

Out in the Mountains

established in 1986

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To Submit Articles and Letters

We encourage and implore our readers to do what they can to make *OITM* a paper both for and by gay, lesbian, and bisexual Vermonters. Please assist us by typing your articles and letters double-spaced and including your name and phone number in case we have any questions. Your submission should be received by *OITM* no later than the 7th of the previous month. Thank you for helping out!

No More AIDS, No More War

by Hugh Coyle

"Money for AIDS, not for war!" was one of the more popular slogans chanted by protesters at the recent ACTUP demonstration on Burlington's Church Street. When asked by a *Free Press* reporter what she thought about that, Jackie Paronto of Essex told them, "I think they should go to Saudi...They are just hurting the families of people going."

Well, before we all take a field trip to the Middle East (a trip the U.S. military won't let US take with THEM, by the way), you should know that you don't have to go to the Gulf to take part in a war. Sons and daughters around the country are already dying here at home. For some reason, though, those casualties tend not to count as much to people like Ms. Paronto. A life lost on foreign soil in a questionable conflict seems to matter more to the American public than the many thousands of lives being lost here to AIDS.

Ms. Paronto's remarks, and the many others like hers that are made daily by those opposed to issues like increased funding for AIDS, do more than hurt the families of those who suffer the abuses of an intolerant society. They invalidate the lives (and deaths) of others. They impede and jeopardize important legislation. In the long run, it can be argued, they kill.

Ms. Paronto is not alone in her inability to equate a life with a life, a death with a death. There are those for whom the subject of AIDS is still a touchy subject, too touchy to deal with honestly and seriously no matter what the cost.

Take the recent American version of the "Red Hot & Blue" special aired on national television (or, perhaps more significantly, the NBC show "Lifestories"

which dealt with AIDS but was *not* aired). The American "Red Hot & Blue" show, unlike its British counterpart, focused on Cole Porter, chronicling his life with interesting clips and asides, not once mentioning that Cole was one of "them," and not doing much to significantly educate the viewing audience on the topic of AIDS, which was the initial motivation behind the project. As a matter of fact, you could argue that any connection with AIDS was secondary, an afterthought. Sure, lots of people are dying of AIDS, but Cole Porter - now a special on him just might bring up those late Saturday night ratings. (Just don't mention that he was - well, you know.)

More than a decade after the onset of AIDS, Americans still find themselves unable to discuss certain issues relating to sexuality (and not just homosexuality) in an honest and direct way. You'd think we were all still stuck in some kind of cultural adolescence, a condition quite unworthy of a world superpower. We could save lives - thousands of lives - if we just admitted that human beings are sexual and that their behavior now could have life-endangering side effects. But no, ratings come before lives. Advertising dollars are worth more than one life saved.

The equations we use to determine our priorities are still somewhat questionable. We'd rather talk about the rising price of gas as a reason for funding an all-out invasion; the argument that thousands of people are dying here at home falls on deaf ears when members of the gay and lesbian communities approach Congress for increased AIDS funding. Then again, if we did channel some of the money used to defend the oil fields of the Gulf into AIDS research, we'd

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