

Ask Aunt Gay

Aunt Gay, housepainter and gardener, lives in a cold, corner of the Northwest Queerdom. She's been learning from her mistakes for 87 years.

Dear Aunt Gay,

I have owned my own home for a few years. I didn't grow up rich and have a house handed to me. It's the result of a lot of hard work. Finally, I have things the way I like them.

My lover moved in with me recently, and I do enjoy living with him. But now he wants to redecorate the living room and rearrange the kitchen. He has his own bedroom. I don't appreciate him wanting to change my home to suit him. He grew up with a lot of money, and I resent it when he expects the world to cater to him. Do you think he's asking for too much?

Dear As You Like It,

Isn't this something! You've had your nose to the grindstone for years and just when you're ready to relax and tell yourself "Well done!" in waltzes Mr. Privilege wanting to share your wealth.

You deserve to have your place reflect you 100%. You also deserve an equal partnership. If your lover has control over one room and you have control over the rest of the house, it's not equal. Do you really want to make a home with him? If you do, you'll need to compromise. But the secret to compromising gracefully is to go for what's most important to you. If you let him rearrange the kitchen, with your input of course, will he cook more? Would that make you happy? Is he artistic? Maybe you'd love having his artist's spirit shining at you from your living room. Letting him into the whole house will definitely change your home, but it might be positive. If not, you can change it around again after a while.

Your lover's money has bought him power in the world. Do you have some privilege that he doesn't? Does mainstream culture treat you more respectfully than it treats him for any reason: your looks, ethnic background, line of work? If he has all the

privilege it will be harder to balance the power between you without your keeping significant control of your home. Take stock of your dynamics together, then look for a balance.

And while you're at it, notice any of his moneyed traits you like: Is he refreshingly self-assured? Does he believe in making fantasies real? You chose him, you like living with him, enjoy him.

Dear Aunt Gay,

I'm outraged. I heard that at the East Coast Lesbian Festival lesbian mothers of sons were harassed by a reactionary wing of the lesbian separatist movement who posted signs advocating violence against the boys. I heard that S/M dykes received notes and phone calls threatening them with physical harm, I presume to punish them for their alleged crime of mimicking patriarchal violence in their sex play.

But that's not all. The dyke who told me all this was "so mad", she wanted to "knock their separatist heads together!"

Come on wimmin, didn't we learn anything from the last two decades of the lesbian community's anti-racist witch hunts, class wars and other devastating schisms? Can we learn something from the Sandanistas who refer to their living revolution as "the Process"? The means are the ends. Right now we are creating our world by how we treat each other. We are our revolution. Aunt Gay, would you tell our community to start acting like it?

Dear Outraged,

Say it, sister.

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Beyond *from page 11*

for us in the past but perhaps it is time to encourage each one of us to choose our own parade route, unencumbered by a parade permit.

As for exactly what our destination is, I don't have a complete picture but I do have some snapshots and in one of them, Brian and I are walking down the streets of Burlington hand-in-hand. That's a good enough picture for me right now.

Public Hearings on Hate Crimes Continue

The Human Rights Commission for the State of Vermont will be holding its fourth and final public hearing on "hate crimes" in Burlington VT. on November 13th at the Unitarian Church beginning at 7 p.m. The focus of the hearing is to gather testimony regarding the existence in Vermont of acts of violence, intimidation, or harassment against people on the basis of their sexual orientation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, ancestry, age, or physical or mental impairment.

The Commission is also seeking the opinion of Vermonters as to whether legislation should be enacted making such acts a separate criminal offense and also actionable under civil law. A hate crimes bill, H. 504, was introduced during this legislative session and will hopefully be considered in 1990. It is currently being supported by the Human Rights Commission and the Attorney General's Office.

The Commission's three previous public hearings in Brattleboro, St. Johnsbury, and Rutland produced testimony predominantly from gays and lesbians as well as from people of color. Vermonters informed the Commission of numerous incidents of violence and harassment that they believed had been motivated by the victim's actual or perceived sexual orientation.

The Commission is hoping for a significant turnout in November since it is the last hearing before the legislative session. The Commission also recognizes that some people may not wish to testify publicly and therefore it encourages people to provide written testimony (either signed or anonymous) at the hearing or by mailing it to: Human Rights Commission, P.O. Box 997, Montpelier, VT 05601. If you are hearing impaired and wish to participate, please contact the Commission and an interpreter will be provided.

The Human Rights Commission also wants to remind people that even though discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations is not currently protected under Vermont law (and is not the subject of the public hearing) that the Commission still encourages people to write or phone their complaints for filing with the Commission.

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