

NAUGHTY NORTH!

SUMMER 2008

A RADICAL QUEER NEWSLETTER FOR MAINE!

Beyond Pride

Our Pride is the antithesis of shame!

In fact, Our Pride struts naked into their black tie events, gyrates its hips at angles that defy quantum mechanics, and with a soulful shriek of euphoria comes a supernova. We refuse to let the celebration of something as precious and vibrant and dirty and vital as our queerness be normalized, packaged, and sold as a safe form of entertaining diversion that the dominant culture can get it's jollies giggling at. Keep your urban consumerism, give us bodies sweating together in love/lust/dance/or protest. Keep your institutions that have progressed so far as to grant us the privilege of aping straights graciously, we want a sexy revolution that lets us break chains salaciously. Keep your twenty dollar rainbow flags you would gag us with, and your classist/racist/sexist/transphobic/ shamefully thin and empty notion of what queer jubilation should look and feel like, what Pride should mean. We will not be house fags or house dykes or house trannies, no mater how many rhinestones you put on our fucking collars. Glitter clit lickers, cocksuckers, high fems, butchs, and TRANSgressors of all shapes and sizes, let's redefine this thing called Pride. Let us tear apart their boxes and build a dance floor where we can all feel proud that we are here and WE ARE FUCKING QUEER.

Naughty North is a movement not a market! We are committed to celebrating our queerest selves while resisting the devastating violence inherent in the consumer driven assimilationist gaystream. We will defend ourselves against the brutal silence of isolation thru a diverse and dedicated network of action oriented friends and lovers. We will not deny our anger or fail to recognize the links between queer struggle and challenging power. Naughty North is a defiant orgasm in the face of oppression: all are welcome to get off with us!

Points of Unity

- We will build friendships and alliances across urban and rural boundaries, celebrating our diversity and micro-cultures while breaking down isolation. Through campouts, work parties, dance parties, sleepovers, farm days, etc, we will create and share a positive queer experience.
- We will not only critique targets like corporations, but we will also expose inconsistencies within our social groups and so-called "communities", in order to grow more toward our radical ideals. Whenever possible, we will use theatrics, humor and satire to communicate and to critique ourselves.
- We will create a radical presence at queer events and a queer presence at radical events.
- Our (direct) actions will not only be fierce and critical, but fun and empowering.
- Fighting racism, classism, misogyny, heterosexism, transphobia, ableism, capitalism and all other hierarchies is a central purpose of Naughty North, not an add-on. We will work to create a space where radical queers can challenge these hierarchies and build alliances with other oppressed peoples willing to struggle with us.
- Assimilation is death through erasure. We oppose all forms of assimilation, especially gay marriage and inclusion in the military industrial complex.
- We will confront notions of shame from both the Christian Right and the mainstream gay and lesbian community.
- We are committed to inter-generational struggle. Radical queer history has been systematically distorted, erased and disappeared by the AIDS genocide and fear. We will re-learn and teach these histories to inform our present and push the boundaries of a new queer activism.

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Shaking Up Corporate Pride

June 21st, 2008 was the 17th Annual Southern Maine Pride. A group of us, unsettled with what pride has become, took some actions to make pride more welcoming to those of us on the fringes of mainstream queer culture. We feel that the mainstream queer culture has become a single issue, that of gay marriage, and that it's all about acting straight and seeming as normal as possible, which allows for little room individuality. In fact, after gay marriage was recently legalized in California, the LA Times published an article entitled "Gay couples are emphasizing low-key weddings," which can be found at:

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-image17-2008jun17,0,4436786.story>

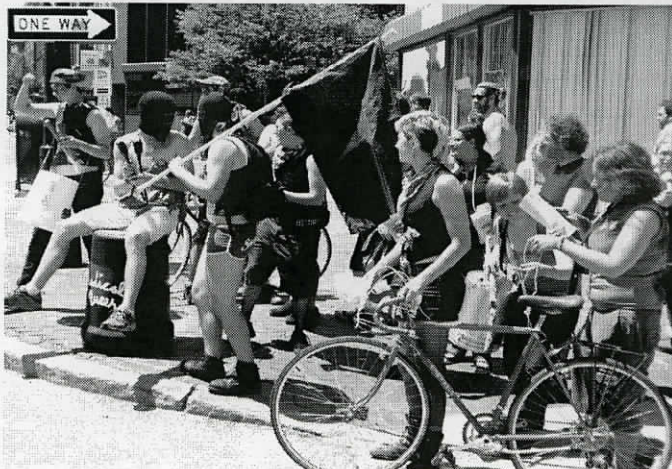
The article had the following to say:

The gay and lesbian couples who packed a Hollywood auditorium last week had come seeking information about California's new marriage policies. But they also got some unsolicited advice.

