

*Out in the Mountains*  
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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, 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 a 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 20th of the month prior to the month of publication (i.e. February 20th 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  
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more information.

## OP-ED: Let's Agree To Disagree - And Mean It, Please

BY PETER KURTH

**Diversity** (n): the condition of being different or having differences.

**Consensus** (n): general agreement; unanimity.

[From Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary]

The ongoing flap over "leadership" and "decision-making" at the Burlington Women's Council, coupled with what has obviously become a personal war of words between the past and present leaders of the council, has got me thinking about something that doesn't get thought about enough in these parts: the true meaning of the word "diversity" and the lemming-like pursuit of "agreement" and "consensus" that afflicts the g/l/b/t agenda in Vermont. I am absolutely convinced that the blind desire for "consensus" is the single most destructive component in a politics that is, more and more often these days, just spinning its collective wheels.

Before I go any further — before the angry letters start pumping into OITM's mailbox — let me say that I'm not "taking sides" in the increasingly juvenile and rancorous debate about the Women's Council. I am speaking, so to say, as a member of the public, who reads the news and "hears the talk on the street," just as Peggy Luhrs does. I'm sure I don't know whether Ms. Luhrs or Jennifer Matthews is in the right about the council's dilemma. They've both been demonized and they've both made ridiculous statements for the record. I'm only here to tell you, as a grown-up and an American citizen, that the gay and lesbian community has nothing to fear from disagreement, dissent or, for that matter, raging quarrels and cat fights.

How did the idea ever take root that no deliberative or representative body could

take action or get its work done until everyone agrees with everyone else? Why are we in the g/l/b/t community so afraid of opinions and beliefs that are different from our own — we who never stop complaining that things would be all right if only "they" would accept us as we are. Diversity means "different" — it does not mean "the same." Consensus means "agreement" — it does not mean "plurality." Why do we spend — no, waste — so much of our time, energy and resources in a vain attempt to "smooth over differences" and "get along" with one another? Jennifer steps on Peggy's toes; Peggy smears finger-paint into Jennifer's hair; do both of them need to behave themselves before they can drink their juice? I don't think so. These are the values and goals of a kindergarten, not a political body with decisions to make, much less an organization and a collection of persons — namely, feminist women — who know, or should know, that their common enemy lies outside and well beyond the council's doors.

In a recent "Free Press" report about the Women's Council's woes, I read only two statements that made any sense to me from the point of view of effective politics. One was from Sandy Baird, who said, "The council now reflects many more political views than it did in the past" — a dangerously sensible remark reflecting the obvious truth that "agreement" is not required in order to conduct business. The other was from Lou Andrews, responding to charges that Jennifer Matthews' "negative stereotypes of lesbians" were "dividing the council."

"It doesn't divide," said Andrews; "I think there "are" strong divisions." In other words, differences are real and disagreement may be expected. Disagreement, indeed,

"must" be tolerated in a democracy. It is the unpopular view and the maverick position that needs protection, "not" the will of the majority or whatever the politically "correct" interpretation might be. Political correctness is a blight on this society. It is anti-democratic. It is authoritarian and intolerant of dissent. It is, in fact, all the things it claims to be "correcting." So when the lesbian faction at the Women's Council complains that Jennifer Matthews "doesn't work to help us reach consensus," it betrays a level of intolerance fully equal to the kind it insists it despises.

It is not the business of a democracy to ensure consensus, but to take action by reaching decisions. Peggy Luhrs is far more honest when she says that the Women's Council needs a new leader, period: "That's the only thing that would restore my faith." That, too, is the way democracy works. Instead, because everyone is so afraid of not agreeing with one another, or of being on the losing side, or — God forbid — of having their feelings hurt, the council is going to "tighten its by-laws," "create a policy manual," work on job descriptions and establish "quantifiable means" to evaluate itself so that a safe space may be enjoyed by all the little kids under the tent. It is, in other words, going to sink into the bottomless pit of committees, mediators, consensus-building and "process." It's going to waste more time and more money. And it's going to become the laughing-stock of a larger community that isn't fully convinced it should exist at all. "E pluribus bunkum."

Why don't we all grow up a little and acknowledge that the world of politics is rough and bumpy, just as the road of personal destiny is bumpy, filled with setbacks and disappointments along with the occasional empowering triumph? Or are we intent on sabotaging ourselves and our (various) agendas by insisting on a false conformity and a phony display of like-mindedness that cannot and will not conceal the very real differences among us?

## EDITORIAL

BY CHRISTOPHER MOES

There is a desperate need for us to reexamine our AIDS fundraising habits. A great deal of money is leaving our state for services in other states. While I am glad people are raising money, there is a serious situation where Local AIDS organizations are having funds disappear. The initial numbers coming in from the AIDS Walk is that the amount of money raised has decreased this year, while the totals from the AIDS Ride have increased dramatically. The AIDS Ride benefits Fenway Community Health Center, which has few if any clients from Vermont.

The AIDS ride has come under a great deal of controversy lately in the national media, as it has been revealed that as little as twenty percent may go to the beneficiary involved. There has been a call to boycott AIDS ride by numerous organizations.

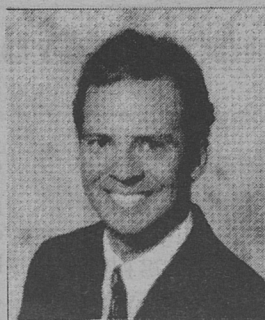
The inventor of AIDS ride, Ray Palotta has a salary of 270,000 a year, just thirty thousand less than the entire staff budget for Vermont CARES for a year. AIDSride was able to take out full page ads in Vermont Newspapers, one ad alone exceeded the entire advertising budget for the AIDS walk.

Another factor to keep in mind: Vermont currently has a waiting list for People With AIDS to get on protease inhibitors, Massachusetts does not. People who are sick are waiting for medication, while money leaves the state.

It is time for the generous and energetic fund-raisers of Vermont to rethink their involvement in AIDS ride. But I am not asking anyone not to raise money for AIDS. We need the money here, please, continue the same fundraising, but on a local level. Together we can organize our own rides or swims (although we can't use the word, "AIDSride" apparently Palotta has copywritten the name to protect his monopoly). As a community we can insure the health and well being of our neighbors.

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