

NETWORK NEWS

Vol. 2, No. 1

The Newsletter of the Maine Rural Network

Spring 1999

Jasper, Texas Says "No" to Hate

Jasper Texas made history in February by convicting a white person for the murder of a black person, for the first time in Texas history. While this is a definite step forward for justice, it does little to redress the horrifying events played out there last June.

As the facts unfolded in the trial of John King, the convicted murderer of James Byrd Jr., the details of the incident have been haunting. Initially it was believed that Byrd was unconscious from the beating he suffered before he was chained to the back of King's pick up truck and dragged to his death. But the forensic evidence shows that he attempted to keep his head off the ground by holding himself up on his elbows as he was dragged. There was no flesh left on his arms, the dragging having removed everything down to the

bone. As he continued to be dragged, his body was pulled apart and lay in pieces down the three mile stretch of road. All of this was done in the middle of an African American community.

It is important to put these details in writing because it is essential that we understand the terrorism involved in this killing. Hate crimes are deliberate acts of terrorism as well as demonstrations of hate. It is hard to imagine the level of pain and terror James Byrd must have felt. The reverberations of his brutal murder on the community must be terrible and in many ways unfathomable to those who have not experienced this kind of hatred directly. Being abruptly confronted with the details brings one face to face with brutality that is not often revealed so clearly. Comparable to the impact of Rodney King's beating in

Los Angeles, this incident has had a profound impact on Jasper, Texas, as well as the rest of the country.

Opposing terror and hate and creating viable, safe communities is one of the purposes of Maine Rural Network. It is about mobilizing communities all over Maine to say intolerance and violence have no place here. This is your chance to get involved in this transformative work and to do it in the name of James Bryrd, Jr., Matthew Shepard and anyone else who has ever suffered as the result of hatred fostered by ignorance. □



Maine Rural Network Social Justice Group Schedule

March 13

Androscoggin meeting at 2pm,
Room 130 of the Olin Arts
Center, Bates College

March 27

Foothills Fairness Project meets,
7pm, Room C23, Roberts
Learning Center, U/Maine-
Farmington. Contact Brian at
778-7379 for more information

March 28

Kennebec meeting at 10:30am
at the UU church,
84 Silver Street, Waterville

March 28

Oxford meeting at 4pm
at the UU Church,
479 Maine Street, Norway

April

Northern Oxford County meeting
- Rumford area. Date and
location still to be determined

For more information regarding
any of these meetings, please
contact Naomi at 642-2015 or
nomad@watchic.net

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Maine Rural Network is to promote visibility and security for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people living in rural Maine, and to work for social, educational and economic justice for all Maine people. The Maine Rural Network seeks to accomplish this by empowering individuals living in rural Maine to organize, establish and support autonomous groups locally and to create a network statewide.

Publication Information

Network News is published quarterly in March, June, September and December. If you would like to contribute a calendar item or short article please send it to us by the 15th of the month prior to the quarterly publication date.

Maine Rural Network
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Maine Rural Network Group Activities

The Foothills Fairness Project

On February 6, the Foothills Fairness Project held its first meeting in Farmington. Twelve people showed up on snowy, cold, Saturday night. They represented a variety of backgrounds and interests: students, educators, authors, a politician and interested community members.

Brian Kaufman, professor of psychology at UMF, civil rights activist and MRN board member, began the meeting by introducing the concept of community organizing using democratic principles. He stressed that democracy is about inclusion of all and reminded people that the right's initiatives are anti-democratic. The use of democracy works as a non-controversial tool to make it possible for everyone to realize what is at stake when discrimination is allowed to flourish.

Then *Not In Our Town* was shown, a video about the response of a community to the rise of hate crimes in their area. The video was presented as a method for mobilizing people who are not overtly political but who are concerned about the mistreatment of their neighbors.

This generated a discussion about how to impact the Farmington area and what people perceived to be the problems there. There were a range of ideas about the direction FFP should go in its pursuit of social justice for all, but many of the ideas boiled down to economic justice and civil rights concerns. Much of the discussion focused on hate crimes and their

underlying causes, which were generally agreed to be economic stress gone awry.

The next meeting of the Foothills Fairness Project will be Saturday, March 27, at 7:00 pm in room C 23 of the Roberts Learning Center at U/Maine Farmington. For more information please call Brian at 778-7379.

The Oxford County Group

The Oxford County group met in Norway on February 27. The topics discussed included civil rights issues and working toward a more inclusive and progressive Oxford County. Community response to hate crimes has been limited and there was general agreement that isolation and lack of community support made it hard for even the most committed activists to get involved.

Similar concerns to those of the members of the Foothills Fairness Project were expressed, involving economic justice, civil rights and the invisibility of native, working class Mainers in the public perception of the LGBT community.

There was definite interest in using the *Not In Our Town* video as an educational tool. Pride at Work also generated interest. Pride at Work is an LGBT organization promoting LGBT issues within unions and unions within the LGBT community, while countering the stereotype that the LGBT community are all middle class people who are not native to Maine.

