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Anita

brothers; they gave me the strength to sit through more ridicule. We know we're not sick, or sinful, or choosing this "immoral lifestyle".

I burned with frustration mixed with anger as another speaker accused me of trying to pull off "a trick to penetrate our schools, our places of employment." Again and again I heard rumors of homosexuals teaching children to follow in this "abhorrent lifestyle." By now my palms were clammy with sweat. My cheeks were on fire--was I embarrassed or humiliated?

Still the speakers in favor of H.247 kept marching to the microphone with their rational arguments--"99% of child molestations are committed by heterosexual males," study after study show that homosexuals comprise 10% of the population, emergency room workers need for incoming patients to be able to speak honestly of their histories including their sexual preferences without fear of reprisals. Some bravely told episodes of harassment--verbal abuse, physical abuse and vandalism. My heart ached for each of them as together we relived the pain.

I listened as I was lumped together with pedophiles, described as lower than dogs,

and told that I "burn with lust in my heart." (Didn't Jimmy Carter lust in his heart once?)

I touched my partner's knee. Maybe I was trying to ground myself in the storm; maybe I was just trying to get my bearings. Still the brave friends of H.247 came to the seat in front of the microphone, some with prepared texts, some in response to the hatred aimed at us.

Finally, the last speaker opposed to the bill finished and the speakers in favor kept coming forward. "This is not a choice," "We are not asking for privilege, just our civil rights." I beamed and the speakers kept coming. They came from all walks of life, all religion, all sexual orientations, all parts of the state. They spoke for me. They spoke about me (not specifically, of course).

And when the hearing ended we applauded long and hard; we hugged and shook hands. I smiled from ear to ear and my heart hurt. I felt the pain of the hatred, the realization that there are real people behind those angry, vile words. I felt the pain of love. I love each of you who had the courage to sit in front of that microphone and speak for me. I pray to my loving God that your efforts will be rewarded by the passage of bill H.247.

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Philip

someone based on his/her sexual orientation.

As one of many persons supporting H.247, I was empowered by the sheer strength and courage of people speaking out in defense of lesbians and gay men, or for themselves as gay persons. Being "out" at such a public forum where reporters, cameras, or simply those present could see you, took a real risk in our homophobic society. For those who were present but could not testify, their simple presence at the meeting added encouragement and strength for all those speaking in support of this bill.

People speaking against H.247 revealed once again their fear and hatred toward lesbians and gay men. The opposition condemns anything they consider different from their beliefs. You have to wonder what it is the people who oppose equal rights for all of the state's citizens fear so much? Why are people so threatened? "You can't pass this bill,...you just can't," pleaded one woman testifying against the bill. I can only surmise that this civil rights legislation would be one more crack in their beliefs of God, country and family. If this is challenged, then so must their other fundamental beliefs.

At times I felt anger toward those speaking against H.247. But most of the time I felt sad. Sad that individuals need to find one segment of the population to despise and fear. One thing is certain about

the night of March 10; people supporting the bill felt energized more than ever. The verbal opposition to H.247 validated our resolve to work for equal justice for all people, including lesbians and gay men. The House Judiciary hearing was a night to behold and remember.

Entertainment was in many forms, all of them welcome in relaxing wound-up minds and bodies. Besides the frequent informal social and "business" exchanges on a one-to-one basis among old and new friends, we were treated to beautiful home-grown music (including mine) and a great dramatic monologue; "Track Two"--a powerful documentary film about the history of gay life in Toronto, the unprecedented raid on five baths in 1981, when 286 men were arrested, the largest mass arrest in Toronto history, subsequent political upheavals, and normalization of gay activity into the present; and forays into the local bar scene, which is both very much alive and fun-oriented, at times even spectacular (for instance, one bar had a "pajamas" contest going on Saturday night on one level, while tall-screen X-rated films were shown on several TV's on the second level of the enormous floor-space).

The Sunday morning service, attended by a friendly congregation, was conducted by several lesbian and gay ministers from the conference, notably the Rev. Mark de Wolfe of Toronto, who gave the intelligent homily about whether the risky process of love

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## Convocation of U.U.L.G.C. Held

by Gilles Yves Bonneau

The third Continental Convocation of the U.U.L.G.C. (Unitarian-Universalists for Lesbian and Gay Concerns) took place in Toronto, February 13-15, 1987. Eighty leaders took part, coming from all corners of the U.S. and Canada (e.g., Montreal, San Diego, Edmonton, Swannanoa [S.C.], Boston, Ann Arbor, etc., etc.); they represented the thousands who cannot participate more actively or openly, for a variety of reasons known to us all. Two delegates (Mike and this writer) brought Vermont's consciousness to the conference.

The issue at hand was the fostering of the Unitarian-Universalist movement as a "welcoming church", one which genuinely accepts and includes lesbians and gay men in all facets of its make-up, in its intrinsic

fabric. It was a source of great pride for me to be the first to stand before this group of dedicated, hard-working, friendly, sharp leaders during the opening worship service and state that our Burlington congregation had already begun to deal with this and shown its deep and emotional inclusion of all its membership. (It turns out that Vermont is also in the forefront of publications for its lesbian and gay citizens with "Out in the Mountains", as the Canadian Gay Archives [Toronto] and several convocation delegates have attested to--one individual, from Pittsburgh, made out a check on the spot to obtain a year's subscription! And the Archives plan to seek a subscription as well; they were given my Feb. issue as a sample).

The recently-appointed Director of the Office for Lesbian and Gay Concerns of the U.U.A. (Unitarian-Universalist Association; U.U. is a free association of independent congregations) in Boston, the Rev. Jay Deacon, was present; his quiet, intelligent, sensitive determination bodes well for ever more effective involvement of the denomination in this area of great social import.

Workshops on Saturday included topics such as: exploring gay/lesbian spirituality; creative solutions to homophobia; AIDS and the congregation; ministry for transformation; working toward inclusiveness in a congregation; meditation: an inner journey. These were followed by a very lively business meeting, lasting well into the evening.

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