

**Out in the Mountains**  
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Editor: Hugh Coyle  
Business Manager:  
Steven West  
Circulation Manager:  
David Grist  
Layout Artist:  
Bruce Howden  
Staff Members:  
Tom Aloisi  
Thom Courcelle  
Joy Griffith  
Ellen  
Nat Harrison  
Moir  
Paul Olsen  
Kathie Sawyer  
Chris Tebbetts  
Staci Visco

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**Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of *Out in the Mountains* is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgendered people, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, support and affirmation. We also see *OITM* as a vehicle for celebration of the goodness and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities.

**Editorial Policy**

We will consider for publication any material which broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of the staff. This paper cannot and will not endorse any candidates and actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered persons.

We will not publish any material which is overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, or homophobic.

All materials submitted must be signed. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously, upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

**To Submit Articles & Letters**

We encourage and implore our readers to do what they can to make *OITM* a paper both for and by gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered 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. Thank you for helping out!

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Monthly

# Editorial

## It's the Constitution, Stupid

by Hugh Coyle

We can all thank our lucky stars that despite all the political grandstanding going on this election year, our nation's system of checks and balances has seen through the hateful smoke screens of our opponents and spoken out in favor of liberty and justice for all in this fair country. Miss Diana Ross can clear the stage; there's a new set of Supremes that we'd all like to dance to for a while!

The recent decision handed down by our nation's highest court signals a new era in the gay and lesbian civil rights movement. Those who seek to keep gays and lesbians themselves in check have been exposed as the prejudiced hypocrites they really are, and the Law of the Land has been shown to stand on our side.

Now, if only we could convince the President of this fact.

Despite all of his accomplishments on behalf of the gay and lesbian movement (and granted, there have been a few), President Clinton continues to miss the big opportunities to stand up for justice on behalf of gays and lesbians. Instead, he has settled for what could be called "politically expedient," meaning that he'll take whatever position will get him re-elected in the fall. In other words, he's not standing up for us; he's standing up for himself.

That didn't bother me much on issues like the Colorado Amendment and the expulsion of HIV+ members of the Armed Forces. In each case, Clinton preferred to let the system of checks and balances do what it was intended to do, and in each case, that did come to pass. Though he didn't take a leadership role on these issues, he did make his feelings known.

But now he has also made his feelings known on another Constitutional controversy: the so-called "Defense of Marriage Act." Clinton's has stated in no uncertain terms that he would sign the act

if it came to his desk; He has said that he never die and never will favor the idea of same-sex marriages, though he can't really (or would rather not) explain his reasons.

Opponents of the "Defense of Marriage Act" have clearly demonstrated that such legislation once again violates the Constitution. Colorado's Governor denounced a bill in his state's legislature which would have prohibited the recognition of same-sex marriages, even if they were performed legally in another state. He called that proposal "mean-spirited," and rightly labeled it the work of vicious and prejudiced minds.

Why, then, is our President suddenly so blind to such prejudice? Why has he chosen instead to jump on the Republican bandwagon and shamelessly wave the banner of his own biased feelings?

Furthermore, why has he stepped back from a prime opportunity to take the moral high ground and defend the Constitution of this country from political opportunists, and in so doing further support a group that has suffered from the misguided and narrow-minded attacks of right-wing extremists?

These questions deeply trouble me as we move into the final stages of Election '96. President Clinton has actively sought the support of gay and lesbian groups around the country, and yet he now stands in opposition to us on a matter of national significance.

Perhaps he should listen more closely to the recent ruling of the Supreme Court on Colorado's Amendment 2. If he did, he might get a wake-up call similar to the one he had posted during his campaign of 1992. This time, however, it's not just the economy. It's also the Constitution, stupid. ▼

## VOICES FROM THE MOUNTAINS: Let's Get Married!

by Joy D. Griffith

What is so devastating about two people's union of love being expressed through a lifetime commitment in a marriage contract? The marriage contract throughout early history was a civil union, and only in recent history has the church taken on marriage for sanctification. Heterosexuals joined together in marriage for monetary reasons, and the homosexual marriage was for love.

America is often quoted as being "a diverse, open society with tolerance of homosexuality," but this tolerance is so defined by fear that many believe the "institution" of marriage will crumble by admitting homosexual unions. We have several religious groups openly and lovingly celebrating unions between same-sex partners: Congregationalists, Methodists, United Churches of Christ, Metropolitan Community Churches, Reformed Jews, Quakers, Unitarian Universalists, and on and on.

This "fear" of same-sex marriage invaded the Vermont State House of Representatives last month when the lawmakers were scared to death that some gay or lesbian couple might use the lack of gender-specific language to get a legal marriage license. Along with the sanctity of the church, we have an American Constitution defining the civil rights of our citizens, even though Americans in past history have withheld these all encompassing civil rights from the slaves and from women, and went so far as to prohibit inter-racial marriages.

To state that "same-sex" marriages are "inherently incompatible with our culture's understanding of the institution" is to perpetuate the message that discrimination against homosexuals is acceptable and officially sanctioned. Marriages were established by citizenry laws for the union of a couple, hence, it is not alright to deny civil and equal rights to some minority groups in our American society. Stability and a healthy, nurturing environment for children cannot be identified for only one group in our society. Writers and legislators have a powerful influence over the formation of public opinion, and their "fears" can only promote the message that discrimination against people of a different sexual orientation is OK when they ask, "What will keep gay marriages together when individuals tire of each other?"

My question: What will keep heterosexual marriages together when these individuals tire of each other?

Shakespeare said, "Unkindness may do much, and his unkindness may taint my life, but never taint my love." There is continuous rhetoric against the "homosexual lifestyle" defined by heterosexuals. They insist on tying our struggle to share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities and commitment of civil marriage to their definition of "the social devastation of the sexual revolution, easy divorce... being fashionable again."

There are lifetimes of same-sex couples in this country who have spent thousands of dollars in legal fees for joint insurance, joint parenting and adoption, inheritance, bereavement or sick leave to care for partners or children. We are working for the same rights that the heterosexual couple has automatically received. If marriage were only for people who could have children, then post-menopausal women should be denied the marriage contract and infertility should become a reason for divorce.

If the American Constitution is considered by history as a "radical experiment," then our claim for equitable marriage rights is long overdue. We need to put away our misguided fears. Hatred grows from fear, and fear stems from ignorance. We need to put away the volumes of fear and ignorance about the homosexual and promote our concern for all the citizens of this nation. ▼

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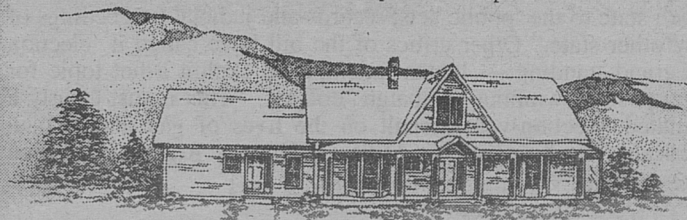
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