

# To the HERLAND VOICE

July, 1998

## MILLENNIUM MARCH CONTROVERSY

by Pat Reaves

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) announced on February 4 that they would sponsor a national gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender (g/l/b/t) march on Washington in 2000. Many G/L/B/T activists and community leaders have questioned the rationale for the march and the process HRC and UFMCC followed in announcing it.

There are several issues I like to raise about the announcement of the Millennium march/rally and the decision-making process. Elizabeth Birch's visit to Oklahoma would seem a perfect opportunity for some dialogue but no public forums are planned for her visit. Only those invited to an exclusive luncheon for major donors will have the opportunity to engage in any discussion.

HRC, UFMCC, and LLEGO, the organizers of the Millennium March, have confused marketing for organizing. They've assembled a product and they are now trying to sell it to the L/G/B/T movement in the US. The product has a catchy name — "Millennium March." Logistics are set — it's really a rally not a march. There's a merchandising plan and official travel agents and accommodations. There's even a marketing survey on the HRC web page. L/G/B/T national, state, and local organizations are invited to "endorse" the product and are promised "frequent up-to-date information" in exchange for their endorsement.

In spite of the marketing line in press statements that the "March should be absolutely inclusive," exclusivity and arrogance are recurrent themes. The only discussions outside the organizations of HRC, UFMCC, and LLEGO have been invitation-only meetings of executive directors of large organizations. A 14 page organizing proposal for the march reportedly drafted in February has not been made publicly available. Can inclusion really be planned behind closed doors?

Organizers say the march will "demonstrate what it means to be gay in this nation at the turn of the century." So far it seems that picture is a pretty limited one. No l/g/b/t of color organization other than LLEGO has endorsed the march. While the statement of Nicole Ramierz-Murray Co-Chair of LLEGO says that LLEGO has joined HRC and UFMCC as an equal partner, a request for endorsements from Troy Perry at the UFMCC web site list lists LLEGO as an endorser along with PFLAG, Dignity and others.

In a joint statement describing what they believe are the benefits of a march, Birch and Perry say "*Everything* from ACT-UP to the 'Free Sharon Kowaski' movement were born out of marches on Washington." (emphasis added) This almost unbelievably arrogant statement effectively dismisses many organizations and much of the work of l/g/b/t activists and organizations. None of the Oklahoma L/G/B/T organizations I have been involved in traces its origins to a national march.

Marketing is about developing a product, packaging it and distributing it in such a way that the product producer receives a return on his investment. What return on investment do the developers of the Millennium March product want? HRC has a goal of a million

members (i.e. contributors) by 2000. Rev. Perry said in a letter posted on the UFMCC web site, "UFMCC will have the opportunity to reach tens of thousands of persons who have not yet been touched by our local church ministries."

Organizers have also said they expect the march to "capture some of the revenue" generated by so many people going to Washington — translate that to "make a profit. Where will the dollars to fund such an enormously expensive event come from? Surely organizers are not so naïve that they really expect the resources — money, time, and energy — needed to organize an national event and needed by local organizations to plan for and mobilize participation in that event will not take away from the resources available to other organizations and activities?

Organizing is about a process. It is bringing people together to discuss and shape an event. One of the most basic principles is the people you want involved are consulted and involved in the process from the beginning — not invited to endorse your plan after all the major decision have been made.

HRC, UFMCC, and LLEGO might sell the Millennium March to a million consumers but that still won't build a movement for justice. Movements are made of people taking action — little and big steps for social justice everyday — not consumers who hand some organization a check for a glossy package. Movement building isn't smooth and it isn't pretty — its messy and moves like a cantankerous old car with a bad clutch, in jumps and jerks and you're not always sure exactly where it's going. It is, however, about living like we really believe in "liberty and justice for all."

*Continued on page 2*

## SUMMER POETRY EVENING

Be prepared for anger, passion, and humor! Topics like these can generate mountains of words, but Oklahoma City has the talented women to distill many words into creative images. Herland is offering a summer evening to show off these talents.

On July 25, several local poets will share their work with us, and any audience participant is also welcome. The readings will start at 7:00 p.m. Enjoy a relaxed evening (in a cool building) with good company and light snacks. Donations requested. □



*Join the Celebration!*  
2 PM — 4 PM  
Sunday, July 19, 1998  
at  
Herland Sister Resources

Our celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York will include an appearance by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a "Women's Significa Quiz" (*there's nothing trivial about the struggle for women's rights*) and light refreshments.

# ST. SYBIL

Dear St. Sybil,

I had the damndest thing happen to me today. I was minding my business and eating my supper when the phone rang and a voice informed me that, in honor of one hundred fifty years of women's emancipation, they were proud to offer me a credit card with little interest and a high limit. "What the hell are you talking about?", I enquired pleasantly. They began to talk about the benefits of the card, and I had to interrupt: "No, the other part," I snapped.

