

Voices from the Mountains: Equality?

Warm weather. Reward for those dark 60 below days. Everyone celebrates. But summer always slaps us with a reminder, the clothing optional reminder. The signs now up in establishment windows. No shoes, no shirt, no service. Only the one rule will ever pertain to us, even if we want it to be both. For womyn, nothing, besides the high alert of being in unguarded territory drives the point home more sharply than the sight of shirtless males in hot weather.

Most anywhere during this season is the hard reminder of who is trapped in occupied territory. On a stroll down main street, in open top jeeps, on bikes, motorcycles, construction sites, front lawns, front porches, parks, beaches, parking lots, hiking trails. There they are. Men's torsos. Furry, sagging bellies obscuring belt buckles, young muscles basking in warmth, hairless, pale, dark, sunburned, bony. All entitled to be as comfortable as they please.

Last year around this time, a picture appeared in the OITM paper from the Pride Rally. It had one of the coordinators, Craig, and his partner James kissing. This picture also appears on the internet, and prompted a letter from a homophobe expressing his views on sodomites, and his affection for guns. Enough said.

The missing piece was, there could never be a picture of a lesbian, kissing her partner. In the same surroundings. Not dressed like they were. Craig was in an open parade marshall safety vest, James, shirtless. To take nothing away from the appropriateness of two men showing affection, and the fact that they are a handsome couple, we want the same. Who decided we couldn't? When this was brought up to a few gay brothers, the responses



(Photo by Joy Griffith)

Nat Harrison and Lanny Jones of Mountain Pride Media's Board.

ranged from, "well, I guess you're right" to a blank look. Why think about gender privilege you take for granted, straight or gay?

Vermont State Law, equates female breasts with open and gross lewdness, and indecent exposure. The same charge used to protect children from molesters. According to the Attorney General's and Public Defender's office, it would also be open to interpretation by the arresting officer, and the judge if it would be a felony, a misdemeanor of frontal nudity, and a fine of \$100. There is also the interpretation of freedom of expression if it was a group effort. The State Parks and Recreation don't have a specific law, but if any 'customer' complains, then the State Troopers will be notified. But they have also had to do this because someone has objected to a naked baby. Lt. Lianne Tuomey of the Burlington Police tells us there is a city ordinance against womyn only going shirtless. Now most cities have their own laws. For instance it is illegal to have a concealed gun in Montpelier although it is allowed under State law. (What about concealed breasts?) In Burlington, this violation would be civil, with a fine of \$50, and handled in the same court as speeding, public urination, and violating the open container law.

As womyn dressed as comfortably as any shirtless man can be tried for breaking the law in the same civil court as someone caught with an open beer in hand, but her breasts promoting that beer for profit, now that's perfectly legal. In Ontario, Canada, recently a womyn won her case for going shirtless when it was decided that it was not done for sexual purposes. Now womyn in Ontario can be as comfortable as the men at the beach, park, and even downtown! Is it time for us to follow the lead of our Canadian sisters.

Dyke March 1997, continued

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flooded DC streets.

Like other Dyke Marches, Saturday's march was both about celebrating dykes and increasing dyke visibility. In addition, the organizers of this Dyke March worked to ensure that their march embraced dyke-diversity by encouraging bi-dykes and trans-dykes as well as lesbian-dykes to be out, loud and proud.

In her brief talk before the start of the march, Amy Beck reminded those present that this march was not the first all-women's march but part of an on-going herstory. Dyke Marches are not separate from the actions of women in Lavender Menace, NOW, ACT UP, the Transsexual Menace, and countless other groups.

As Jess explained, the intent and energy of this Dyke

March is positive: "It is not about excluding men. It is not about men. It is about celebrating lesbian, bi and trans women. It is about visibility and pride for dykes."

Asked for a 'soundbite quote' Jess paused a moment and then laughingly said, "Dykes Rock!" That pretty much sums up the spirit of Vermont's first Dyke March.

Anyone interested in making a donation toward covering the costs of posters and the \$80.00 march permit can do so through Jess at 865-9970. Also, any dykes interested in working on next year's Dyke March are encouraged to call Jess.

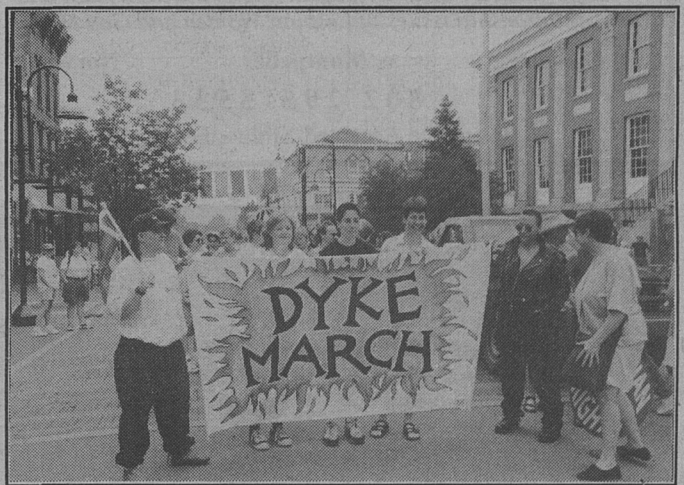



Photo by StaciAnne Visco

Golden Threads



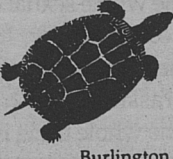
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