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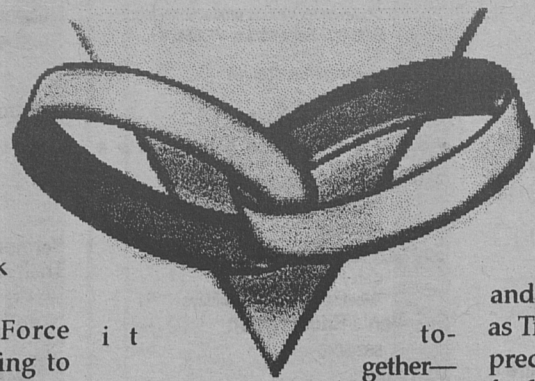
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Notes From The Task Force

BY BETH ROBINSON



It's been a busy month for the Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force.

Right now Task Force volunteers are scrambling to pull together a bike-a-thon on September 12 at 9 a.m. The bike-a-thon starts at Kingsland Bay in Ferrisburgh, Vermont, and there are 12, 25, and 55 mile loops. A few prospective pedalers have already sent letters to their holiday card lists soliciting contributions, and updating folks on the freedom to marry movement here in Vermont. Please join these folks! It should be a great trip, and it's a relatively painless way to support a worthy cause. (For more information, or sample solicitation letters, call Sue Murray at 388-6356.) Three cheers to Sue Murray and Nancy Yannett for organizing the event.

Earlier in the month volunteers hosted a brunch for some friends and neighbors and invited Task Force representatives to speak. Special thanks to Chris Tebbetts and Jonathon Radigan for pulling

it together—it's a great way to reach out to some new folks, both gay and non-gay, and to raise a little money to boot! If you'd like to volunteer to host a house party for your friends and/or neighbors, please give us a call. (You can e-mail info@vtfreetomarry.org or call Beth at 388-6356, and we'll hook you up with your regional coordinator.)

The really big push right now is the Task Force's planned booth at the upcoming Champlain Valley Fair from August 29 through September 7. We'll let you know how it goes. In the meantime, a very heartfelt thanks to Laurie Caldwell of Caldwell Carpentry in Weybridge for volunteering to construct the Task Force booth for us.

The Task Force Board of Directors held its annual meeting last month. Deborah Lashman and Bari Shamas

generously agreed to stay on as Chair and Secretary, respectively, and Wendy Beinner took over as Treasurer. A gold star of appreciation to Michael Warner for his fine work as Task Force Treasurer since its inception! We are also thrilled to have Sandi Cote joining the Task Force Board.

Under the able leadership of Roberta Garr, the Central Vermont region of the Task Force has been meeting regularly, and is scheduling various forums and events for the fall. Stay tuned.

We're continuing to update and revise our web site. Check it out at www.vtfreetomarry.org and let us know your thoughts. There are dozens and dozens of volunteer opportunities at the Task Force, for all tastes and talents. Please give us a call to figure out how you can plug in and join a historic project that, we hope, will help open the door for full gay and lesbian equality under the laws—including the freedom to choose to marry (or not to marry).

Crow's Caws
by Crow Cohen

More Thoughts on SEPARATISM

About a year and a half ago I re-introduced the word "Revolution" back into my vocabulary after a ten year hiatus while I sobered up. A few weeks ago I re-introduced the word "separatist" not yet sure I'm ready to reapply that label as a description of myself, but doing a little research on the topic. (These articles tend to be explorations in my process of reclaiming my Lesbian Feminist identity here in the late '90's when it's totally unfashionable).

Holding my hand as I venture out into Separatist landscape is a great book I ran across which is now out of print called *For Lesbians Only: A Separatist Anthology* by Sarah Lucia-Hoagland and Julia Penelope, eds. The book is 575 pages long, as big as a bible, if you will. I've spent many a delicious hot afternoon feeling soothed and nurtured by the brave wimmin peppering these pages. Most of these writings are from the '70's and early '80's, a time when I was too busy acting out — way too impatient to read thick books let alone listen carefully to others. One thing I'm learning is that I did, indeed, let myself be swept up in politics in my 30's and lost sight of some basic

needs such as building a stable family life, holding down some sort of tolerable job and being more consistently "there" for my kids. It was difficult for me to differentiate from our fervent community.

Here I am in my mid-fifties with a totally satisfying job in hospice and homecare; a loving live-together partner; and grown heterosexual kids who also love and respect me and with whom I am invested in remaining connected. Also my spiritual community is a thorough mix of men, women, gays, straights, transfolk and whoever else happens to show up. So there you have it - my job, my home life and my spiritual community are all a mixed bag of humanity. Where does the Separatist label fit? I'm friendly with my straight neighbors, my brother's a good guy, my father (may he rest in peace) was gentle and personable and I love reading bug books even if they're written by men. Kind David invited me down to Middlebury to rap about Revolution and Chris welcomed my monthly contribution to OITM. Obviously men are an integral part of my life.

Separatism for me is not so much about maintaining a

physical separation from men or an adamant refusal to partake of anything patriarchal (which is impossible anyway). It's a concept, a worldview and a vision. It's a belief that male domination is the oldest of all the oppressions and the one from which the others (racism, classism, anti-Semitism, ablism, etc.) are derived. Furthermore, in order for wimmin to make a dent in sexism and to experience profound freedom, they need to stop enabling men — to stop cleaning up their messes, taking care of their emotional needs, giving into their incessant sexual demands and to break out of the cycles of violence which keep us enslaved. In other words we need to learn the one skill that is the mark of maturity in the face of a tantrum-throwing culture such as patriarchy — detachment. We may want to hold onto love and compassion; but face it, ladies, the patriarchy and its fanatic adherents do not have our best interests in mind.

So...do I call myself a Separatist or not? Frankly, I'm not ready to decide. Besides, it's all a process anyway. Who knows. By the next "Crow's Caws" I may. Stay tuned.