

'SKEETER



BITES

BY SKEETER SANDERS

Well, the votes have all been counted in last month's elections and once again, the queer community has taken a rock-solid ass-whipping on the issue of legalizing same-sex marriages.

I'm not the least bit surprised. In fact, I'll say it right now: It was an ass-whipping we richly deserved. We deserved it because for the past three years, we have allowed our assimilationist "leaders" to sell us a bill of goods, saying that we have a right to marry legally the same as straight people.

We have fallen hook, line and sinker for what is nothing more and nothing less than an assimilationist fantasy — totally ignoring two fundamental realities that we simply cannot escape from.

Reality No. 1: In the one matter about queer people that counts the most — our sexuality and our relationships — queer people are, by nature, fundamentally different from straight people. We always have been and we always will be.

The assimilationists who have been campaigning for same-sex marriage have done so in total denial of this reality and in the process, have betrayed what it means to be queer. The dictionary partially defines "queer" as "different." To advocate that we have a right to marry legally is to deny the reality that we are different from straight people and that to buy into this institution is to surrender our queerness.

Reality No. 2: The legal institution of marriage is the backbone, the epitome — indeed, the

very LIFE BLOOD — of heterosexual patriarchy. It was created centuries ago as a means for men to gain control of the wealth and property of women. And for most of its history — even today — legal marriages have had more to do with property, wealth and politics than with love and commitment.

Today, straight people are using the legal institution of marriage for yet another purpose: to give sanction to their feelings that their relationships are superior to those of queer people and even those straight people who form deep relationships without legal sanction. "We're better than you because we're married and you're not," they argue.

Never mind the fact that more than 50 percent of legal marriages today end in divorce.

Never mind the fact that legally married people must pay higher income taxes than their unmarried counterparts.

Never mind the fact that domestic abuse and violence runs much higher among married couples than among unmarried couples.

Never mind the fact that you can legally marry only one person at a time and that if you're bisexual and/or polyamorous, you're shit out of luck.

And God help you if your marriage goes down the toilet — Especially if you have kids, for unlike any other license that you obtain, the government will not revoke your marriage license; you have to sue to get rid of it — which can cost you a fortune, to say nothing of a great deal of emotional distress.

And therein lies the biggest fallacy of all; that there is a "right" to marry, forgetting that

you must obtain a license for your marriage to be legal. Anything that requires a license to be legal is, by law, not a right, but a privilege.

*"We're better than you because we're married and you're not," they argue.*

Unlike the rights guaranteed us by the Constitution and the laws that back it up, privileges are NOT guaranteed and can be taken away. When that happens, there ain't a damn thing you can do about it.

Contrary to what the assimilationists have been telling us, marriage is a privilege, and given the fact that it is also the lifeblood of the heterosexual patriarchy, it is a privilege that the patriarchy will stop at nothing to reserve exclusively for straight people.

The idea of legalizing same-sex marriage is to the patriarchy what the AIDS virus is to our own blood: a deadly threat to its very survival that must be fought at all costs.

But legalizing same-sex marriage is also a threat to our own queer culture and identity by buying into the assimilationist myth that we are the same as straight people. We most certainly are not, and we never will be. To deny this reality is dangerous.

It is a massive betrayal of those of us who fought for more than 30 years to assert our right to live our lives on our own terms, instead of living them according to the dictates of the dominant heterosexual culture.

Nobody in the queer community knows this better than those of us who have already gone down the path of legal marriage — and have lived to regret it.

In fact, because marriage is a religious sacrament — and the vast majority of marriage ceremonies are conducted as religious ceremonies — the government has no constitutional right to either grant them legal sanction or to ban them. To do so violates the First Amendment separation of religion and state.