Be aware.

Images from gay weddings, said Lorri L. Jean, chief executive of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center, could be used by opponents in a campaign designed to convince California voters that gays and lesbians should not have the right to marry. Those getting married, she cautioned, should never lose sight of what they might be supplying the other side.

Sitting close to his husband-to-be in the audience, hairstylist Kendall Hamilton nodded and said he knew just what she meant. No "guys showing up in gowns," he said.



It even said that the early weddings around the state were all long-term couples who were "selected by central casting to appear both non-threatening and mainstream."

Pride is not about conforming to other people's standards, but about being who you are, and accepting diversity among others; however, mainstream gay and lesbian culture seems to be encouraging us to do the opposite of that. Most of the events are drinking oriented, beer advertisements are all over pride; as result, most of the events are 21+, which blatantly excludes youth. The whole thing has become a marketing scheme; companies just use it as a way to target the queer demographic. For example, there was a Home Depot float in the Pride Parade passing out smocks and water bottles with the Home Depot logo to the children that were present.

To counter all of this, a group of us clad in all pink and black joined the parade, which you normally have to register for and pay to be in. We made lots of noise with drums, shouted cheers, and passed out flyers to people. The flyers explained that we're a movement, not a market; that we feel Pride leaves out youth, trans, gender variant, HIV+, lower-class people, people of color, people with disabilities, sex workers, migrant workers, immigrants, non-English speakers, and others; that Pride should be about celebrating ourselves and not the products that companies are trying to sell us; and that pride is a right, not a privilege for the people who can afford it.

Southern Maine Pride also has a dance on the Maine State Pier. It's an outdoor event, but still costs \$15 to participate in. There's a roped off section for people who are over 21, so that they can sell alcohol. Again feeling that this is classist and exclusive, we scheduled an alternative guerrilla dance party in Tommy's Park in downtown Portland. This event was free to anyone who wanted to come, and we played some sweet jams. Lots of people showed up, even some who saw the party in passing and joined in. The police drove by a few times, and even came into the park once, which worried us at first, but they didn't come because of us any of those times. The only downside was we had to end it by 10pm, because that's when the noise ordinance in Portland kicks in, but I think everyone still had a great time, without having to spend \$15 to dance outdoors.



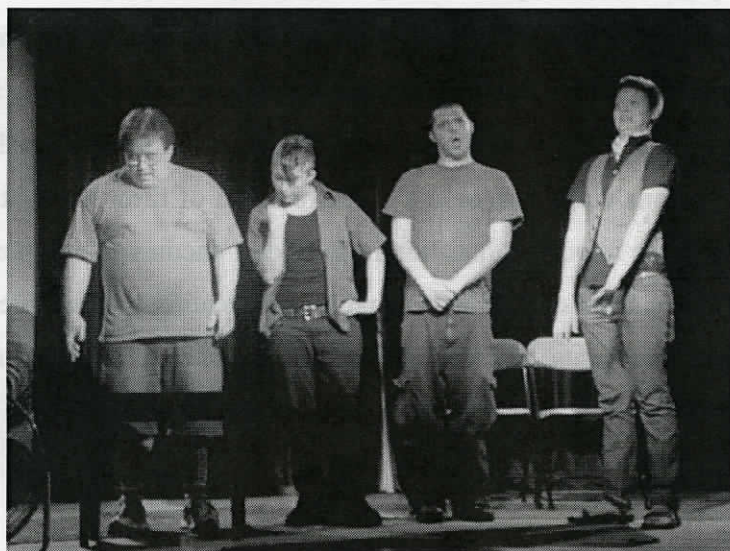
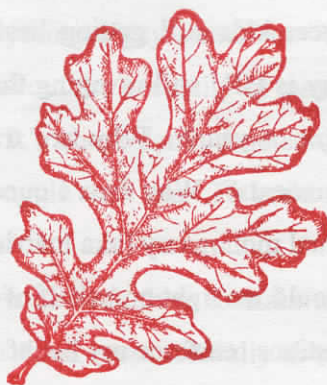
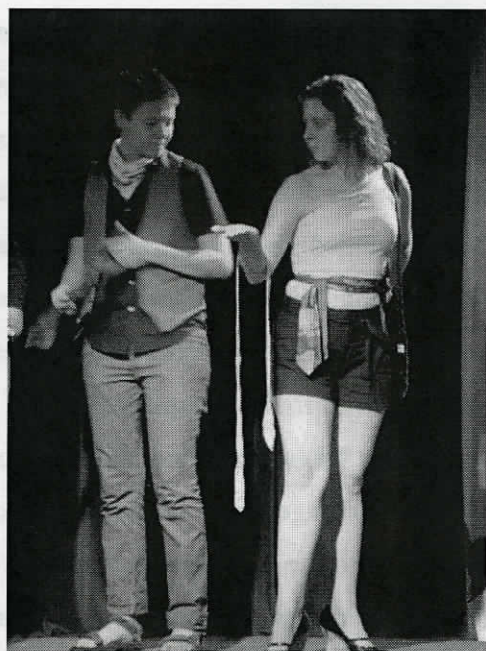
Queer and Allied Youth Performance Project

