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VERMONT'S NEWSPAPER for LESBIANS and GAY MEN

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Marching with pride

by Howard Russell

With the Lesbian/Gay Pride march approaching once again, many people are struggling with the issue of whether to march or not. There are a lot of good reasons not to march. We all know them. The discrimination and hatred is there and, it is very real and very frightening. And yet, the things which keep many of us from marching are the very reasons that the march must go on. The day that we have no consequences to fear in marching is the day when we should question the necessity of marching - not before.

This year we will be marching behind a banner asserting that there is "No Turning Back." It is a phrase which is very strong, very determined, and yes, very confronting. It is a statement which says: in the face of Phyllis Schlafly-inspired homophobia, we will march; in the face of high levels of homophobic violence, we will march; and in the face of a conservative/fascist swing by our national leadership, we will take to the streets and we will declare our pride.

There are some among us who would like lesbian/gay pride to be "less political." I would contend that politics and pride are inextricable for us. No stronger political statement can be made in a system which has institutionalized our oppression than a declaration of self-pride. Our oppression depends upon our believing the lies that we have been force-fed. We are too strong to be oppressed if we refuse to take part in our own oppression. Our numbers are too great. Our ideas are too sound. And our goodness is too pervasive.

This will be the fourth year that I will have marched in Vermont's lesbian/gay pride parade. My reasons for marching are political, yes, but they

are also very personal.

I grew up in Vermont believing that I was the only gay person in this whole area. Naive? Yes, but who among us wasn't at one point? I think that this feeling of complete isolation was the hardest part of the oppression for me. This is also one of my main motivations to march. I want to do everything I can to assure that lesbian and gay youth growing up in Vermont today will realize that they are not alone. I want to make sure that there will be pictures with articles about, and statements by, lesbians and gay men appearing in the media throughout Vermont.

Each time I have marched, I have been afraid - afraid of what could happen. However, that fear for me is lessening, because each time I've marched I have felt my own sense of personal power and pride take quantum leaps forward. Marching makes me feel stronger and when I feel stronger, I am stronger.

So think about it. Some of you can't march and your reasons are good. Don't put yourself down for protecting yourself. Think about coming to the concert or movie or the lesbian/gay pride interfaith service.

But if you are someone who's waiting until it's totally safe, you probably never will march. Safety will not be given to us; we must create it. We create it by pushing the limits back which have been imposed on us. Many of you have pushed these limits in big personal ways - by coming out to family, friends, co-workers, and by fully loving the person of your choice. Marching on June 14th is one more big way to challenge those limits. So go for it!

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GAY PRIDE 1986



Friday - June 13

Concert - Susan Kenniston, John Calvi & Gilles Yves Bonneau
7:30 pm - Christ Church Presbyterian
Redstone Campus, UVM

Saturday - June 14

1:00 pm - Rally (speakers, music, etc.) Unitarian Church
Head of Church St.
2:30 pm - Parade through Burlington
3:30 pm - Post Parade Rally
7:15 & - Movie "Before Stonewall"
9:00 pm - Angel Hall, UVM

Sunday - June 15

2:00 pm - Lesbian/Gay Pride Ecumenical Service
Friends Meeting House
N. Prospect St.
(Across from synagogue)

Lesbian/Gay pride issue