

## The Responses

In response to January's question, "Does the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights address the concerns of bisexual, transsexual, and transgender Vermonters? Should the Coalition's name be changed to explicitly include bisexual, transsexual, and transgender Vermonters?" one reader wrote ...

As a bisexual man, it really doesn't bother me NOT to see bisexuals included in the title. After all, it's just a label, and we should insist on moving beyond labels rather than restricting ourselves to them and then arguing about semantic points. That is why I favor an all-inclusive label like "Vermont Coalition for Sexual Rights" or some such thing.

To be honest, as a bisexual, I have the right to act on my heterosexual instincts without fear of reprisals or denial of rights. It's only when I act on my homosexual instincts -- when I identify myself as "gay" (which I do since I'm "married" to another man at the moment) -- that I need to have my rights defended. So, though you might label me as bisexual, I identify myself as gay, and therefore find strength and support in movements which acknowledge that side of my sexual orientation and seek to liberate it from oppression.

Hugh Coyle, Ripton

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The letters still keep pouring in responding to December's question concerning the "appropriateness" of "Dykes To Watch Out For" ...

I think it's ridiculous to call DTWOF inappropriate for this type of paper regardless of where it is distributed. First off, the subheading of OITM makes it clear that this paper is for gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals. Its main purpose is not to enlighten the religious right. Secondly, Alison Bechdel's realistic characters are no more offensive than the characters in any blockbuster movie released within the last ten years. The language in this cartoon is frequently tame by comparison. ... Anyone who feels turned off by this feature is obviously leading too sheltered a life.

Steve Stowell, St. Johnsbury

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... When I think about some church-going folks being offended, my response is: this is OUR magazine. I'd like to think that they are choosing to subscribe or read because they are interested in finding out about our issues, lifestyles, lives, etc. DTWOF is really pretty tame and a pretty good reflection ... of

the real lives of many lesbians in this country. I personally don't think that the language and/or subject matter are any more offensive than ... some (het) ... birthday cards on display in a local store.

I wonder why the Rutland church receives this newsletter, and what they think is the purpose for its publication. Are we publishing ... to keep g/l/b/t's in the state of Vermont (and surrounding rural areas) in touch with each other and the relevant happenings in Vermont, or is its purpose to "cleanse" our real lives of enough detail in order to make them palatable to those we hope to "educate"? ...

Renee Risingsong  
Hanover, NH

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Some of my fellow readers, in response to the question of the appropriateness of the content of the comic strip "Dykes To Watch Out For" exploded with alarmist cries of homophobia. It's completely unreasonable to call members of the Rutland United Methodist Church homophobic. That is, unless you know they have comic strips in their lobby that depict heterosexuals in graphic sexual situations and want to exclude only those depicting homosexuals. Of course, they don't. In fact, Rutland UMC was the first church in the Methodist Troy Conference to become an "Open and Affirming" Congregation, which made them the only one in 336 UMC churches to welcome out homosexuals as members. Allies in places like the Rutland UMC are a great resource for the g/l/b/t community and if they actually care enough about us, and our justice issues, to express an opinion about the way we come across to them, we should welcome the dialogue and be open minded, not nasty.

But beyond that, I would ask everyone to remember our own community is diverse. Diverse enough to include g/l/b/t people who think graphic depictions of oral sex ... do not belong in a newspaper. I love sex. I even like some "pornography". Still, I don't think graphic depictions of sex, whether they be woman to woman or man to man, are appropriate for the pages of OITM. So perhaps I'm a prude. Some gays are prudes. I enjoy reading DTWOF and I firmly believe that the strip has a place in our paper and should remain there. But, I also think that the strip sometimes goes too far.

And why slam the editor for asking the question? If the editor has had conflicting opinions on any subject, I think it's fine for (the editor) to ask our community for clarity. Why should a comic strip be above discussion?

