

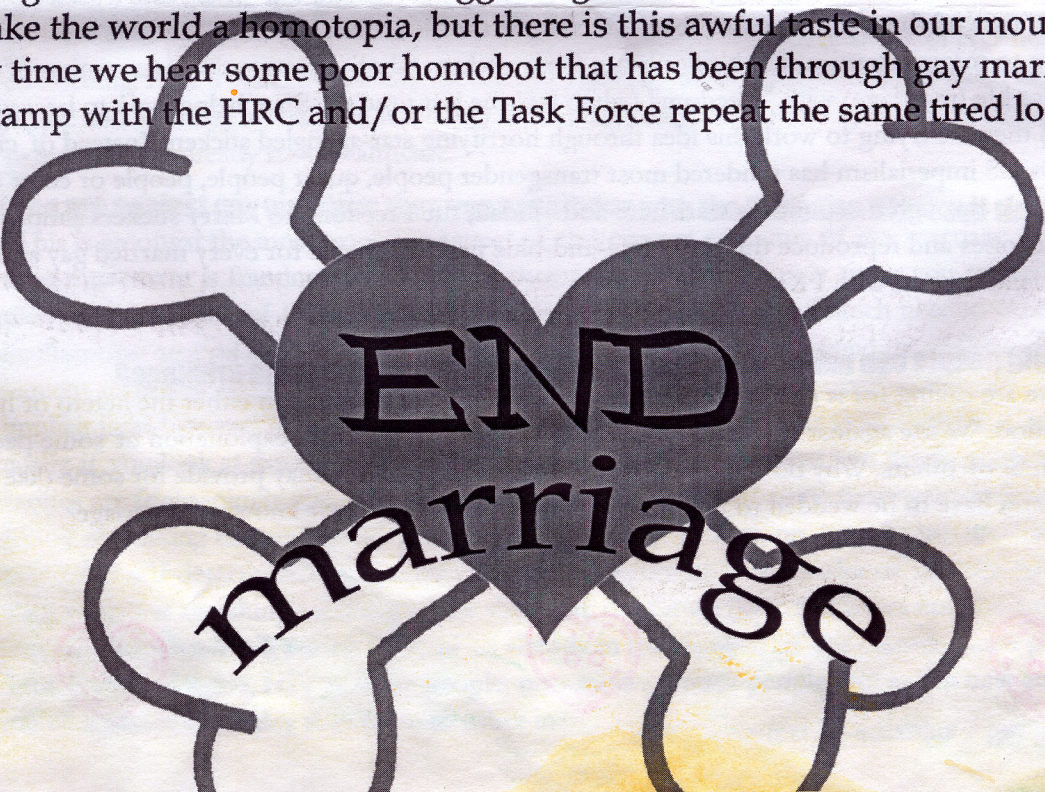
# Naughty North #2

a radical queer newsletter for maine!

## what's wrong with **gay** marriage ?!

over the last year that folx have met under the naughty north moniker, a constant elephant in the discussion circle has been the gay marriage debate. while some of us are staunchly opposed to the entire idea of marriage, some of us are simply critical of all the over shadowing attention the issue gets while other critical issues are simply left unaddressed.

we have assembled this newsletter to help arm ourselves and others with information, ideas and insight to combat the rhetoric of the mainstream gay marriage movement. we aren't suggesting we have all the answers as to how to make the world a homotopia, but there is this awful taste in our mouth every time we hear some poor homobot that has been through gay marriage bootcamp with the HRC and/or the Task Force repeat the same tired logic.



END  
marriage



# a short primer...

## **So, what is wrong with gay marriage?**

In order to answer that question we must first understand what this thing called marriage is. Marriage is essentially a financial and legal contract that allocates the movement of property, power and privilege from one person to another. Historically it has been a way of consolidating family power amongst and between men, through women. In more recent times marriage in the United States has functioned to solidify the American middle class. Marriage does this through concentrating wealth and power through family lines and inheritance (both in terms of money and power). Because of marriage's ability to discipline class structures it is now, and always has been a primary structure of a capitalist economy. In reality most people marry within their own socioeconomic class. Marriage, earlier through miscegenation laws, and currently through racist "values" also contains wealth through racist ideologies of matrimony. Because of these realities there has been a long history of critique of the institution of marriage launched by feminists of color, white feminists, and queer people among others.