What does it mean to be an ally? Who are our allies? Where do youth stand in this search for empowerment and need for competent comrades in our struggle for understanding?

AddVerb Productions began asking this question over a year ago when they began the Queer and Allied Youth Writing Project. The goal of the project is to create a tool that Gay Straight Alliances across the country can use to educate and cultivate new allies. AddVerb sent out their youth editing team that stretched all across Maine to collect submissions from as many youth queers and their allies, ages 12-24. We came to the realization that many of the pieces we gathered were outpourings of the hearts of young queers and their hetero identified supporters. They were reaching out to us from their seclusion in small conservative towns, surrounded by hostility out of ignorance for who they are or who their friends are. We became messengers for these young courageous folks, starting out slowly, giving the project a test run at an open mic night in Portland. I have never witnessed the place so packed before. Young, old, queer, straight, new faces, familiar faces. All were there to listen to these stories. Poems and stage plays and stories, voices from afar perhaps for the first time publicly being heard, thoughts once only kept in heads, hearts and on pen and paper. There was also a large amount of submissions from those already outspoken and comfortable in their convictions. We celebrated all pieces for each held an individual story. We saw allies there to support us, speaking of other allies, het and homo alike, to us. We felt the presence of our own allies as they looked up at us from the pieces of paper we held in our hands. However, that warmly-lit, coffee-scented, friendly and magical little corner of Portland, Maine was only the launching pad for what we were about to do.

Almost immediately after the first presentation of the writings of queer and ally youth, rehearsals began for the longer more theatrical version. A cast of mostly straight USM theatre students and some community members came together and rehearsed almost every day at USM. The cast lacked the overwhelming queer presence that the writing portion of the project had. Some cast members came into the project not knowing what the word queer meant or how it was supposed to be used. The responsibility for educating the cast fell onto the shoulders of the two openly queer cast members. Understanding came when the performers thought about the pieces they were in and how it was a true struggle for queer people every day.

An ally is someone who understands what the word queer means and can use in a sentence or to describe things, such as people or a community. An ally is someone who doesn't need an explanation when someone talks about their queer identity. An ally is someone who can support queer people and community by understanding and helping without question.



Why don't any of my queer friends have time for queer activism? Why do I continue to find myself amongst only a small handful of queer people committed to radical queer activism? Why are queer kids still getting beaten, raped and killed in the public schools and on the streets? Why is HIV still ravaging the queer community with new infection rates well above 30,000 people a year? Why are trans people still excluded from most gay and lesbian politics/movements? Why aren't queer people fighting against the tyranny of the institutions of heterosexual monogamy (aka marriage) and the military industrial complex (don't ask, don't tell? Why would we fight on behalf of a country trying to kill us in the first place?!).

These questions reinforce my belief that queers still have a lot to fight for and against on our own behalf. So why aren't we fighting!? Have we been assuaged with minimal protections through bureaucratic hate-crime legislation (who has access to the legal system anyways? Do you really trust the state to fight on your behalf?) and the distant promise of a normal gay married life? Maybe we have become so obsessed with self-criticism about gay gentrification that we've become more worried about being fashionably anti-racist rather than building real alliances and actually fighting all forms of oppression? Maybe we have so much fucked up internalized homophobia that we don't value/prioritize activism that directly benefits ourselves, especially the kind of activism that keeps pleasure central to our motivations!