Joseph F. Watson, East Middlebury ▼

## Letters to the Editor

### Freeing Her Mind

In your January issue (covering) the Queer Town Meeting, you listed a section called "Free Your Mind", which were things people said into the microphone at the hour long Town Meeting. ... You included many people's statements but failed to include mine. This really upsets me because I feel I said something very important and want my voice heard. Being the last speaker, I set a nice finishing tone. I am displeased this had to happen.

I am still going to be a supporter of (OITM), but I want you to know how I feel.

Bethann Prendergast  
Burlington

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### Blair's Is Theirs, Part Deux

This is in regard to the letters criticizing the only lesbian/gay bar in Plattsburgh. Again, we have a case of self-cannibalization. It's ours, the owner has been more than supportive of any efforts on the part of the local les/gay community, and we're fortunate to have it. Jill Cerrone, the owner, renovated the interior, new floors, bathrooms, and atmosphere. I don't want to compare bars, because we need them all, but have you been in there lately? Maybe it's time for a return trip.

We have to support any efforts made to give us a place of our own. Criticism and oppression is what we can always expect from the outside world. Why do that to ourselves?

Nat Harrison  
Chazy, NY

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### Shame, Shame, Double Shame

I'll wager I'm not the only individual in the community who, at times, feels the ingratitude of our community makes it difficult to sustain any level of contributing activism.

I looked in vain for any gesture, anywhere within the pages of the January '95 issue of OITM, or in the record of the recent gathering in Middlebury, for comments about the lengthy and significant service to our community by Holly Perdue and Keith Goslant, our immediate past Co-liaisons to the Governor. Holly and Keith served in those positions for years, received no pay (contrary to the shockingly ill-informed beliefs of some in our community and elsewhere), and no expense reimbursement worth mentioning. They also received very little, if any, thanks in any formal or informal way. In return they gave our community thousands of hours of dedicated, thoughtful service, picked up the tab for thousands of phone calls, returning calls at all hours of the day and night when the need arose. They traveled thousands of miles, which is remarkable when one considers how small Vermont is, and that most of their travel was in-state. They have spoken to thousands of people on our behalf. They have facilitated positive results far beyond what has been credited to them thus far.

After all the years of such service, not a whisper of tribute or even a simple thanks. Shame on you all. Shame on OITM for this gross oversight -- and no matter how pressing other issues may seem to be, this kind of failure to recognize and inform the community about such service is inexcusable. Shame, especially, on the leadership -- past and present -- of the (Vermont) Coalition (for Lesbian and Gay Rights), some of whose leaders' disdainful treatment of both Co-liaisons in recent times is difficult to tolerate (one of the reasons I resigned from the Board of Directors this year), and marks them as thoughtless and small-minded. Most of all, shame on Vermont's g/l/b/t community for failing to inform yourselves about the labors of people who you expected to work on your behalf, without you ever giving them much in return; and shame on you all -- yes, every one of you who has not spoken out in anger about this gross oversight ... No thoughtful person or group of people would have failed to give appropriate thanks. ...

Gene F. Barfield  
Barre ▼

## Opinions In The Mountains

Readers are encouraged to voice their opinions by responding to the question posed in this monthly feature. Please send responses to OITM at P.O. Box 177, Burlington, VT 05402, or via the Internet at OutVermont@aol.com.

This month's question deals with Vermont's only g/l/b bar, 135 Pearl, now marketing itself as "gender and orientation neutral". Do you like 135 Pearl's new found neutrality, or do you think our community has lost a "safe space"?

Readers' opinions will be in an upcoming issue. Responses to previous questions can be found below.

## Out in the Mountains

VERMONT'S NEWSPAPER FOR LESBIANS, GAY MEN, AND BISEXUALS

By subscribing now to OITM, not only will you guarantee delivery to your mailbox (in a discreet envelope, of course), but you will also help underwrite the rising costs of publishing the newspaper. We also welcome any additional contributions you can make to support our continuing existence. Checks should be made payable to OITM and sent, along with this form, to: OITM, P.O. Box 177, Burlington, Vermont 05402-0177.

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