



Reclaiming Our Pride

CONDENSED FROM SPEECH AT PRIDE DAY BY PEGGY LUHRS

HAPPY PRIDE DAY EVERYONE! I'D LIKE to see us reclaim our pride as a liberation movement.

After 9/11 I joined one of the first vigils at the top of Church Street. My sign read "the antidote to terror is increasing human rights for all." I believe that more now than ever.

Using war to respond to terror has been one of the stupidest blunders the U.S. has ever made. Oh, and what's this got to do with gay pride?

The Pride theme this year is "Peace Out."

Peace out ... stay calm. We need to do that on a personal level so as not to add to the ever-expanding level of violence in the U.S. and the rest of the world.

But collective action for peace and human rights is what I see missing. The GLBTQ movement began as part of the liberation struggles of the mid-20th century: civil rights, women's liberation, lesbian and gay liberation, coexisting and part and parcel of the anti-Vietnam War movement.

There is no greater enforcer of gender roles than the culture of militarism, which defines men as killers and dominators and women as supportive wives and sacrificing mothers. After Vietnam, the Pentagon began a "Make America a Man Again" program. They had to conquer the dreaded Vietnam syndrome; that people were turning against war. They needed to make war popular again. They do it by making war a manly endeavor. They have video games now for recruiting teens. Games that make war seem like a fun ... well ... video game.

The media now refuses to show the reality of war. We don't see the corpses, the wounded and maimed. We try to ignore the fact that life on earth itself is in doubt because of the consumptive and militaristic practices of the American empire.

Despite the myth that our wars have won us our freedom, the reality is that wars always bring greater repression. Each war has torn away our freedoms and instituted an ever-larger military, industrial, energy complex.

Women are considered spoils of war, always in danger of rape and just so much collateral damage. All deaths but those of soldiers are collateral damage. Thirty percent of women in the military have experienced rape or attempted rape, and I'm sure that's a low number since women under-report. The military does not want gays because of the threat to this rigid gender hierarchy. Horrors! Men might treat other men the way many men treat women. That is the big fear.

Terror has been as much the ally of the state as its enemy. We now have a huge and hugely useless state apparatus that spies on our every communication and keeps tabs on our political activity, but cannot actually protect us from terror or from hurricanes. We are deeper in debt as a nation than we have ever been and yet there is no money for schools or healthcare or sheltering the homeless, ending poverty or repairing our much-abused environment.

They are spying on gay peace groups. Focus on the Family tells us that marriage equality for queers is being brought to us by the forces of hell.

Perhaps we should start breathing fire. African Americans are once again under the rule of a coalition of racist good old boys. And their votes are being annulled. None of us who oppose the ruling cabal can trust that our votes will be counted.

But reacting as we are meant to by being intimidated by the State/the government does no one any good. We react to the labeling of the right and refuse to take the moral high ground which I think rightly belongs to those seeking peace and human rights. Since the Reagan backlash against

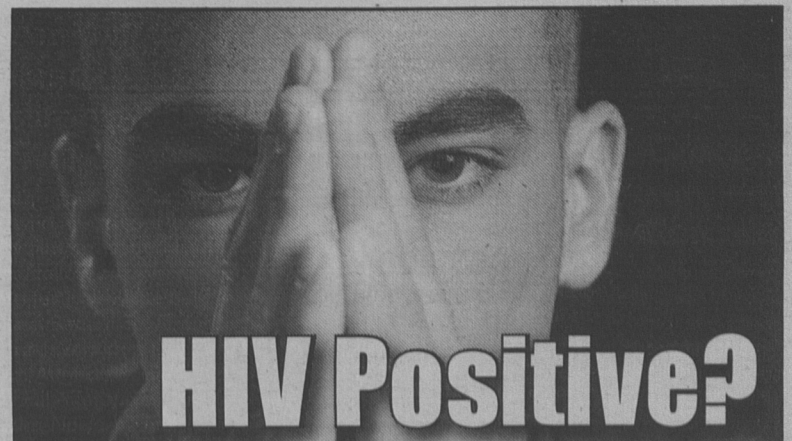
There is no greater enforcer of gender roles than the culture of militarism, which defines men as killers and dominators and women as supportive wives and sacrificing mothers.

equality, the debate has moved steadily to the right with devastating consequences for all but the rich and the energy and war profiteers. Why are we so insecure about all this? Because it is not the manly way?

In our movement, I'd like to see more pride; less fear: a movement inclusive of all races and classes. I am particularly tired of parts of our movement feeling they should tell others how to be and when and where they should participate. Like those whose main goal is marriage wanting to keep the Queer Liberation Army from participating in a demonstration for the Gender Identity Bill. I am very tired of folks who think they are the ones who know how politics works and who should be squelched in the name of success. Whose success is it if it isn't inclusive? I'm tired of it for two reasons. First, it's wrong, it's undemocratic, and it marginalizes the more radical among us.

Second, I'm tired of it because it doesn't work.

This how we lost the ERA in Vermont, the Equal Rights amendment for women in Vermont. It doesn't work and yet it goes on, whether it's Mattachine throwing out its founders for being leftist when the organization became popular, or the Vermont ERA committee leaving out grassroots feminist organizations because they weren't ladylike enough or the Democratic Party




HIV Positive?

**Feeling alone in the HIV System?
Newly diagnosed?
Need help getting the services you need?**

CONTACT THE HIV CONSUMER ADVOCATE

VT People with AIDS Coalition, P.O. Box 11, Montpelier, VT 05602
800-698-8792 & 802-229-5754 & vtpwac@sover.net & vtpwac.org



OperaNorth

2006 Summer Season

Verdi

Il trovatore

a romance

Aug. 12, 15, 18, 23, 26

Matinee Aug. 24

Britten

Albert Herring

a riot

Aug. 17, 19, 22, 25

Professional opera at the Lebanon (NH) Opera House

Evenings \$17 - \$75
Matinee \$5, \$25

For Tickets: (603) 448-0400
www.OperaNorth.org

CONTINUED ON P.19 →