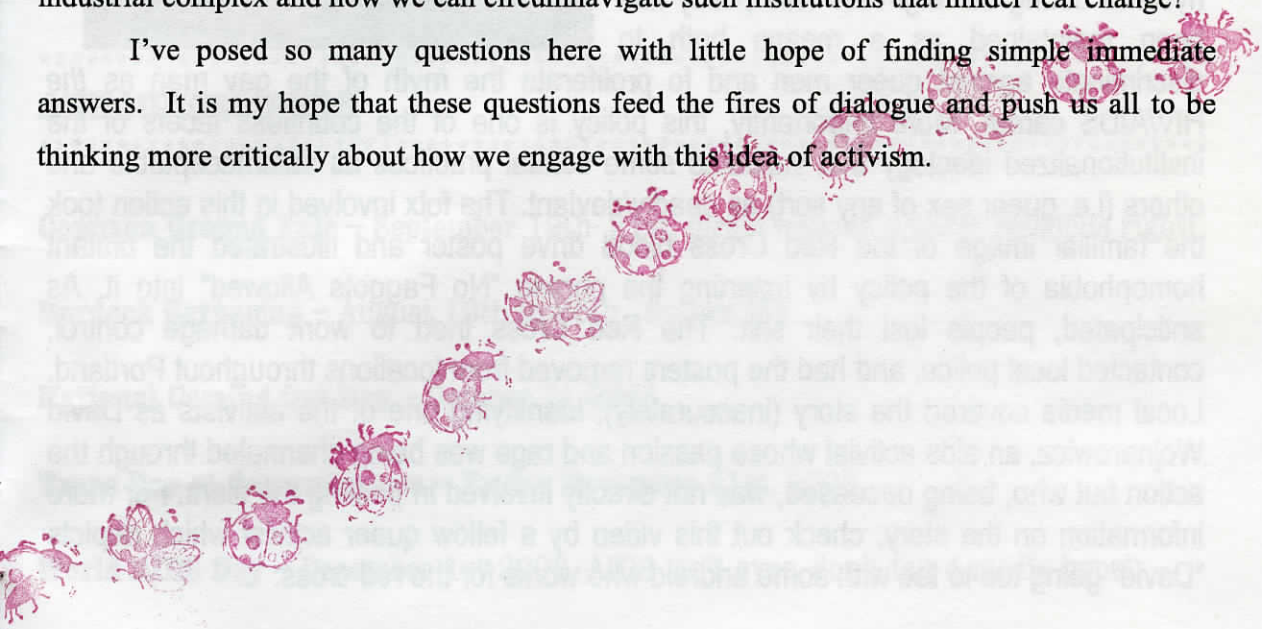
Perhaps the real reasons elude me, or it's a combination of these thoughts and many more. Regardless of reasons, the important question is: how do I encourage my queer friends to make time and space for queer activism? Whether that means creating a fierce queer presence within other radical groups/movements, or creating a radical presence at queer events and within gay and lesbian organizations, how do I activate my friends who are wrapped up in other important projects?



Maybe it hasn't been made clear that straight people aren't going to hand us a damn thing without a fight? Sure, not all straight people are hateful vindictive homophobes, but most straight people are entirely clueless. I so often hear, "You have rights," "You have privileges," "You're overreacting," "Why do you always make everything a gay issue," or "You have a victim's mentality," from my so called allies when I talk about the necessity of queer activism. I'm so tired of building bridges to nowhere by myself. It's about damn time straight people meet me where *I'm at*, and makes the commitment to struggle with me. To build these queer bridges and overcome oppressions...

So again, how do I activate my queer friends? How do I ask them to make time to fight for and prioritize our own bodies? How do I ask them to think more critically about how and where they put their energy? How do I offer loving criticism about their engagement in organizing with groups that need to reexamine their hyper-masculine approaches to creating change? How do I encourage them to think critically about their participation in the non-profit industrial complex and how we can circumnavigate such institutions that hinder real change?

