

Weekday at Bernie's: Interview with Rep. Bernie Sanders

Continued from page 1

pregnant women and newborn children. What was your position on this HIV testing controversy?

Sanders: We are opposed to mandatory testing.

OITM: In view of incidents like the 1992 Republican convention, the gays in the military debate and Senator Bob Dole's recent support of the Christian Coalition's (anti-gay) "marriage-protection resolution," do you think that gay men and lesbians are being exploited politically?

Sanders: The country right now is being run by extremely right wing people. In every instance, gays and lesbians will be used to divide America. They will be used in order to obfuscate and run away from the real economic issues facing this country. They will be blamed for many of the problems. If there is a problem in a school system, gays and lesbians will be blamed for that. If children become drug addicts, gays and lesbians will be blamed for that. Any social problem that exists will be targeted toward gays and lesbians, poor people, and people of color.

That is the standing operating procedure of the Christian Coalition and the right wing of the Republican party. As long as those people remain in power, we can expect more and more homophobia and more and more assaults on gays ... because a culture is being developed which says that it is appropriate to do that. When you have openly homophobic people in leadership positions in the United States Congress, you can expect that attitude to filter on down and to create very bad results.

OITM: After her death it was revealed that U.S. Representative Barbara Jordan (D-Texas) was a lesbian. What impact, if any, do you think this disclosure may have on her political legacy?

Sanders: Not much. She has a strong political legacy and it will stand on its own.

Maine Group to Expand

AUGUSTA, ME -- Following the success of their campaign to halt passage of anti-gay rights legislation, the group *Maine Won't Discriminate* hopes to capitalize on its momentum and create a new activist network in the state. An initial planning meeting is set for Saturday, May 11th, from 1-4:00 p.m. at the Pine Tree State Arboretum in Augusta.

In a recently drafted announcement, the planning committee stated, "We need to pursue a community-based, grass roots organizing of projects. The network will provide an opportunity to share resources and ideas; learn of opportunities and calls for action; get and give help on individual projects; renew in our coming together the energy, strength, and commitment that we bring to our work for equal rights and justice."

Though motivated mainly by their efforts on behalf of Maine's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities, the group also hopes to address other issues pertaining to social and economic justice. "Nothing is written in stone," they say. "We're hoping for a representation from as large a cross-section of the community and allies as possible."

Erica Rand of Lewiston and Ray Rogers of Waterville will co-facilitate the meeting. For more information, contact Erica at 207.782.0975. ▼

Rozema Scores Again With "When Night is Falling"

Reviewed by Nat Harrison

Patricia Rozema, the Canadian womyn who gave us the film "I've Heard the Mermaids Singing," shows her strengths yet again with "When Night is Falling," which recently showed in Vermont at Montpelier's Savoy Theater and via Catamount Arts in St. Johnsbury.

"When Night is Falling" stars Pascale Bussieres, Rachel Crawford, and Henry Czerny, each of whom pulses throughout the film (and let's not forget Bob, the little terrier!). Bob is the catalyst for two women, Petra and a weeping Camille, to meet while their wash tumbles in the dryers at the laundromat. That day, the two womyn's worlds of illusion begin colliding: Petra's Fellini-esque backdrop of the Sirkus of Sorts and Camille's controlled Calvinist College environment.

Camille wrenches herself back and forth while Petra plays Cupid, even to the point of shooting an arrow through Camille's window and sitting in a tree outside her office window. Mixed with the angst in the film are buoyant moments including a hang gliding adventure and the scene in which Petra meets the Reverend at the College. Add to that exquisite lovemaking, on red velvet, while the circus shimmer and soars in the backdrop, and the romance of the film floods in like the tide. It continues even though the final credits, with Bob ending the story in a way that made my companion cheer with delight.

In the United States, "When Night is Falling" was given an NC17 rating, while other countries such as Canada, Australia, and Germany rated it PG13 and ran it in mainstream theaters. "I strongly suspect homophobia, and I vaguely suspect racism," Rozema told the *Village Voice*. "Twisted sex is fine, but a very tender love scene — I don't even want to call it a sex scene — is threatening." Instead of accepting the NC17 rating, Rozema opted to have the film released unrated, thereby killing its chances for mainstream showing in the United States.

