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rappin' about REVOLUTION

CROW'S CAWS
by Crow Cohen

Picture this. In celebration of International Women's Day I got to sit in the cozy lounge of the elegant yankee Chellis House (now transformed into a women's center) at Middlebury College on comfortable overstuffed furniture surrounded by over 20 bright minds and rap about Revolution for 2 hours. What a gift - thanks to MOQA, Middlebury Open Queer Alliance, who invited me down to share some thoughts about feminism with young activists.

Revolution is one of those words that is definitely out of style in this era of embracing diversity, freedom to marry, drag balls. Revolution was associated with the 1960's and 70's when dismantling the patriarchy seemed imminent and dyke separatists dominated the streets. Now separatism is regarded as simplistic, intolerant, too narrow a world view, and, most of all, unrealistic. As one honest guy said (yep, there were guys in the room that night willing to entertain notions of radical feminism along with the rest of us, which gave me hope): "I'm sick of the word 'Revolution.'

My dad was in the SDS and now all he wants to do is just lead a quiet life. What's wrong with that?" Excellent question. A lot of us who were once raving activists now just long to settle into quiet lives of meditation, raising kids, and planting our gardens, leaving all that confrontation and anger behind.

And yet I also heard: "This is amazing! I never get to sit in a room full of people and talk about Revolution anymore. I have so much energy now I don't know what to do with myself. Will you come back to our house so we can talk about Revolution all night?" This was not simply an intellectual exercise. We didn't debate the fine points of the definition of that ambiguous word. I did throw out some broad concepts, like there's a difference between Revolution and reform, or that Revolution, in my mind, is related to confronting male domination in all its guises both within and without. But, fortunately, I left it up to them to debate the details. Instead, I apparently helped inspire hope among these restless activists who find

themselves hemmed in by a conservative, elitist institution earnestly attempting to acquire an education despite the general lack of support from the administration around combating homophobia, classism and racism. I was surprised to learn that UVM was regarded as a lot more open-minded than Middlebury, but I guess I'm a little naive. (Liberalism will fool you every time.)

What kind of hope? Well, for one thing, I assured them that entertaining notions of Revolution personally gives me great joy in my 50's. (I wonder if that ex-SDS dad needed to just refine his concept of Revolution instead of giving up on it. Maybe it's not about lobbing bombs. Maybe it's more about getting out from under corporate; or, if you will, patriarchal, numbness in a much more playful way?) I assured them that, although we may be fewer in number and out of style, there is a remnant of us who still are willing to think about the big picture beyond Ellen Degeneris and domestic partner benefits doled out by (ugh) managed care

corps. Not to knock civil rights, mind you, nor the hard, dedicated work by our fellow activists in obtaining them for all of us. But what about visionary thinking? For example, instead of picturing ourselves totally accepted by the mainstream (or "malestream" as my radfem sisters might call it, or maelstrom for that matter) why not form little groups to create erotic fantasies based on equality rather than "consent" for dominance/submission which is all we've ever known?

I do know that most of us felt pretty "turned on" after our passionate exchange. I also know that we all long for tight political communities that seemed to dissipate during the Reagan/Bush years or transformed into theories that, not coincidentally, tend to leave out the word "feminism" let alone "radical feminism" let alone "lesbian feminism." That's not OK with me. I long for the day when radical feminist theory will re-emerge from backlash and once again begin to pepper our GLBT minds with gentle, peace loving, sexy urges to overthrow!

Ex-gay scheduled

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cal Association, which listed it as a dangerous practice.

Williams himself only admits to a 30 percent success rate. He describes success either as "becoming heterosexual, or remaining celibate." He said his numbers were compiled over the past four years since New Journey was founded in Jericho.

When the plans to present Williams' point of view to the students at Mount Mansfield became known, Outright Vermont, through a concerned faculty member, provided school administrators with documentation about the danger of reparative or conversion therapy, which New Journey attempts to practice. The American Psychological Association has come out against ex-gay ministries as dangerous and false.

There remains dispute about who was responsible for scheduling the speaker, although it was clear that Corasaniti and school board member Wolcott "Tut" Parmly were the active forces in recruiting Williams.

Parmly said he asked his pastor, Peter Anderson, to help him find someone to balance Mitchell's expected message. "I don't believe in the lifestyle, but they should be heard," Parmly said. He said that both the committee that organized Awareness Week and the school board itself agreed to the anti-gay speaker's appearance.

But School Board Chairman Rich Reed said that simply was not the case. "Unfortunately what happened was that an adult got involved in the process," Reed said. Parmly was not acting as a school board member when dealing with the issue, Reed said. "We support and encourage presenting two sides of a topic. We do not endorse anyone specifically who comes down on either side of the issue," he added.

