

Out in the Mountains  
Established in 1986

**Editor:** Hugh Coyle  
**Business Manager:** Steven West  
**Production Manager:** Staci Visco  
**Circulation Manager:** David Grist  
**WebSite Managers:** Kathie Sawyer and Tracy Buttles  
**Contributors:** Jess Bell, Bob Bolyard, Susan Murray, Paul Olsen, Beth Robinson, Ross Sneyd, Chris Tebbets

Out in the Mountains (ISSN 1081-5562) is published monthly by Mountain Pride Media, Inc. The newspaper maintains offices at 109 South Winooski Avenue in Burlington, Vermont. Our mailing address is PO Box 177, Burlington VT 05402-0177. Our e-mail address is oitm@together.net. Bulk rate postage for the mailing of the newspaper is paid in Burlington, Vermont. The subscription rate is \$20 per year within the United States.

© 1997, Out in the Mountains.

**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, insight, and affirmation. We also see *OITM* as a vehicle for the celebration of the goodness and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

**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 or actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered persons.

We reserve the right not to publish any material deemed to be overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, xenophobic or homophobic.

Writers' guidelines are available on request. All materials submitted must include a name and contact number. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

Articles, letters, and artwork should be sent to us by the 15th of the month prior to the month of publication (i.e. February 15th for the March issue). We encourage and implore our readers to do what they can to make *OITM* a paper which truly represents the many voices of our communities.

Materials should be sent to:  
*Out in the Mountains*  
PO Box 177  
Burlington, Vermont  
05402-0177  
E-mail: oitm@together.net

**Advertising**

If you would like to place an ad in *Out in the Mountains*, please contact us for rates and guidelines. Ad copy should be mailed to the address above or call Hugh Coyle at (802) 388-6503.

# Editorial: Caught in the Balance of Winter and Spring

by Hugh Coyle

Outside, the late winter snows have become crusty and drab. When the temperatures finally rise above freezing, melting ice and slick mud make my daily walk to the post office a test of survival skills. Each day my white long-haired dog drags enough sand and salt into the house to fill a dozen vacuum cleaner bags. It's March in Vermont, and, like most of my rural neighbors, I'm getting a bit testy about it.

Oh, I could imagine running naked along the shimmering hot sands of Bermuda with Brad Pitt and Antonio Banderas by my side, but when such daydreams are so incredibly far from reality, it's more an act of self-torture than titillation. Instead, I should stick to driving the back roads and checking on this year's pothole crop. Maybe I could even help my home state's economy by thinking up new uses for maple syrup. "Sugar on snow" could take on a whole new meaning.

Despite the physical and emotional challenges of the season, I can rest assured that spring is coming. The daylight hours are getting longer, the trees are beginning to think about budding, and the daily highs and lows on the thermometer are registering some progress upward. Still, long-time Vermonters tell us not to get our hopes up. To hear some of them tell it, spring will never come 'round these parts again.

To endure mud season in Vermont, one must work hard to achieve a balance between optimism and pessimism. Imagine a set of scales, with hopes on one side and fears on the other. Late winter in Vermont stacks some serious weights on each side of those scales, but as physics teaches us — balance can be achieved no matter how heavily stacked the two sides may be.

This is a lesson that we in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities should take to heart. Quite often, it seems as though the odds are stacked against us and we have little chance of winning. Passage of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) seemed like that last year, and continues to dishearten the community as state after state adopts laws to prevent the legal recognition of same-sex marriages. At the same time, however, we came so very close to seeing the passage of the Employee Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), and heard predictions that in the coming year, such legislation would stand a very good chance at becoming law.

On a set of scales, DOMA and ENDA have very different weights, and hardly balance one another out. Marriage (as Susan Murray points out in this month's Legal Briefs column) has a sweeping number of benefits associated with it, many of which are currently denied to same-sex couples. ENDA, by contrast, has a narrower focus, and though it might apply to more members of our community, the benefits associated with it are substantially lesser. One might even argue that there are no real gains or benefits at all — only a legal course of action to protect us against harmful job-based discrimination.

