit-flavored cigarettes, and rolling out hip, trendy, graffiti artist-inspired promotions to market their new products to youth.

The Coalition for a Tobacco Free Vermont urges *OITM* to continue to say "no" to Big Tobacco and to protect queer Vermonters from the tobacco industry's ongoing, underhanded marketing efforts.

NICOLE LUKAS,
COORDINATOR, COALITION
FOR A TOBACCO FREE
VERMONT
Williston

Vermont Needs Venue of Gay Solidarity

Last week my partner and I made our yearly trip to Stowe, where he has maintained a timeshare for over 20 years. One of the events we were anticipating eagerly was the Pride in Burlington. In preparation, we went to Burlington earlier in the week, hoping to get more details at Pearl's. We parked across the street, and ate at a cafe on Church St., expecting to visit Pearl's after dinner. Of course, as we discovered, there was no activity at the bar. Surprised, we drove back to Stowe - where we finally found your newspaper - and the news that Pearl's was closed. I found it incredibly ironic that the front page news was shared with the story of the governor's veto of transgender rights. Frankly, I was not at all surprised: the two stories most certainly go hand-in-hand.

Gay rights were earned through the tireless work of many, many people in all states. However, by the mere fact that the gay population of Vermont cannot sustain one bar in the state is a tacit admission of weakness in the gay community - like it or not. And it would only follow that opportunists, like your Republican governor, would seize that moment of weakness to pounce - and attempt to reverse the progress that has been made.

Surely I am aware that the real, inclusive gay community goes well beyond the bar scene; however, it is important to have

one showcase of unity for all to see. I would hope that SOMEONE in Vermont is able to reopen a venue of gay solidarity in Vermont. It need not be merely a bar: many gay bars here in Connecticut have survived by adding cafes, which have provided good, reasonable food for those who would not care to limit their socializing to drinking.

I hope your entire community unites on this issue, and does not become blase, as seems to be the case of many who were interviewed for the Pride article in the newspaper *Seven Days*. I wish you all luck!

STEPHEN M. MARTIN
Meriden, CT

Editor's Note: Fortunately for members of our community, a number of people have been busy organizing new gathering places and venues. Please see the article about Queer Social Space on page 3, and check out the Community Compass for the new location of Womyn's Night.

Press Missed Real Story

Most notable about this year's Pride was the lack of press coverage of our legislative priority: the gender identity and non-discrimination bill. Simultaneously, messages of divisiveness seemed to be the theme in the media covering Pride, topped off with false accusations about Freedom to Marry members regarding their contributions to the community and passing this bill.

For nearly two years, TransAction, a small group of committed organizations and community members, have joined together to ensure that Vermonters are not discriminated against based on their gender identity and sexual expression. The Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force is one of the organizations that worked diligently to pass this bill. VFMTF dedicated two weeks of staff time to help TransAction respond to the governor's veto, and activated its members throughout the state to contact their legislators, to write letters to the editor and to educate others about the importance of this bill. VFMTF's members, board and staff have

contributed greatly to the success of the gender identity bill and we applaud their contributions.

Other members of TransAction include the R.U.I.2. Queer Community Center, Safe Space, OutRight Vermont, and several community members. Each organization has organized its volunteers, communities, and board members to focus on passing the gender identity and non-discrimination bill. With a combination of our work and thanks to many throughout the community who have acted when we have asked you to, it passed this year with tri-partisan support. We remain disappointed by the governor's disgraceful veto, however, this has only made us stronger. We will continue to work together to ensure that we win so that all GLBT individuals are treated equally.

As we prepare for the next legislative session, we urge you to join us. Email any of the organizations of TransAction to find out how you can help.

Together, we can win!!!

MEMBERS OF TRANSACTION
including Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force, R.U.I.2? Queer Community Center, SafeSpace, and OutRight Vermont

Student Government Association Also Sponsored Ad

In July's *Out in the Mountains*, a number of University of Vermont offices sponsored an ad celebrating LGBT community and pride.

Inadvertently, the Student Government Association (SGA) was left off the ad. Please know that the SGA joined with 33 other UVM departments and groups in sponsoring this ad and supporting LGBT peoples. Our apologies for this mistake.

DOROTHEA BRAUER
AND ELI CLARE
LGBTQA Services
University of Vermont

Correction

Martin Hyatt wrote *A Scarecrow's Bible*, which was reviewed in the July issue of *OITM*.