

letters

OITM, PO Box 1078, Richmond, VT 05477-1078 or oitm@together.net

CT Residents Watching VT Supreme Court

Editor:

In replying to the Skeeter Sanders January column against gay marriage, I'd like to point out that, thankfully, the gay community is as varied as any and we all have different situations.

Some of us feel that we would get married in a heartbeat if we were permitted to — anywhere — and that our civil rights are being denied when we are not allowed to. None of us is saying all gay couples should be married. But for those who want to, we shouldn't have to fight for this right — not with straights or gays. It should just be available to us. Simple civil rights.

We are neighbors to the south and are keeping our fingers crossed that gay marriage does become legal in Vermont so we can drive right up for our ceremony. It would be a very happy day for us.

Maybe it would help to point out that though I am a pacifist and don't see why anyone would want to be in the military, I support the rights of gays to be there. Also, though I eat a fat-free diet, I don't criticize those who eat fatty foods. I am self-employed but understand how people like working for others and on and on and on.

I'm getting sooooo tired of some gay folks putting down gay marriage. If you don't want to get married, then don't, but understand that you need to respect our right to do so. For god sakes, don't sign on with the folks who legalize bigotry.

Moregan Zale
Norwalk, CT

Presbyterians Love Us, Too

Editor:

Kudos to the Vermont Episcopal Diocese for its stand calling for "full inclusion" of gay and lesbian persons in the Church.

Your readers might be interested to know that Burlington's Christ Church, Presbyterian has taken a similar stand in opposition to its denominational requirements. One of approximately 100 Presbyterian churches nationwide that fully welcome GLBT persons into the life and leadership of their congregations, Christ Church announced in April of 1997 that it could not in Christian conscience follow the denomination's newly adopted constitutional amendment that would prohibit ordination of gays and lesbians.

In March of 1998, Christ Church was instructed by the Presbytery of Northern New England to come into "compliance" with the denomination's standards. The church responded that it would be unable to do so because the new requirement was totally inconsistent with many other provisions in the denomination's constitution that call for diversity.

At its December 1998 meeting, the Presbytery of Northern New England considered alternative disciplinary actions against the Burlington church, but after extended and contentious debate, voted 46 to 32 to endorse the church's stand.

Conservatives in the denomination are expected to appeal the Presbytery's action to the highest ecclesiastical courts, but Christ Church has made it abundantly clear that its position will not waver.

Ken Wolvington
(Elder)

You Say "Tomato," I Say "Polyamory"

Editor:

I read Crow's article on non-monogamy with dismay. It would be a mistake to assume that her experiences and recollections are the last word on radical lesbian feminist non-monogamy in the '70s—or on current polyamorous practice. I, for one, never bought into the concept of "political lesbianism" (the idea that calling oneself a lesbian was the most radical thing one could do). The most radical thing we can do is to be who we are, whoever that might be. This should not be misconstrued as some sort of "liberal" apologist stance regarding heterosexuality. I simply want for others the freedom I demand and expect for myself.

Monogamy as an institution does infect relationships with the sense of owning another person. If proof is needed to verify this — just take a look around you. Dyke drama is plentiful. In a society which makes monogamy as compulsory as heterosexuality, it is difficult to envision sexual and emotional freedom as our birthright. Our inability to imagine relationships that are fluid and freely chosen limits our entire vision of life. The notion of ownership affects how we relate to everything around us, our lovers, our friends and children, plants and creatures — everything. We are constantly preoccupied with the project of "keeping" what we feel we own. This is not to say that monogamy cannot be right for anyone. But there must be a sense of other options available, otherwise it can hardly be a choice.

Having been involved in several polyamorous relationships over the years, I cannot say that any of us mindlessly had sex with whomever came into our path. Frankly, I think mindless sex is a waste of time. (Mindfulness has nothing to do with whether you know the person you're making love with, but rather with respect and caring expressed as part of that moment). Some of the most mindless sex in the world takes place between disenchanted monogamous couples. To judge the depth of feeling, connection, and commitment between lovers based on whether they sleep only with each other is simpleminded. Both mindlessness and simple-mindedness devalue sexuality.

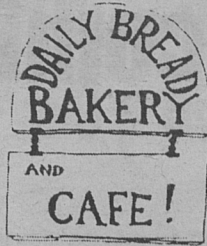
Although I have had sex with friends, I cannot say that is was ever a matter of expediency. On the contrary, good friends are hard to come by and it would be sad to complicate matters by sleeping with friends, for example, who are not polyamorous. On the other hand, making love with someone you are already in tune with is delicious. Almost all my great loves have been friends first.

This is not to say that polyamory is all sweetness and roses. There are the proverbial thorns as well. Women do not always know their minds. This is a common feature of all relationships between people. I'd be lying if I insisted that everything is always uncomplicated and straightforward — that I never have questions about what I'm feeling. But at least I haven't reduced my life to fit into someone else's petty formula. We cannot find ourselves or each other by trying to be safe or by avoiding conflicting and uncomfortable emotions.

So, Crow, lighten up a little. If polyamory isn't for you that's fine. But don't assume that everyone's desires, history, sensibilities or politics are the same as yours. Experiences, meanings, and patterns of non-monogamy are varied. This has been my experience which I wanted to share as a balance to your own.

We are under so much pressure to conform to institutional norms — to assimilate. It's important to look deep within ourselves and try to be clear about whether we're living our lives in ways that are meaningful to us, or whether we're being bullied by the fearmongers. Whether you are monogamous or polyamorous, let it be your choice insofar as that is possible at this time. As a gesture toward clarity and liberations, let's check any assumptions or self-righteousness about each others' choices at the door.

Karen Starr
Burlington, VT



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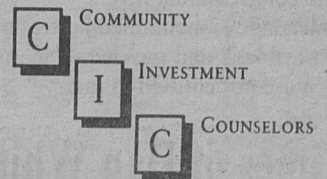
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