Meanwhile, a number of members of our community continue in the struggle to secure higher and higher levels of HIV and AIDS funding. News of improved treatments is met with heightened warnings about the risks of unsafe sex; statistics showing that the fastest growing risk group is women/straight teens/African Americans (take your pick; I've heard them all) continue to pour out of the nation's databanks and often go unchallenged by those who hear and spread them.

As a species, we humans crave balance. "Preserve the status

quo;" "Don't rock the boat;" "Don't try to fix something unless it's broken" — these aphorisms, which are widely held by American society to be nearly gospel, challenge certain notions of progress, particularly for those who exist outside or on the margins of mainstream society. They stand in opposition to sayings like "You can't make an omelet unless you break some eggs." Quite often on the American playing field, g/l/b/t people are cast as the ones threatening to break the eggs. In many ways, however, we're the ones working hard to create a true sense of balance in society — a balance firmly grounded in a sense of equality, of (to quote the Pledge of Allegiance) "liberty and justice for all."

I recall a brilliant piece of conceptual German animation involving four black-clad figures standing on the corners of a square platform in space. A chest stood fixed in the center of the square, and each person eyed it with a mixture of curiosity and desire. Whenever one stepped toward it, however, the balance on the platform shifted and threatened to tip them all off. Ironically, as one person stepped toward the center, the platform would tip down and cause the chest to slide away and toward the opposite person.

This is how most American perceive of equal rights. As one group inches toward them, the balance of the whole field is upset. Clearly, the solution to this problem for most people is to simply stay put. If we all just stay where we are, everything will be OK. Don't worry; be happy.

So let's say that most of straight white middle-class America is sitting smack dab in the center of that floating platform, right on top of the chest. And let's say that in the four corners we have (take your pick; any oppressed or disenfranchised group will do) a welfare mom, an African American, a physically challenged person, and a democratically elected unbiased representative from the g/l/b/t community.

Now here's a scenario we've all heard before: let's imagine that the g/l/b/t person steps forward toward that chest full of equal rights. The balance starts to tip; the chest starts sliding away; and people start accusing the g/l/b/t community of threatening everyone's equal rights. Likewise, when the African American steps forward to catch the sliding chest of rights, the balance is once more upset and the chest starts sliding somewhere else. We could just retreat to our four corners and stand there forever, content with perfect balance. Or, we could enact the solution to this mental puzzle.

If all four corners work together, balance can still be maintained even as each of the groups moves closer to the chest in the middle. With such a common desire identified and placed as the center, progress could be made and the goal could be ultimately achieved. In this scenario, if someone in the center then tries to push one of the four groups away, that act — not the movement of the four groups — would upset the balance and threaten stability.

Ultimately, this is just one of those mind games that help to pass the dreary days of late winter, but it offers yet another reminder to us that the struggle for equal rights is not something we undertake alone. We need to continue working toward uniting our efforts and balancing our needs with our desires, even as certain setbacks (and advances, it should be noted) threaten to tip us off course.

Outside my office, night has fallen and the temperature is plummeting once again. There's snow in the air, and I can see the pile of sand where my dog was lying just a moment ago. So there's this platform in space, only this time I'm in the center, and standing on the four corners are Brad Pitt, Antonio Banderas, Denzel Washington, and David Duchovny...▼

Errata: Last month's "On the Other Hand" column, "The Risks of a Bisexual Identity," was written by Monique Van de Van, not Kim Ward as noted. *OITM* apologizes for the error.

*Charlotte L. Vincent*  
*Enrolled Agent*

Accounting, Business and Individual

PO Box 431  
Essex Junction, Vermont 05453  
Tel (802) 879-4596  
E-mail: VTTAX@aol.com

DIANE LEARDI, LICSW  
Counseling • Psychotherapy

(802) 254-7345  
Brattleboro, VT 05301

★ phoenix rising ★  
- spirited jewelry & gifts - ★

The way is simple  
but the crooked path is  
more popular.

Zen saying

104 main street, one flight up montpelier 802.229.0522

**Susan McKenzie MS.**

Licensed Psychologist—Master

*Experienced therapist specializing in the individual and relationship issues of Lesbian Women and Gay Men*

Quechee Montpelier Norwich

802 295-5533

Insurance Accepted—Sliding Fee Scale