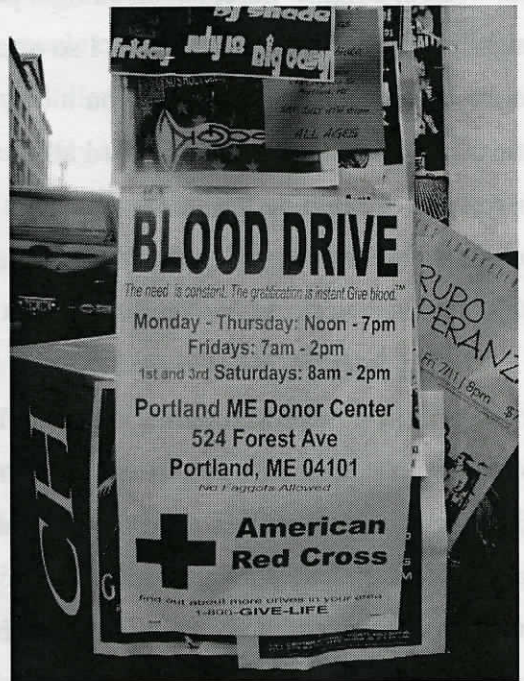
I've posed so many questions here with little hope of finding simple immediate answers. It is my hope that these questions feed the fires of dialogue and push us all to be thinking more critically about how we engage with this idea of activism.



NO FAGGOTS ALLOWED

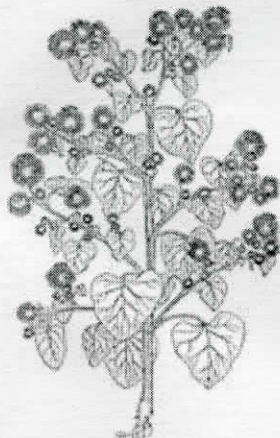
In Mid July a quite striking strike team of Naughty North affiliated queer guerillas (gay guevaras if you will) painted Portland red in a fierce satirical protest against the Red Cross's policy that bars queer men from donating blood. The policy states that those who have "high risk of being infected with HIV" may not donate. This includes any men who have had "sexual contact, *even once*" with a man since 1977. The logic behind this being that if you fit this criterion than you probably have AIDS. The policy was enacted at the height of the medical establishment (including the FDA's ignorance inspired homophobic AIDS hysteria during the eighties. This policy has been maintained as a means both to

discriminate against queer men and to proliferate the myth of the gay man as *the* HIV/AIDS carrier. More importantly, this policy is one of the countless facets of the institutionalized ideology that validates some sexual practices as safe/acceptable and others (i.e. queer sex of any sort) as deadly/deviant. The folx involved in this action took the familiar image of the Red Cross blood drive poster and illustrated the blatant homophobia of the policy by inserting the phrase "No Faggots Allowed" into it. As anticipated, people lost their shit. The Red Cross tried to work damage control, contacted local police, and had the posters removed from locations throughout Portland. Local media covered the story (inaccurately), identifying one of the activists as David Wojnarowicz, an aids activist whose passion and rage was being channeled through the action but who, being deceased, was not directly involved in posting the fliers. For more information on the story, check out this video by a fellow queer activist which depicts "David" going toe to toe with some android who works for the red cross:



<http://think.mtv.com/044FDFFFF00989E500017009915BF/>

BURDOCK



Burdock, a gathering for a free and sustainable future bringing people together across ages, urban and rural, and cultures to learn, share, play and build community through workshops, swimming, food music, kids activities, bartering and more! August 19th - 26th in Starks ME.

http://www.peoplesfreespace.org/burdock_new/

Naughty North will be hosting this year's queer kitchen on Saturday August 23rd. Dinner is served at 6pm so if you're going to join us in dance, debauchery and dinner making, be ready to shake that rump and chop them veggies all afternoon. Bring costumes, sweet jams, and your sauce.

Naughty North will also be facilitating a queer/trans caucus on Sunday August 24th at lunch. We will find a quiet place to eat and will talk about upcoming actions and ways to better network.

ANNOUNCEMENTS


Common Ground Fair – September 19th- 21st, direct actions against religious right!

Burdock Gathering – August 19th to 26th , Starks ME.

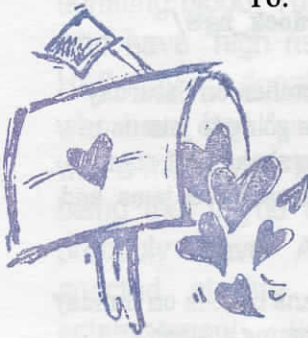
National Coming Out Day – October 11 2008.

Trans Day of Remembrance – Friday November 21st, 2008.

World AIDS Day – December 1st 2008. AIDS isn't over, don't fall 4 media hype!

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To:



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<http://thenaughtynorth.blogspot.com/>