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Out in the Mountains

VERMONT'S FORUM FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER ISSUES

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FREE

“Gender Outlaw” Visits Vermont

Kate Bornstein Transgresses and
Transcends Definitions

by Hugh Coyle

MIDDLEBURY — Writer and performance artist Kate Bornstein evoked tears of both laughter and sorrow during an appearance on the campus of Middlebury College on Friday, April 18. Bornstein is perhaps best known for her landmark book on transgenderism, *Gender Outlaw*. Just a few weeks ago, she was Terri Gross's guest on the National Public Radio show “Fresh Air.” Her Vermont visit was sponsored by the Middlebury College Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Alliance and the campus' Coalition for Feminist Consciousness.

Bornstein opened the show hidden away out of view. With a smooth, sensual voice, she tempted and teased the crowd as “Stormy,” a phone sex operator, before making her grand entrance on stage. From there she launched into a discussion of how, prior to her sex change operation, she had signed up for voice lessons to sound less like a man. The piece highlighted Bornstein's incredible ability to modulate her persona, particularly as she mimicked the sexist suggestions offered by her first instructor. In the end, she paid tribute to the contemporary performance artist Laurie Anderson, whose vocal stylings often defy any clear allusion to gender.

Throughout the evening, Bornstein presented a number of pieces she had written for various events. One, which appeared in the *New York Times*, described her attendance at her mother's funeral. While other mourners accosted her and asked “Who are you?”, Bornstein was reminded of how her mother had lovingly considered her to be “my son, the lesbian.”

Two of the pieces Bornstein presented were originally intended for the OutWrite conferences held in Boston. Though reading from the page, she filled each sentence with zest and urgency as she discussed what, if anything, it meant to “cross genders” in writing and how we often find ourselves limiting our own imaginations when we perpetuate the language-based conventions of our oppressors.

Bornstein illustrated this last point by describing how gender continues to be a strong basis of self-definition even in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities, where gender is often transgressed by the very choice of sexual partners. “People claim to be a gay *man* or a lesbian *woman*,” Bornstein said, further stating that even in the transgendered community, individuals feel a need to identify as “male-to-female or female-to-male.”

In order to stir up the audience's feelings and assumptions about gender even further, Bornstein asked her “assistants” to hand out exam booklets containing “The Truly Amazing Gender Aptitude Quiz.” Bornstein's voice bellowed out instructions as

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Transgendered performance artist Kate Bornstein at her most recent Middlebury College appearance. (Photo by Hugh Coyle)

Vermont Women Take Back the Trails

by Kara DeLeonardis,
Vermont Network Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

This coming Memorial Day weekend will mark the first anniversary of the murders of Julie Williams, a Burlington resident, and her girlfriend Lollie Winans, from Unity, Maine. To commemorate the event, groups and individuals around the country are encouraged take part in the “Take Back the Trails” movement on Sunday, May 25th.

Winans and Williams had been camping in the Shenandoah National Forest along the Appalachian Trail when they were brutally attacked and had their throats slit. Although investigators have yet to release information regarding possible suspects or motives, many in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities believe that this was a hate crime motivated by homophobia.

The Vermont Network Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault has joined forces with the national “Take Back the Trails” group. The primary motivation behind the “Take Back the Trails” effort is to recognize and speak out against the deaths, violence, harassment, etc. that have occurred to ANY woman in the outdoors, and to engage in a positive and inspiring crusade toward ending violence against women in general. The group's main goal is to get 30,000 women or more across the country to hike, backpack, and/or camp along the trails of our nation's forests and parks to show that they refuse to live in fear.

Vermont women are invited to get out on the trails in whatever way is most comfortable for them and to show their support to end violence against women. A number of trips have been scheduled around the state; check the schedule on page

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Making a Statement at the State House



Leaders and representatives from a number of organizations joined the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian & Gay Rights at the State House for Visibility Day on Tuesday, April 15th. Pictured at the information table are (l to r) Beth Robinson of the Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force, Judith Beckett of VCLGR, John MacDonald of the AIDS Community Resource Council, VCGLR's Co-liasons to the Legislature Virginia Renfrew and Keith Goslant and Lil Venner of the Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Other attendees included the Vermont Chapter of the National Organization for Women, Out in the Mountains, the Transgender Radical Action Network and Support Group, and the Vermont AIDS Council. (Photo by Hugh Coyle)