## **What about gay marriage? Isn't gay marriage going to change all of this?**

NO. The current push towards gay marriage is, in fact, not going to subvert the systems of domination we all live through. Ironically, the gay marriage movement is standing on these same legacies of brutality for their slice of the wedding cake. Take for example the "Freedom to Marry" stickers created by the freedom to marry organization. Not only are these stickers falsely equating the intervention of the State into ones life (marriage) with "freedom" (when was the last time the State helped you to become more "free"?) they are trying to work this idea through horrifying star-spangled stickers. Instead of critiquing the ways US imperialism has rendered most transgender people, queer people, people of color etc. as expendable through its countless wars here and abroad, the Freedom To Marry stickers simply disguise these histories and reproduce this red-white-and-blue national theme for every married gay and guilt filled liberal to wear with PRIDE.

## **If straight people can marry, why should gay people not have the same privilege?**

What we are calling for is an abolishment of State sanctioned coupling in either the hetero or homo incarnation. We are against any institution that perpetuates the further exploitation of some people for the benefit of others. Why do the fundamental necessities marriage may provide for some (like healthcare) have to be wedded to the State sanctioned ritual of terror known as marriage?





## **Won't gay marriage help couples stay together where one person is not a US citizen?**

The way immigration is being used by the gay marriage movement is not only un-thought-out but also relies on racist notions of the "white man saving his brown lover". Although it is true that because of the US policies on immigration some lesbian and gay couples may be split, gay marriage does not at all question these systems that allow some people into the country (white) while excluding others (people of color). Where are the gay marriage "activists" when the INS is actively raiding and deporting whole families? (such as it is currently doing up and down the commercial districts in the north east). Also missing from the picture of immigration that gay marriage advocates are painting is the reality that there are queer couples in the US where neither person is a US citizen. How will gay marriage help them stay in the US if that is what they want to do? Gay marriage will not challenge "citizenship" but simply place some bodies within its grasp while holding others out.

## **I agree with your argument, but isn't gay marriage a step in the right direction?**

This liberal model of "progression" is one of the primary ways many of us are ideologically trapped into a reformist way of thinking. To understand how gay marriage, like voting, will never lead to liberation we can look to the histories of many "social justice movements" that only address oppressions on a level of the symptomatic. Gay marriage and voting are symbolic gestures that reinforce structures while claiming to reconfigure them. This scheme will undoubtedly become apparent with "marriage equality" advocates. As they have positioned gay marriage as the last great civil rights battle, will they continue to fight after the Honeymoon?

## **Won't gay marriage help get health care to more people?**

It may help some people get healthcare but for the vast majority of Americans with NO healthcare it will do nothing. And within the rhetoric of the gay marriage movement working towards healthcare for all (people and animals) is nowhere to be found. This argument also relies on the false assumption that one person would already have healthcare.

## **So if you are against gay marriage then you are allying with the Christian Right and the GOP!**

NO. This is amongst the most troubling aspect of this current epidemic of gay marriage. The way the marriage movement is framing any critique of their precious institution is either you are one of us (gay married) or you are one of them (homophobe). This helps to silence the much needed debate and public discourse around such issues. It seems as if everyone has been shamed into submission and subsequent silence by the marriage movement. Even in allegedly "progressive" circles any mention of the implicit links between marriage, misogyny, and racism in the U.S. gets shutdown by a "gay married". Ironically, if you look at the rhetoric of the freedom to marry movement and the Republican Party their similarities are frighteningly apparent. In their ideal world we would all be monogamously coupled, instead of rethinking the practice of "coupling". They want us working our jobs not working towards collective and self-determination, remembering anniversaries not the murder of trans-people, buying wedding rings not smashing capitalism. The vision of the future the republicans and the gay marriage movement has offered will render most of us already in the margins of the picture (trans-people, sex workers, queers of color, HIV positive people, non-monogamous people etc) as the new enemy of the régime of married normalcy they hope to usher in.

~text by e.stanley / gay shame



# this shit is personal...

Last fall I was invited to speak at a Unitarian Universalist welcoming congregation retreat in Saco, ME. I was to go and represent the queer youth organization I had been working for at the time. The UU's had invited me down to talk about the my organization and how it could be accessed as a resource to folx in the UU churches to be better supportive of their queer membership.

When I was asked by my supervisor, I of course jumped at the chance. I was sure that Equality Maine would be there pushing their gay marriage agenda on the kind liberal minded folx at the UU, so what better opportunity to reframe the debate for lots of well meaning folx. My only hope was to get out of there without a screaming match or crying, but still making my point.