The next meeting will be March 28, at 4pm at the U.U. Church, 479 Main Street, Norway. For more information please contact Naomi at 642-2015/nomad@watchic.net.

Community Bulletin Board

March 6 - MLGPA Banquet. 6pm social hour, 7pm dinner, 8 pm awards, 9pm to midnight dancing, Augusta Civic Center. Reservations must be made in advance. FMI ☎ 626-9309.

March 9 - Massachusetts Dept. of Ed. members speak about their Safe Schools program. 3-4:30pm in the Main Lounge, Moulton Union, Bowdoin College, Brunswick. FMI ☎ 725-3465.

March 13 - MRN's Androcoggin social justice group formation and showing of *Not In Our Town*, 2pm, Room 130 of Olin Arts Center, Bates College, Lewiston. Snow date 3/14, same time/location. FMI ☎ Naomi at 642-2015.

March 16 - Elaine Bernard of Harvard Trade Unions Program speaks on social unionism - social activism beyond trade unionism. 7pm, Moot Court. USM law school.

March 20 - Hancock Co. community networking meeting. UU Church, Ellsworth. FMI ☎ Peter Rees 667-7828.

March 24 - Equality Begins at Home lunch 10am to 2pm, Moose Room, State House in Augusta.

March 27 - Equality Begins at Home march and rally 11am, Cony High School, (120 Cony St.), Augusta.

March 27 - Foothills Fairness Project meeting, 7pm, Room C23, Roberts Learning Center, U/Maine Farmington. FMI please contact Brian at 778-7379.

March 28 - MRN's Kennebec County social justice group formation and showing of *Not In Our Town*, 10:30am, UU Church, 84 Silver Street, Waterville. FMI ☎ Naomi at 642-2015.

March 28 - MRN's Oxford County group meets at 4pm at the UU Church, 479 Main Street, Norway. FMI ☎ Naomi 642-2015.

April - Northern Oxford (Rumford area) MRN social justice group forming. FMI ☎ Naomi at 642-2015.

April 9-11 - Reproductive Rights Conference at Hampshire College, Amherst, MA. This is a free conference and an opportunity for student and community activists to network with people who are interested in reproductive rights and health. FMI ☎ (413) 559-5645.

April 24 - HOPE (Help Organize Peace Earthwide) Earth Day Festival with an organizational fair, music, speakers, and children's program, 10am - 5pm, Brewer

Auditorium. FMI ☎ 942-9343, Peace & Justice Center of Eastern Maine, 170 Park St., Bangor 04401. peacectr@mint.net.

May 1 - First annual Economic Freedom Day hosted by Hospitality House, noon. Tentative location is Capital Park, FMI and to confirm location ☎ 453-2986.

May 14-16 The second Grassroots Organizers Workshops (GROW) Conference at Camp Winona, Bridgeton. FMI ☎ Nancy at 567-4075 and see box below.

May 28-31 - Symposium XXV at the University of Maine - Presque Isle. See article on following page.

Maine Rural Network Decals

Be the first one on your acreage to have a MRN decal. For the price of a membership in MRN you too could display your support for advancing civil rights in rural Maine. For a donation of \$20 or more you can be the proud owner of a blue and green MRN decal.

National Day of Appreciation for Abortion Providers

is Wednesday, March 10, 1999. You are encouraged to write letters in support to your local paper, reminding people that committed healthcare workers risk their lives to keep choice a reality.

GrassRoots Organizers Workshop

Save This Date! The second GROW Conference is coming to Southern Maine **May 14, 15 & 16th**. Come discover the vitality of the wonderful community of grassroots organizers, enjoy a mix of training workshops and relaxation at Camp Winona in Bridgeton, a beautiful, comfortable "old Maine" camp looking over a lake to the snow-capped Presidential Range. For more information call Nancy Galland at 567-4075.

Sponsored by the Institute for Non-violence, Education, Research & Training (INVERT).

Symposium XXV

This state's annual statewide gathering, the Maine Lesbian-Gay-Bi-Trans Symposium XXV is planned for Memorial Day weekend, Friday through Monday, May 28-31, 1999, on the campus of the University of Maine at Presque Isle. This is the fifth time that year's sponsors, the women and men of Northern Lambda Nord, are hosting this important weekend gathering. The conference is a chance to exchange ideas, argue, discuss, meet old friends, make new ones, and spend a long weekend in a relaxed and safe environment. Activities include two keynote speakers, workshops, films, discussion workshops, and plenty of free time to enjoy "The Crown of Maine." Participants are housed on campus, and all meals are provided.

When Symposium is held in Presque Isle, the weekend event draws about 20% Canadians. As is traditional when Northern Lambda Nord hosts this conference, one of the two keynote speakers is a Canadian. This year's two keynote speakers are Diane Elze, longtime activist,

someone who was involved in the earliest Symposia, and organizer of the Outright/Portland youth group. Robin Metcalfe is a community historian, visual arts curator, and longtime Canadian activist from Halifax, who has written essays and erotic fiction for gay periodicals around the world.

