

Out in the Mountains

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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 10th of the previous month. **Thank you for helping out!**

Editorial

Terrorism Nothing New to Us

by Hugh Coyle

What a wonderful thing it was to have parts of last month's editorial on the Persian Gulf War go out of date between the day the paper went to the printer and the day it was set out for distribution! But even as the fighting in the Middle East tapered off, the fear of terrorist reprisals in the Western world remained. Though these worries are perhaps less pronounced than they were at the height of the bombing sorties, they nonetheless remain a reality with which Americans must now somehow learn to live.

For a period during the war itself, I wondered why I didn't feel more concerned about the increasing threat of terrorism. I had known people from countries in which such attacks were commonplace, so perhaps I had somehow acquired a touch of that perseverance, that stubborn refusal to surrender one's personal freedoms even in the face of impending adversity.

More recent events, however, have made the answer clear to me. International terrorism didn't bother me much because as a gay man, I'm growing accustomed to living in a terrorist state right here at home. Our community has had its meeting places stoned, bombed, and burned; our gay brothers and lesbian sisters have been targeted for brutal beatings; verbal harassment in the form of anti-gay slurs and slogans is on the rise in America once again.

New York City Mayor David Dinkins can tell you about terrorism against gays firsthand. Dinkins drew sharp and steady disapproval from a number of constituencies following his decision to march with an Irish gay and lesbian group in New York's St. Patrick's Day parade. Obscenities weren't the only things hurled at him during the procession; spectators also took to throwing beer bottles at the city official. With this firsthand experience of anti-gay terrorism, perhaps Dinkins will more effectively counter the alarming increase in hate crimes against homosexuals in his city.

Here in Vermont, our community is reeling from the shocks and aftershocks of yet another instance of brutal homophobic violence. The vicious murder of John Irons demonstrates once again that this quiet, rural state is not quite an idyllic paradise.

Letters to the editor of several local papers condemning the civil rights bill also serve to remind us that our enemies are out there in force, ready to vent their anger and hatred. Many refer back to the Bible in their

defense, as though God would somehow justify their vicious and repugnant sentiments. Just as a number of Middle Eastern terrorist groups claim to be driven by the Word of God, so do our opponents seek to defend their cruel and violent actions.

Miraculously, we persevere against ignorance and enmity. We live our lives as fully as we can and seek to help others live theirs just as fully despite the dangers and risks involved. We carry on acknowledging the terrorism directed against us, yet not accepting it. We cannot and will not surrender because in our hearts, we know that what we feel is right and true.

The poet Adrienne Rich once wrote of her work, "I draw strength from the traditions of all those who, with every reason to despair, have refused to do so." As gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals, we must continue to realize that goal of refusing despair, of standing proudly and demanding our rights, of serving as role models for the rest of the world to show that terrorism need not deprive us of our collective spirit.

With hate crimes on the rise nationwide, we face a challenge which is incomprehensible to the "average American" (if such a thing even exists). What may remain equally incomprehensible yet unavoidably glorious is the strength which we bring to that challenge, for that strength is ours, we have earned it, and we will not surrender it now or evermore.

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