And of course, it came to me before they could answer: Seneca Falls; this is the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the Women's Rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. And some incredible slimebag credit card company is using this as a hook to get more addicts of opulent consumerism on their particular line. Some piece of excrement is using Elizabeth Cady Stanton to make it easy for me to sally forth and buy some darling catch-her, killer-her five-inch heels she would have sooo admired. These foul purveyors of excess and despair are using Sojourner Truth's back, her labor and passion, to encourage me to enslave myself to credit card debt.

It is just making me sick thinking about it, and about all of the women who have worked and fought so valiantly and so long for women's rights and advancement; and now are being used as a damned marketing tool....what should I do about it, do you think? I fantasize about how all my friends and I could get these cards, and take out the insurance they offer that pays the card off when you die; then we would max them out on outfitting a hideaway in Central America or Portland or somewhere, you know, with furniture, computers, printing presses -- and then fake our deaths and move to our commune; but that is a little daunting even for someone with my organizational skills. So, Sybil, do you have anything to suggest?

Thanking you in advance, your friend and fan,  
Amahl Rahldup

Dear Amahl,

First of all, let me suggest that you try to get in touch with your anger, and stop holding these things in. Secondly, I would like to offer you the comfort of believing that very few feminist women and men are going to fall for an offer like this. As a marketing campaign, it is surely doomed by its inherent flaw of targeting intelligent and informed people. And lastly, let me agree with you that this is an egregiously offensive and depraved use of our heroes -- and of ourselves who are still active and passionate in the struggle. Which I am glad you still are. Keep up the good work and clean up your language.

Fondly,  
Sybil

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Subscriptions to *The Voice* are free upon request although a donation is requested to meet publication and distribution costs.

## MMOW *Continued from page 1*

If HRC, UFMCC, and LLEGO really want to build an event that is based in a grassroots movement, there's only one real option -- go back to the beginning, Hold organizing and strategy meetings around the country (just one meeting in a coastal city is not really an open process) with all L/G/B/T organizations encouraged to be voting participants and with attendance and participation open to all. These meetings would not assume that a rally will be held on April 30, 2000 in Washington but would address such questions as: *Is there a consensus supporting a national march/rally? When and where should the event be held? What are the goals for it? planning? How will we make sure that the planning is inclusive of the diversity of the L/G/B/T movement and accountable to the grassroots? What will be done so that financing of this event does not adversely effect funding for other important work?*

Answering those questions and the many more generated in the process of discussion and debate will take us a long way toward developing new activists, strengthening organizations and building an inclusive movement. And *if* a consensus for a march emerges, it could take a million or more of us to Washington, D.C. □

### MMOW Related Developments

**November, 1997** Robin Tyler proposes a national march in Washington for 2000 to the leadership of NGLTF who decline in favor of supporting already proposed state marches.

**February 3, 1998** Robin Tyler calls Directors of leading L/G/B/T organizations asking for their endorsement of the march telling them they must decide immediately as the press conference is already scheduled for February 4.

**February 4, 1998** The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) issue a press release announcing their plans to sponsor the Millennium March on Washington for Equal Rights (MMOW), "the first first human rights march of the new millennium" in 2000. The event will be produced by Robin Tyler who is employed as Executive Director.

**Mid-February, 1998** HRC Executive Director, Elizabeth Birch temporarily stops the march planning process in response to the surrounding controversy.

**March 5, 1998** Birch and Troy issue a joint statement listing benefits of the march and call the controversy surrounding the march a "mud fight that has emerged among those who would criticize this idea."

**March 6, 1998** Nicole Ramirez-Murray, Co-Chair of the National Latino/a Lesbian and Gay Organization (LLEGO) issues a statement of support for the Millennium March and announces LLEGO is joining the MMOW lead organizations, HRC and UFMCC, as an "equal partner." **April 23, 1998** The National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum, an organization which initially endorsed the march and then withdrew endorsement, holds a public meeting about the march. This meeting is the only public forum on the march up to that date.

**April 30, 1998** UFMCC, LLEGO and HRC announce the Millennium March will be held on April 30, 2000.

**May, 1998** The Millennium March is reported to be a major controversy at the annual retreat of Executive Directors of large L/G/B/T organizations.

**June 2, 1998** The Ad Hoc Committee for an Open Process, activists who have been demanding a democratic and inclusive process for deciding whether to hold a national event, issue a proposal calling for a national discussion on whether or not to go to Washington. By June 8, 85 L/G/B/T activists and community leaders have signed the proposal.

**June 9, 1998** An invitation-only meeting between rally organizers and selected executive directors of L/G/B/T organizations is held in Washington, D.C. Members of the Ad Hoc Committee for an Open Process who attend uninvited are allowed only to make a brief statement in the morning session.

**June 18, 1998** A UFMCC press release announces the initial Board will have 15 members, seven of whom were chosen at the June 9 meeting, two others who were appointed after the meeting and six who remain to be appointed.