Even the *New York Times* refused to run an ad showing the two lovers lying together, tastefully covered. Rozema joked about airbrushing a mustache on one of the womyn to make it look more acceptable. And though the controversy may help boost ticket sales, Rozema warned, "I'm afraid the raincoat brigade is going to come out and be really disappointed!" ▼

OITM: What are your thoughts about your upcoming reelection campaign?

Sanders: We only won by 3 percent last time. We are taking on the Republican National Committee which will pump \$110,000 in hard money into my opponent's campaign and maybe an equal amount in soft money. We are taking on the ruling class in the State of Vermont and the big money interests. We are taking on the NRA. We are taking on the Christian Coalition. I think we have a tough race. We are asking and will ask for the support of all progressive forces in the State of Vermont, including the gay and lesbian community.

OITM: Do you have a final message for the readers of *OITM*?

Sanders: My message is that all people who are concerned about progressive politics, who are concerned about civil rights, who are concerned about the economic well-being of the middle class and the working class of this country, have got to appreciate how frightening the times are in which we live.

The current United States Congress is the most reactionary Congress in the modern history of America. Their leadership is not only homophobic, but much of it is sexist and anti-women. There is currently a war being waged by Gingrich and his friends against the low income people of this country and against the working class of this country. If a Republican becomes President of the United States, and if the Republicans retain control of the House and the Senate, what you can expect are Constitutional amendments to ban abortion in America and you can expect legislation which will make life much more difficult for the gay and lesbian community.

What I would like to leave with the gay and lesbian community is my belief that all progressive forces have got to work together in opposition to the Republican leadership and the Republican party. Now I understand that the Democratic party also has many serious problems, which is why I am not a Democrat. I believe we've got to move toward a third party which represents ordinary Americans...that's not going to happen tomorrow. For the present moment, I think we really need what used to be called a "United Front" effort where people understand they've got to come together with other groups.

People have got to be concerned about what is happening to kids. You have to be concerned about what's going to happen to the elderly. The bottom line of all that is, whether people want to or not, they've got to begin to think politically.

As Americans, we don't think politically very often. You may be interested in your concern, somebody else is interested in their concern, but people are not looking at the overall picture. So when you ask me about this or that issue affecting the gay and lesbian community, in my opinion, that is not the way to approach it. The way to approach it is to understand that so long as Gingrich and his friends stay in power, everything that you believe in, everything that you want to see for the gay and lesbian community is not going to happen. In fact, the terror and the pressure will only be significantly increased. That's what the story is and people have got to understand that.

These are frightening times. You'd be shocked to hear the openly homophobic remarks made by people there...Republicans in general. People are going to have to stand up and get organized and understand that the opposition is very strong. Our job is to educate and to organize, and we look forward to working with the gay and lesbian community in that direction ▼

135 Pearl

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Burlington, Vermont

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Level II Coffeehouse

open every day noon-2 am April 1st All New Lunch Menu

Music, coffee, food, fun, smoking!

Sundays-Champagne Brunch — special brunch menu-mimosas

Level I



Weekly Events

Sundays-Brunch 11-4
Tuesdays-\$1 Bud Drafts

First Friday, Women's Dance 5-9pm

Saturday, April 6 Pluto & Persephone Fashion Show 11pm

Every Saturday Sat 8-10 Retro Cocktail Lounge

First well drink or 12oz. draft on the Pearl
1st...Sunday

G.L.B. T. Pride '96 Fundraiser

7-10 \$3:00 DJ Dancing etc.

Come support your community

All proceeds go to *Pride without Borders*

2nd...Sunday

Lipliner—Drag Show w/hostess Colette and special guest Too Tall Tina 9PM

3rd...Sunday

Women's Cabaret

Monthly women's entertainment

6-10 \$3 Cover

4th...Sunday Bucks Tea Dance 7-10 PM

Wednesdays—Heartattack DJ Roberto & Friends

Saturdays—Masspool DJ Dan Shaw

Mondays—

Free Pool & "all you can eat" Wings \$5.