So I drove the hour and a half to the retreat center in Saco where a large group of adults were taking part in a discussion on trans related topics. It seemed to be going really well and I was hoping that by having trans issues really out there and on the table, the marriage stuff would at least be thought about critically

Then came my turn to talk with the group. I was part of a round robin of presenters that had about 8 minutes a piece to talk about the organizations we work for, what services we provide, and how we can be accessed to support UU congregations. EQME was supposed to go first, but that hadn't showed up yet. A GSA student from the Southern Maine GLSEN network spoke first, telling the group about the neat things they were up to at their high school and how they were working to combat hate language and homophobia in schools.

When I got up to speak I echoed a lot of the things the previous student had been talking about, but framed it a little differently. I made a comment about how our organization is youth led and the youth I work with determine the type of work we do. I made a point to mention that we have never, in our ten years of existence, focused on gay marriage as it has never been pertinent to our youth. I also described how my more rural geographic location in Androscoggin and Oxford county made our priorities much different than those of southern Maine.

I got a question from the audience about why organizations like the one I work for are so poorly funded. I gave two reasons. One, the state of Maine rejected federal funding for STD and sexual education because the federal government was mandating that we teach abstinence only education. Maine rejected such a foolish mandate, but in doing so, lost out on millions of dollars from the feds to support programs like the one I work for. Two, most of the money being given to GLBTQ organizing from foundations, grant-makers, and people who make personal donations are going to organizations whose sole focus is on gay marriage.

The latter of my reasoning didn't sit well with the audience a woman responded with, "well first we get gay marriage, then we get to the rest." I held my tongue and politely said, "not in my opinion." When I so desperately wanted to scream, "What the fuck is wrong with you!? Marriage is more important than the kids in my program



getting beaten and sexually assaulted at school and home because they're queer?!" I was pissed off, but doing my best to put on a friendly face and encourage people to access my organization.

About twenty minutes later, in walks Equality Maine. They blew in without much care about what had happened before they got there, and weren't very interested in networking with other organizations that were represented there. Equality Maine then continued to show their ten minute marriage equality video. As if the video wasn't enough to get their point across (it's about LOVE), they then had two volunteer speakers answer questions for another twenty five minutes.

During the question and answer time, a woman in the audience was talking about her partner who is now in a nursing home. She told a heart wrenching story of isolation and homophobia within the nursing home, not just amongst the professional staff, but of the other residents. It was painful to hear such a horror story, and really felt like a call to action to challenge homophobia within the medical institution and among the elderly. But in the end it led to the woman speaking feeling as if she could just say she and her partner were married, things would be better. I felt so awful. As if saying you were married would make homophobic staff and co-residents less hateful? If anything I suspect the resentful opposite. I wanted to reach out! I wanted to brainstorm pragmatic and thoughtful solutions, but how to even begin such a conversation with people that had so much, too much, hope in the forbidden fruits of gay marriage?

Once EQME finished they packed up and took off. Seemed like they weren't too interested in what anyone else was doing.

\* \* \*

So I was pretty happy that I got out of their only feeling depressed and annoyed. I began to gather my things and say my goodbyes to the organizers that had invited me and the few friends I had amongst the other presenters and audience. Then it happened. I got cornered. And all hell was breaking loose...

-conrad

## frostbite**THIS!**

by jen

March in Maine is a cold, brown time. The snow is old and crusty and the six weeks until green seem as long as the five cold months behind us. For people who own businesses it's a slow time, used for getting ready for the cheerier months of warm sunshine and spendy tourists—unless people can somehow be convinced to drop some money into the frigid wasteland.

Enter Frostbite ME, a marketing initiative set up by the brand-new—and allegedly "grass-roots" organization [gaymaine.org](http://gaymaine.org)...