For more information see the HRC Web site: [www.hrc.org/](http://www.hrc.org/) the UFMCC Web site: [www.ufmcc.com/millennium.htm](http://www.ufmcc.com/millennium.htm); *Sojourner* (June 1998, Vol 23, No. 10) on the Internet at [www.sojourner.org/](http://www.sojourner.org/) and various documents available at: <http://qrd.rdrop.com/qrd/usa/dc/> □

# HEADLINES

by Margaret Cox

June 9, 1998: The top two headlines in the *Daily Oklahoman*:

- 1) "Former Medford Priest Sentenced in Two Rapes"
- 2) "Retired Judge Pleads No Contest, Deferred Sentence Expected in Molestation Case"

The priest received a 15-year suspended prison sentence for raping two elderly female patients in a nursing home. He pleaded no contest to the charges. One of the women was blind and unable to speak.

The judge, 72, is scheduled for sentencing July 28 on the felony lewd molestation conviction, after pleading no contest to molesting a minor girl, who was an altar girl in the church in which he was a deacon.

Inside the paper, a story tells of a Sheriff in western Oklahoma who was booked into jail on complaint of raping a 15-year old girl. He was released later in the day and no charges have been filed, but he has been suspended from his duties as sheriff.

Well, fifty years ago, we didn't have altar girls, so I guess we've come a long way, baby.

Also in the Jun 9 paper is the story of the vicious killing of a black man, who was tied to a car and dragged to his death along a rural east Texas road. Three white men are in custody and suspected ties to the ku klux klan are being investigated.

Well, fifty years ago this would not have generated headlines, so I guess we have come a long way, baby.

In the June 6, 1988 *Austin American Statesman*, the headline read: "Gay Republicans [say]: Party Hurts Itself by Excluding Us. Evidently, the Log Cabin Republicans, a gay and lesbian group, were refused their request for exhibit space at the upcoming state GOP Convention. The President of the Log Cabin Republicans said, "We're not asking for special rights. We're Republicans asking for the same opportunity to be heard that other Republicans have."

A Republican party spokesman said, "...the Republican Party is not going to allow individuals like the Log Cabins or the KKK or any other hate group that are in direct conflict with our philosophy a forum to spread their hateful message. We don't allow pedophiles, transvestites or cross-dressers, either."

Members of the Log Cabin Repubs sued the party last year, when they were first denied exhibit and advertising space at the 1997 state convention, and the Texas Supreme Court ruled against them, saying the GOP is a private organization.

Well Lesbians and Gays wouldn't have been allowed space at the Republican Convention fifty years ago, either, so I guess we haven't come so far, have we baby?

For our Headline lesson of the day, I respectfully submit that any person or entity who doesn't think sexism and racism remain rampant and continue to poison our society and devastate us all, is "a idiot and a ass." Also, it is perfectly clear to me that the only possible name for a gay and lesbian Republican organization; and I offer it to them at no charge, and expect they will really like it because it keeps the rural and sturdy undertone of "Log Cabin" is Fence Post Republicans - as in dumb as a ....."□

# GO FISH

by Diedra

I was watching *Go Fish* with a group of friends - granted the company was mixed: a straight married couple and some bi-folk - when they became more annoyed with the rough sound track and editing than the subject matter of lesbian relationships, so we turned it off. I was sill curious. The dialogue and intent was what I went fishing for.

*Go Fish* is obviously made with a limited budget, hence the home-movie sounds, the jumpy camera and some amateur imagery run throughout the film but it is also comfortable, like listening in on some intelligent and witty observations. It is more like a familiar play, dealing with issues and situations maybe you too have lived before. I ended up appreciating the naturalness or the inexperience of the actors quickly recognizing the importance of any film being mad dealing directly with gay themes.

For me, the boldest and my favorite segment was a mock trial of Dorla, one of the main characters, who did not feel the need to defend her open sexuality. The lesbians demanded to know why she ever wanted to experience a possible bisexuality and Dorla shot back with just as many interesting questions as their own but I'll let you decide for yourself.

*Go Fish* treads deep waters: fear of intimacy, the complications of age differences, monogamous relationships, individual choice but I did want more of a sensuous story and two characters instead of so many brief glimpses would have held more emotional connection. Yet I recommend *Go Fish* and would love a movie discussion group to begin. If interested call me: Deidra 209-0171.□

Dear Reader:

I am a graduate student working on my Ph.D. in Family Relations and Child Development at Oklahoma State University. My dissertation is focusing on studying family relationships and parenting styles in Lesbian Headed Households.

I am seeking 20 couples of whom at least one member has brought a child into the current relationship from a previous relationship (i.e., a previous heterosexual relationship, an adoption, etc.). The child or children do need to still be living at home. Participants will be asked to participate in three areas: the completion of a questionnaire packet, a personal interview with each individual and an interview with the couple. These interviews will concentrate on the family dynamic and parenting styles of the participants and will not cover topics which deal with sensitive aspects of personal behavior such as drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol.

As a member of the lesbian community, I am very aware of the degrees of "outness" we all experience, therefore every effort will be made to insure confidentiality including the use of "pseudonyms" in any discussions and written materials dealing with interviews.

If you are interested in participating in this study please call me (feel free to call collect) at (405) 377-2068. If I am not home an answering machine heard only by me is available. I ask you do not use your real name so I will not know your identity at anytime thus protecting your confidentiality. At the time you call I will give you additional information and you can decide at that time if you are willing to participate.

Thank you,  
Jill Rohrbacker



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