Bob Poirier, videographer from Portland, will screen and discuss his film, "Tangible Fathers," the story of a gay priest.

Saturday night entertainment will be provided by Lynn Deeves and Martin Swinger. The concert will be followed by a dance with a special DJ.

Six meals are included in the "full plan" registration fee: Saturday breakfast, lunch, and an Acadian-style buffet banquet; Sunday brunch and an evening pizza party; and Monday breakfast. Friday evening hors d'oeuvres will also be served. All meals will include both meat and meatless dishes; special dietary needs can be accommodated when requested in advance.

Child care is available with advance notice.

A variety of workshop discussion groups are planned. Confirmed to date are: Community Building through Rural Organizing, Monogamy vs. assorted non-monogamies, Transgendered issues, institutionalized homophobia/heterosexism, and a discussion of the book "Two Flutes Playing" written by Andrew Ramer.

Costs for the entire weekend are: the "complete package," which includes 3 night's lodging (double occupancy), 6 meals, and admission to all events for \$140; two nights plus meals is \$120; one night plus meals is \$90. Other "commuter" plans - with no lodging - cost even less (prices are slightly higher if you register after May 1). A limited number of scholarships are available.

For a pre-registration form, write to Symposium 25, POB 990, Caribou, ME 04736-0990, or e-mail to symposium@mfx.net, or call the Gay & Lesbian Phoneline of Maine in Caribou at 498-0900, Mon-Fri from 7-9pm (leave a message at other times).

I believe that human dignity is the basic right of every person.
I want Maine Rural Network to bring that message to all parts of Maine.

Individual
☐ \$20

Household
☐ \$35

Activist
☐ \$50

Organizer
☐ \$100

Visionary
☐ \$250

☐ \$ _____

Name _____

Street _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: day _____ evening: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Your contribution for our educational efforts is tax-deductible. Please make checks payable to MRN..

☐ I'd like to join a local social justice group. Please contact me.

THE BOWDOIN COLLEGE COLLOQUIUM ON CURRENT ISSUES IN SCHOOLS

Lessons from the Massachusetts Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students will be presented by Kim Westheimer and Jeff Perrotti of the Massachusetts Department of Education on Tuesday, March 9, 1999, from 3-4:30pm in the Main Lounge of Bowdoin's Moulton Union, Brunswick. Over the past five years, Massachusetts has pioneered the first state funded initiative to address sexual orientation in schools and promote equity for gay, lesbian, bisexual students. Kim Westheimer and Jeff Perrotti, staff members instrumental in the program's development will share the program's successes and challenges over the past 5 years, and strategies for educators to address gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues in their states, schools and

communities. A brief video highlighting the Safe Schools Program will be shown.

Kim Westheimer is the School Program Coordinator for the Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students at the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Jeff Perrotti was the Founding Director of the Safe Schools Program and is currently a Senior Trainer for the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN).

For more information, please call 725-3465

Bringing together Maine educators, Bowdoin faculty and students, and local community members for inquiry, discussion, and debate.

"Equality Begins at Home"

Save This Date!

Wednesday, March 24

What is it? An exposition/luncheon for all lgbt organizations.

When? Wednesday, March 24, 10am - 2pm

Where? Moose Room of the State House in Augusta.

Who? Every LGBT organization in the state is invited.

Cost? Absolutely free, including the luncheon!

Why? To show legislators just how broad and strong the LGBT community is *and* to celebrate a nationwide event called "Equality Begins At Home."

We are hosting this exposition/luncheon for all legislators to see how broad and strong the LGBT community in Maine is. We will achieve this goal only if the majority of LGBT organizations participate. There is no cost to any organization. Lunch is included for all participants.

If you are part of an LGBT organization of any kind, please join us at this event. We recognize that the event takes place on a weekday and that most of us work full-time, but it is the only time that legislators will be there. We feel this event will have a significant impact on the way legislators view our community. And as we strive for equal rights, we need their support now more than ever.

And Save This Date!!

Saturday, March 27

What is it? A statewide rally for equal rights!!!

When? Saturday, March 27, 11am - 1pm

Where? Cony High School, (120 Cony Street), Augusta

Who? LGBT and ALLIES!!!

Why? To continue building community and to kick off the new effort to attain equal rights in Maine *and* to celebrate "Equality Begins At Home."

Come celebrate!! Come rally for equal rights!! Why are we celebrating and rallying?!

- A new coalition, MAINE COALITION FOR EQUAL RIGHTS has been meeting and strategizing since last summer. (All meetings are open!)
- Six (6!) civil rights bills have been introduced to the Legislature.
- A lobbyist is closely monitoring and advocating on our behalf.
- We are beginning our newest effort to achieve equal rights for LGBT people!
- Equality Begins At Home - a first-of-its-kind national event is happening in every state. Come celebrate with live music, local and national speakers, information, networking and food!! Bring all your friends!!

Note: The rally will be followed by the monthly meeting of the Maine Coalition for Equal Rights, 1-4pm. Come learn how you can be involved in this newest effort.

INVERT/MRN
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