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New York Times Errs on Lesbian Parenting

A New York Times story on lesbian childbearing, which ran on Jan. 30 and was the first story by a national paper on the subject, contained grave inaccuracies and bias. As a result of immediate protest by the NGLTF, the Lesbian Rights Project, the ACLU Gay and Lesbian Rights Project and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), the offensive paragraphs were retracted by the Times in an unprecedented "Editor's Note" which appeared on Feb. 3.

The article in the Times entitled "Lesbians Find the Means to be Parents" grew out of a January 9th meeting between NGLTF Media Director Urvashi Vaid and Times reporter Gina Kolata. The story Kolata submitted to her editors was not the story that finally appeared. Without notifying Kolata or securing her approval, editors at the Times wrote an entire paragraph which contained negative and biased statements about lesbians and children raised by lesbian families. The story was also rearranged to give prominence to the anti-gay views of a sociologist at a Catholic college and also misquoted another prominent psychiatrist. No quotes were contained in the story from psychologists whose research shows that there is no harm to children raised in gay and lesbian households.

The most offensive paragraph in the story, a paragraph not written by Kolata, read: "Some clinicians, however, speculate that in the long term, girls might have difficulty in intimate relationships with men, and boys might be uncomfortable with their roles as males. If lesbian parents are openly hostile toward men, these difficulties could be worsened."

The Editor's Note acknowledged that the comments cited above were "added in the editing process." The Note continued: "[The comments] did not fairly reflect a spectrum of views among behavioral scientists and ethicists about possible effects of being reared by lesbian parents. In the absence of evidence that hostility toward men is common among lesbian parents, the reference to such hostility was unwarranted. The article should have given lesbian parents a chance to respond to concerns raised by others." The Note also addressed the misquotation attributed to psychiatrist Dr. Richard Green.

NGLTF urges all readers to write to the New York Times and register their disapproval with both the final story and the bias

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Just a few of the Supporters of H.211...

- Governor Madeleine Kunin
- Lieutenant Governor Howard Dean
- Attorney General Jeffrey Amestoy
- Olin Robison Ph.D President, Middlebury College
- The Episcopal Church of Walden
- The Episcopal Church of Lyndonville
- Unitarian/Universalists Ministers Association of VT/NH
- St. Johnsbury Friends Worship Meeting
- National Organization of Women - VT Chapter
- St. John the Baptist Episcopal Mission of Hardwick
- Spruce Mountain Inn
- Vermont Low Income Advocacy Council
- Onion River Coop

To add your organization's name to this list, write Vermont Coalition of Lesbian and Gay Men, POB 1125, Montpelier VT 05602.

As readers may or may not know H.211, the sexual orientation anti-discrimination bill was assigned to the House Judiciary Committee. The Committee has decided to hold a public hearing before it votes on the bill. This year's hearing will be held on April 11th, at 7pm at the Vermont Statehouse in Montpelier. All supporters and people testifying are asked to arrive early, these hearings tend to fill the house chambers quickly. For further information contact either Keith Goslant 454-8552 or Holly Perdue 229-0109. Your presence makes a difference at these hearings even if you are not testifying.

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