

Purpose

The purpose of *Out in the Mountains* is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, support and affirmation. We also see *OITM* as a vehicle for celebration of the goodness and diversity of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities.

Editorial Policy

We will consider for publication any material which broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of the staff. This paper cannot and will not endorse any candidates and actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals.

We will not publish any material which is overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, or homophobic.

All materials submitted must be signed so we can contact the author should we need to consider editorial revisions. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously, upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed. No revisions or rejections of materials will occur without dialogue with the author.

We welcome and encourage all readers to submit materials for publication and to share your comments, criticisms, and positive feelings with us. This paper is here for you. The deadline for submitting material for each issue is the 7th of the month prior to publication.

Materials should be sent to:
Out in the Mountains
PO Box 177
Burlington, VT 05402

To Submit Articles and Letters

We encourage our readers to participate in bringing this publication to gay, lesbian, and bisexual Vermonters. Please assist us by submitting articles no longer than two double-spaced typed pages and letters to the editor no longer than one double spaced typed page. Your submission should be received by *OITM* no later than the 7th of the previous month.

Thank you!

Editorial

Censorship and Education

by Hugh Coyle

Censorship has been a hot topic over the past year. The photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe continue to incite protests and counter-protests; the NEA has recently denied funding to four artists whose work was deemed questionable (three of the four just happen to be gay); and earlier this year a traveling exhibit on the Holocaust ran into problems with school boards because it mentioned the fact that gays and lesbians were persecuted and murdered along with the Jewish population of Germany.

All of these attacks threaten the visibility and validation of gay concerns in contemporary society. We've made great progress over the past years in bringing these concerns into the open, so it's no wonder that our critics and enemies are seeking out ways to close us out once again - to censor not only our artwork, but to censor our lives as well.

Nothing has fueled this ongoing battle more than the AIDS epidemic in the last decade. Issues of censorship play a prominent role as health officials grapple with the various ways of informing an erotophobic culture about the potential health risks surrounding certain forms of homosexual intercourse. Posters and pamphlets aimed at the gay community now feature "homoerotic" visuals: two men walking with arms entwined, two naked men wrapped together in an American flag, and a whole bus-length panel of same-sex multi-racial couples kissing.

As these images are aimed at educating the gay community, they speak in what might be called a "gay voice." This voice is and must be sexually-oriented. To truly educate our own population, we must speak our own language, and speak of our own experiences. In order for an article on "safe

sex" to truly inform, it must speak frankly about sex and not avoid the topic. If it does, it weakens its own effectiveness, casts doubt as to its own validity, questions the defining essence of what it is to be gay.

Such articles also serve the double purpose of educating the heterosexual community about our lives. This is an education that doesn't come comfortably to many, however, and that discomfort is reflected in the rhetoric of censorship (i.e. words like "distasteful" and "offensive.")

This discomfort is the scar of yet another form of censorship, one less visible yet just as insidious. In school, few of us learned that Michelangelo (the creator of that beautiful "homoerotic" masterpiece "David") was gay, or that Walt Whitman kept records of the men he slept with, or that Emily Dickinson was madly in love with another woman. That information, like the fact that thousands of gays were not released with the Jews once the Americans "liberated" the concentration camps, was censored, and continues to be censored in most of our American schools.

Likewise, there are few role models presented for gay and lesbian youth, and in most cases, not even a definition offered of the words "gay," "lesbian," and "homosexual" (at least not a true definition; we all learned what those words meant on the playground and in the locker room, and most heterosexuals still live by those horribly mistaken definitions). For many of us growing up in our teens, there was no such thing as a gay or lesbian community. It was kept hidden from our sight, censored from our everyday experience.

We need to continue to explore and express our selves for all of society to see and hear, to know and admit and allow that
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