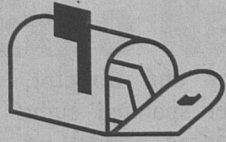


letters



OITM, PO Box 1078, Richmond, VT 05477-1078 or Editor@mountainpridemedia.org

Out in the Mountains welcomes your letters. Although we will withhold names from printing upon request, the letter must be accompanied by a verifiable name and address in order to be considered for publication. We reserve the right to edit for space and clarity. Letters are also subject to the editorial policy stated in the masthead.

On perspective

They weren't bigots. Thoughtful, decent people opposed integration in the name of "states rights" and "Southern tradition." Now the excuse is "traditional marriage" and "take it to the people." Of course it's not prejudice, it's not bigotry, they don't really hate gay people! Tell me another.

They say Vermont legislators didn't listen to the people! Then why is it that every single legislator who compromised moved away from same-sex marriage, not towards it? It's because they listened to the bigoted, ignorant majority that we have marriage lite, Jim Crow marriage, the marriage that dare not speak its name.

They say the legislature is arrogant! No, the arrogant ones are the straight people who think they know what's best for gay people. Not only that — they think they can tell us what our sexuality is all about. How many gay people do you hear talking about "choice?" If you're straight and believe your own sexuality is a choice, fine! But don't tell me what mine is; I know better than you. And there's more: straight people have such a sense of arrogant entitlement, that if we get a second-class institution just for us, they want in too! It's OK for gays to be excluded from marriage; but God forbid straight people be excluded from anything.

Arrogant?

Kevin Moss
Middlebury, VT

On gratitude

We have heroes and angels walking among us, and I want to thank them for everything they have done for us.

Bill Lippert, the only openly gay member of the Legislature, was able to put a face on discrimination that his peers could not ignore. His eloquent words carried the day when our opponents thought they had the votes to kill civil unions. The outcome was not always certain and Bill made a critical difference. Who can forget Bill's words when he told the world that gays and lesbians are good people and we deserve to have our relationships celebrated. He told the truth when he said that our communities and our families depend on us and that the world is a better place because we exist. He made us feel proud.

Stan Baker, Peter
Harrigan, Nina Beck, Stacy

Jolles, Lois Farnham, and Holly Puterbaugh put themselves and their families on the line when they filed the lawsuit to get the right to marry. Their courage is a beacon to all. The inner strength it takes to make yourself a public target for the greater good of your community is something most of us will never experience. We can never repay the debt we owe them.

Beth Robinson and Susan Murray were the lawyers who decided that if gay and lesbian marriage were to become a reality, they would need to bring the lawsuit. On the steps of the statehouse, one of them told the story about the first time they marched in a Gay Pride parade with the "Freedom to Marry" banner. Some opponents laughed out loud at the very idea of gay and lesbian marriage. Anticipating victory, she said, "They aren't laughing any more."

I was reminded of Mahatma Gandhi's quote. "First they ignore you. Then they laugh at you. Then they fight you. Then you win." These two women were ignored and laughed at. They fought and they won, and now they have blazed a trail that others can follow.

We also need to thank the thousands of Vermonters who worked hard to make civil unions a reality. Thank you for writing letters. Thank you for testifying. Thank you for attending town meetings. Thank you for talking to the media. Thank you for organizing your community. Thank you for talking to relatives and friends. Thank you for talking to your lawmakers. Thank you for your time and effort. You have made a difference. Together, we have overcome churches that reject the truth of who we really are and we have overcome legislators who willingly choose to oppress their own citizens. We have been part of changing the world and we have become better human beings in our struggle. We took all the lies and hatred that the opposition could throw at us and we didn't let them drag us down to their level.

Legislators who supported us deserve our future support. We needed (and received) support from all parties and we need to remember our friends in the fall elections. We need to make sure the lawmakers of all parties know that if they support us, we will support them. We need to show other states that a lawmaker can vote for civil

unions and get reelected. That will make it possible for Vermont's example to be repeated in other states.

Ron Benard
Essex, VT

On accountability

Barbara Dozetos' last editorial tells us we need to reward people like Keith Goslant and Virginia Renfrew for their long unpaid hours. It would be nice if everyone got paid for their work in the movement. It would also be nice if there were accountability to the LGBT community. Virginia Renfrew was a paid lobbyist for the Freedom to Marry Task Force and somehow became liaison to the governor.

But the only public act we are aware of that she performed in that capacity was against, not for lesbians. When over half of the members of the Burlington Women's Council (a minority of them lesbians) named the homophobic nature of then director Jennifer Matthew's behavior, Virginia Renfrew publicly supported her pal against lesbians. She allowed her name and position as liaison to the Governor to be used by Peter Freyne to say what he wanted to say. i.e. — there is no homophobia at BWC, see Virginia Renfrew official liaison says so. But did Renfrew ever check into it? No.

Did she speak to any of the lesbians in BWC about it? No. She did this because Jennifer Matthews was her crony. She dismissed the experience of lesbians who actually witnessed Matthew's behavior. Did she investigate the matter before proclaiming to the press that it was false? No again. She came to one meeting with her mind already made up and screamed at Peggy Luhrs, "Do you think you're helping lesbians?" That was the extent of her attempts at dialogue.

The three of us were part of the Council and saw a distinct homophobic pattern in the way Matthews dealt with those who opposed her authoritarian reorganization plans. So did many heterosexual BWC members. That is why the group voted to have a workshop on homophobia. Though more straight women than lesbians opposed the plans, Matthews and her allies continually characterized lesbians in the organization in dishonest, demeaning

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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 culture 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 Out in the Mountains. 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.

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