Our relationships are none of the government's business. To ask the government to give its blessing to our relationships — whether gay, straight, bi, mono or poly — is just asking for trouble. To say nothing of selling out to the patriarchy. ▼

*Skeeter Sanders is the host of "The Quiet Storm," a weekly radio program of smooth jazz and soft R&B, which airs Sundays at 10:00 p.m. on WGDR-FM (91.1) in Plainfield and on the Internet in RealAudio at www.goddard.edu/wgdr. You can e-mail him at skeeter\_sanders@hotmail.com.*

**Include yourself in the 2nd edition of NH/VT Gay Lifeline**

As you may have heard, the Gay Info Line of NH and *Out in the Mountains*, Vermont's monthly l/g/b/t newspaper, will soon publish a NH/VT directory of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender social, religious and political groups; meeting places; community services; and professionals sensitive to the needs of our community. We are particularly looking for physicians, realtors, contractors, mediators, and resources in the most rural areas of VT and NH.

This second edition of Gay Lifeline will be distributed through the GIL and OITM to listed resources and to l/g/b/t communities and organizations. We'd like your help to make this edition even better than the first.

There is no fee for inclusion in the Gay Lifeline, but you can reserve your copy of our directory now by making a minimum \$25 donation to the Gay Info Line. Any person or group who donates \$50 or more will also be listed in the directory as a sponsor. Thanks for your help. Please give us the information requested at right to be included in the directory. Feel free to print out this form and share it with other individuals or organizations who think should be included.

NAME (or contact person) .....

ORGANIZATION.....

ADDRESS .....

CITY .....STATE .....ZIP .....

LOCATION (if different than mailing address) .....

TEL.....FAX .....

EMAIL.....WWW .....

Type of Service Org:.....

Do you have Meetings? YES or NO How Often: .....

\*\*\*\* Attach a short description (30 words max.)

L/G/B/T Owned/Identified? YES or NO  
(indicated by a Lambda sign beside your listing)

Whom can we contact regarding your listing? .....

Thanks for your help and prompt return of this form. If you have questions, please feel free to call the gay info Line at 603/224-1686 or email us at gayinfo@aol.com

RETURN FORM TO: 26 S. Main St, Box 181, Concord, NH 03301

**Creating Change Convenes for 11th Year**

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nary made it obvious to everyone at the conference that sticky questions like assimilation vs. progressive politics, divisiveness in the GLBT movement, and the Millennium March controversy would be debated energetically and thoroughly," stated Moore.

She was referring to the plenary panel entitled "What Is This Movement Doing to My Politics" where panelists described their frustrations of conducting progressive activism in a GLBT rights movement that is being "mainstreamed", "corporatized", and "marketed" by some national gay rights advocacy groups such as the Human Rights Campaign (HRC). The HRC was repeatedly lambasted during the conference for their decision to endorse Republican New York Senator Al D'Amato in the last election.

Although, D'Amato had been supportive of gay groups in New York, he has consistently opposed women's access to

reproductive health care and abortion. In response to the HRC endorsement, New York gay rights groups mobilized the gay vote to elect D'Amato's opponent, Democrat Charles Schumer.

The HRC was further criticized by the Ad Hoc Committee For An Open Process for joining with the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) in unfairly dictating the planning process for the Millennium March. The Ad-Hoc Committee has been meeting ever since the two groups announced a Millennium March on Washington with the theme "Faith and Family" last February. Critics of the march claim that it was organized with a "top-down, corporate approach" leaving out GLBT activists and organizations on national, state, and local levels.

The committee held several meetings during the conference and circulated a petition urging

national organizations such as NGLTF to resign from the Millennium March planning board in protest of the alleged unfair activities of HRC and MCC.

This controversy however, was merely a backdrop for over 200 workshops, meetings, and caucuses spread over three days and nine sessions at Creating Change. The conference provided the opportunity for its attendees to tailor their stay in Pittsburgh to their specific interests. Workshops were organized by tracks like "Ageing/Ageism," "Fundraising," "Movement Building," "Queer Feminist," "Technology," and "Transgender" to help conference-goers pick and choose from a wide array of opportunities.

Chris Moes, former Editor of *Out in the Mountains* and resident of Putney, was invited by