I began what seemed like an exciting conversation about GLBTQ youth organizing that ended with me nearly in tears and practically yelling at my counterpart. This person told me they had listened carefully to what I had said while presenting and felt really sad that it seems like I, and other young people, have been left behind by the mainstream gay marriage movement. As our conversation continued they began to social work me and mirror the things they heard me saying. Meaning, they began to repeat back to me my feelings of desperation, frustration and disappointment with the mainstream gay marriage movement. I didn't realize they were pulling a common social work tactic on me called mirroring and figured they was just being condescending. Their mirroring tone only sent me further over the edge. I don't remember everything said in the conversation as I was running high on emotion, but I do recall them proving my point that EQME eats up a large part of the donated money and volunteer hours in Maine. I had lamented that I thought it was disrespectful and disproportionate that EQME got to present for as long as they did when the rest of us could have shared that time. They told me of course they took more time; they had a well crafted video and guest speakers. I shot back, give me a \$200,000 a year budget and I will show you the most kick ass youth led media project on combating hate language and homophobia in school you've ever seen.

A friend of mine helped end the conversation and pulled me out of there. It was time to go. We parted ways with my counterpart, on hopeful but unresolved terms. We walked out to the dunes just beyond the retreat center, my breathing was returning to normal and quake in my voice was subsiding. I can't do this much longer on my own. I'm tired of gay marriage advocates in Maine telling me they don't want to make GLBTQ issues and either or, between gay marriage and... everything else, where they do very little to make marriage not only issue that gets attention or funding.

~xorc

There is hardly any information on the gaymaine.org website about who they are, just that they are people who "share a love for the state of Maine." Some info can be deduced: their political orientation is obvious in their use of "gay" (hello—lesbians? transfolk? everybody else?) and that their first event is a marketing initiative leaves no doubt: these are the mainstream capitalist equality gays, and they're here for your money.

The stated goal of the weekend is "to develop a vibrant and connected GLBT and friends community," but there is not, at this date, an event-wide gathering listed in the schedule; that is, not one opportunity for people participating to meet each other and build community. Instead there are a plethora of conflicting events for the weekend. Saturday alone lists a skiing trip \*out\* of Portland, a hockey game, the EqualityMaine awards banquet, ballet and theater events, and more. Chances are good that Frostbite participants won't even \*see\* each other, much less meet and build the relationships that will develop community.




# a top 10 of sorts

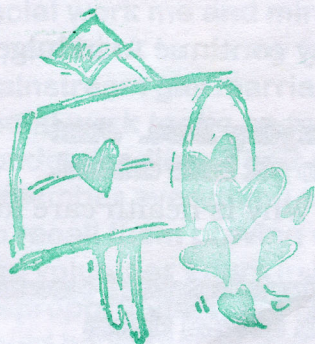
to oppose gay marriage

1. Patriarchy. Historically marriage is pretty fucked up. Why continue to indulge in such an archaic and fucked up institution?
2. Gay Marriage does NOT challenge homophobia in our everyday lives. Just because you're gay married doesn't mean you aren't going to get hate crimed.
3. The rights marriage affords should be everyone's rights. Why is health care and immigration status are tied to the state through marriage?
4. Marriage is NOT about love, its about the STATE. A religious/spiritual ceremony to celebrate the bonds between lovers has nothing to do with special rights administered by the state. Most gay marriage activist insist that marriage is about love, then make demands about how they deserve the same state sanctioned rights that straight married people have. Therefore, marriage is a financial and legal contract between two individuals and that state.
5. Universal Health care for EVERYONE, not health care for those who are married with middle class jobs that have health benefits. And what about folx who are both working class, and have jobs without benefits. Marriage is going to help get either one of them healthcare. Does this make marriage a middle class bourgeoisie value?
6. Can someone again tell me how gay marriage will challenge transphobia?
7. Is gay marriage going to cure HIV/AIDS too?
8. I still can't marry my two girlfriends!
9. Since when did emulating heteronormative behavior feel liberating?  
gay married? shit, i cant wait to get gay divorced!
10. fill in the blank: \_\_\_\_\_

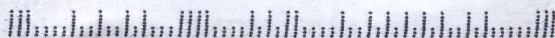
Even if all of these scattered and expensive events were going to be somehow build a community, what kind of community would it be? For a hint, you could just look at the price tags. EQME Dinner tickets: \$30-\$60 each; hockey game tickets: \$8-20 each; skiing lift tickets: \$72 each (with equipment rental starting at \$25). The website offers that there will soon be a package available for hotel and admission to all events, and you can bet that it won't be cheap. I suspect that this event is for the double-income no-kids queers who buy subarus and use HRC credit cards I'm not opposed to building queer community, but I am opposed to the expensive and exclusive nature of this event. I am opposed to people using marketing to create a false sense of activism. Bringing consumers to Portland isn't quite the same thing as building community, and Frostbite isn't fooling me.



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to:



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