

Out in the Mountains

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Burlington's New Mayor

(Continued from last issue: OITM interviews incoming Burlington Mayor Peter Brownell)

Walter I. Zeichner

OITM: How do you see the role of the Mayor's office in relation to the gay and lesbian community? What would you like your relationship to be?

Brownell: I never have sat down and pictured a specific program other than the general program of equal opportunity for everyone; not to start a new office, a new program, a new plan that isn't existing now, just to insure that everyone's aware that not only does the city feel an obligation to not discriminate for any reason, but that I certainly don't personally either. That it's not something the city is doing because that's the law, because it's the right thing to do. In terms of starting a new city office I hadn't given any thought to doing anything other than to see that we are at least living up to our legal obligations, but hopefully we can develop the skills we need to communicate to people who are not as tolerant as they ought to be, to recognize that they have a responsibility beyond just the observance of the law, but to recognize that it's the right thing to do.

OITM: What role do you think homophobia plays in the whole domestic partners controversy?

Brownell: Certainly there are people who are opposed to that issue because they are homophobic...but there are just as many people, who I talked with anyway, who felt that providing insurance to domestic partners of same sex couples was ok, it was the opposite sex couples that irritated them. If I've got to get married to get these rights how come these people just don't have to? That was one of those issues where there were things to dislike for a variety of reasons for a variety of different people.

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The March on Washington: Waiting for a Simple Matter of Justice

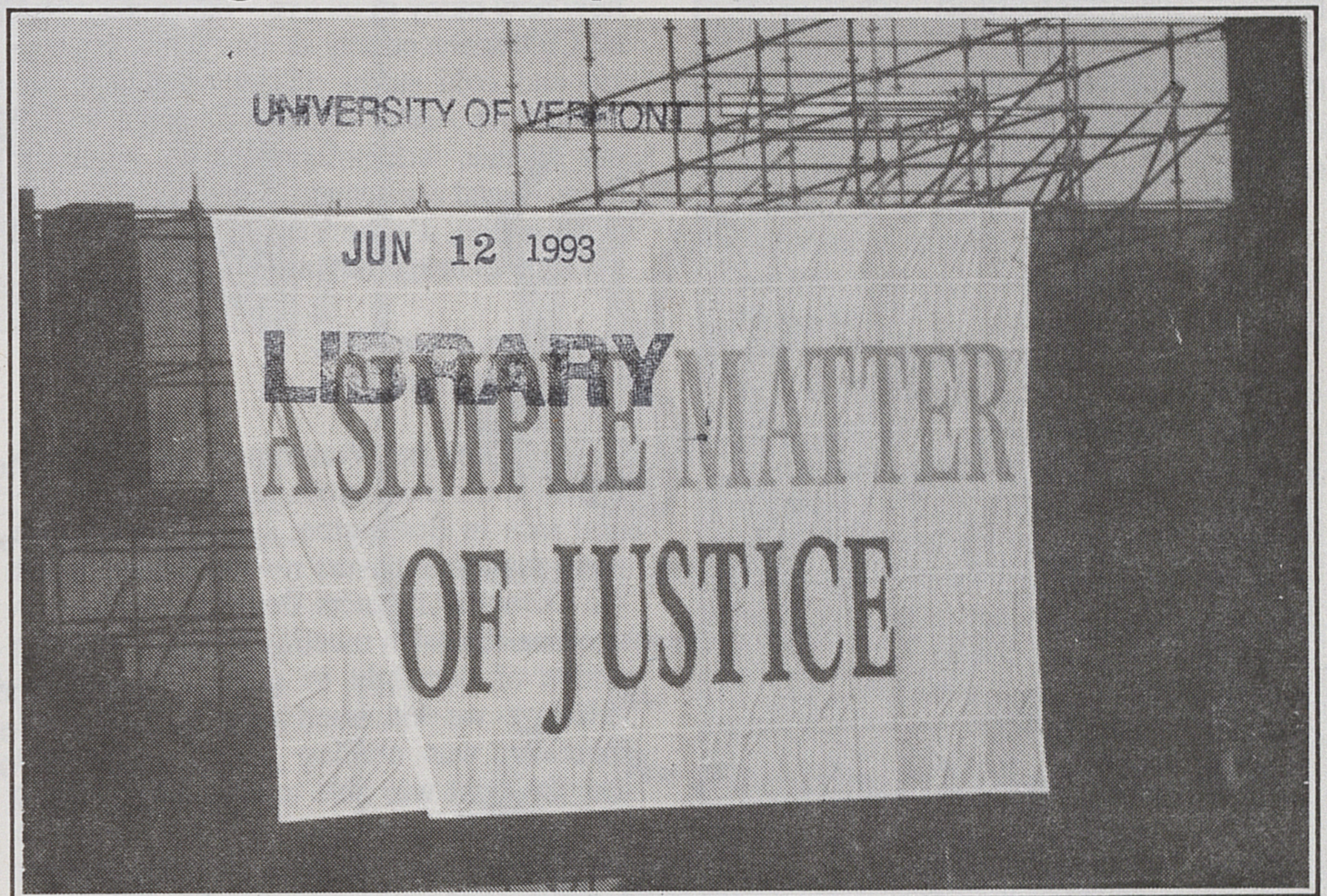


Photo by Paul E. Olsen

Paul E. Olsen

Waiting at the airport. Waiting for the subway. Waiting to cross the street. Waiting to shop at Lambda Rising Bookstore. Waiting to eat and drink. Waiting to see the Vietnam Memorial. Waiting for Phil Donahue, Jesse Jackson and RuPaul. Waiting to march. Waiting for our rights.

While the 1993 March on Washington has come and gone memories of the weekend and its impact will last a lifetime. Waking up the day of the March, I experienced both the childlike excitement of Christmas morning and the anxiety of the first day of school. Shared feelings of solidarity, affirmation, and empowerment were a result of being surrounded by gay and lesbian brothers and sisters and supporters on the subway, in restaurants, in Dupont Circle, in the streets, at the clubs, and during the March itself.

While people of color, older Americans, women, and most recently the disabled have been insured protection under the law, lesbian and gay Americans are still waiting for civil rights protections. Remembering that Vermont is one of only eight states to afford civil rights protection on the basis of sexual orientation, I left Washington thinking of what we can do (other than wait) to expedite the extension of civil rights protections to lesbian and gay Americans. Here's a list of my "top ten" suggestions:

- 1) Become and remain informed about issues affecting the gay/lesbian/bisexual (g/l/b) communities (i.e. the military ban, adoption issues, employment discrimination, domestic partner legislation).
- 2) Regularly read *Out in the Mountains* and one of the national gay and lesbian news magazines.

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