This sentiment apparently was presented by Parmly to the committee. Still, he did not choose to offer two sides to any other topic addressed during Awareness Week, including racism or drug use.

Williams will not give much detail on his qualifications to counsel high school students. He will not say what his counseling training is but says that his experience includes 12 years as a pastor of the Churches Of Christ, high school teaching - although he won't say where - and that he himself is "ex-gay."

Williams said he that he does not represent himself as a counselor but as a "pastoral worker." He said New Journey has a six-member board, but he would not reveal who is on it, except for the president, Craig Benson. Benson also is co-founder of Take It To The People, which is organizing against the gay marriage lawsuit.

Tami Eldridge, Outright director, said she was shocked that Mount Mansfield administrators would present a program such as reparative therapy to youth who might be grappling with the confusing issues of sexuality.

"We found it unconscionable that in the light of this information school administrators chose to go ahead with Mr. Williams' presentation," Eldridge said. "By scheduling him to appear, school officials sent a message that despite all the evidence to the contrary, it is their belief that it is possible to change orientation, that homosexuals should want to change and that homosexuals who do not have the desire or ability to change are somehow bad, deficient, immoral, etc."

Vermont Law

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students, promoted a resolution urging the AALS to initiate political and legal action against the Solomon Amendment at its annual meeting held this past January. In an unusual show of urgency, the AALS' members waived the normal 45-day delibera-

tion period and adopted Wroth's resolution, on a nearly unanimous vote.

While there is a great sense of pride on the VLS campus in the aggressiveness of the dean, there is also some recognition that his leadership brought the school to the attention of the JAG Corps, and on January 30th the JAG Corps announced its intention to conduct interviews on campus just ten days later.

The Alliance, unable to reach consensus among its membership in favor of any kind of political or civil rights protest, chose instead to focus its energies on establishing educational opportunities illuminating the plight of gays and lesbians in today's military. Caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place, the VLS Administration announced its intention to temporarily suspend the school's anti-discrimination policy, allowing the JAG Corps to recruit on campus, while publicly encouraging active demonstrations of protest.

Susan Irish didn't need much encouragement. Dismayed by the conciliatory stance of the Alliance and horrified that the school would abandon its anti-discrimination policy, Irish, a minister, independently organized a well-attended protest and vigil for the day of the interviews. The vigil, which Irish envisioned as a "quiet, non-violent protest" included a discussion of the Solomon Amendment led by Associate Professor Greg Johnson, a time of silence in honor of gays in the military who have been abused and killed out of prejudice and fear, and the sharing of personal stories of discrimination in the military by students.

Another student, Andrew Tarasevich, appreciative of the vigil, decided it would be insufficient. "When I found out that JAG had notified the school they were coming, it sunk in that there was nobody who would actually take a stand and try to challenge them. It seemed like the prevailing argument was that to not allow JAG to come would somehow disadvantage those students who wanted to interview. The problem with this argument is that there is no reason those students

couldn't interview off campus." In fact, VLS students had in recent years routinely interviewed off campus for JAG positions, most often in Boston.

JAG gave just ten days notice of their visit, and Tarasevich wasn't sure where to start. After educating himself better on the issues confronting the school, he turned his attention to what legal actions might be appropriate, and how best to implement them in the Vermont courts. On Friday, February 6th, Tarasevich filed a hand-written motion requesting a temporary restraining order against the VLS Board of Trustees, the President of the Board, and Dean Wroth to uphold the anti-discrimination policies of the school. His motion, brought before Judge Alan Cheever of Windsor Superior Court, was denied without explanation.

The next Monday morning, the day of the scheduled interviews, Tarasevich appealed to the Vermont Supreme Court for an emergency restraining order, and was heard by Associate Justice James L. Morse. Opposing counsel was provided, ironically enough, by a partner of the Burlington law firm Hoff, Curtis, Cassidy, Pacht & Frame, a firm with a local reputation for being supportive of gay and lesbian causes, once having taken the lead in Vermont's single-parent adoption case. Now the firm was in the incomprehensible position of arguing in favor of suspending the anti-discrimination policy of VLS, in effect welcoming a known perpetrator of discrimination against gays and lesbians to the South Royalton campus, in violation of not just the VLS policy, but also, many believe, Vermont's anti-discrimination statute, which prohibits discrimination in public accommodations.

In his decision, Justice Morse failed to address the merits of the case, instead suggesting that it would be *inconvenient* to prevent discrimination: "Considering the imminent commencement of the recruitment interviews and the lateness of the petitioner's request to prevent them from occurring, and balancing the com-