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Through Rainbow Colored Glasses
By Christine Dinsmore

There's an e-mail bouncing around the Internet, urging people to go see and then picket the movie *Notes on a Scandal*. The letter oozes with indignation because an old woman, played by Judi Dench, is portrayed as a predatory dyke. The offended moviegoer claims that the film reeks of ageism and homophobia, and she berates the filmmaker for propagating a 1950s stereotype of lesbians as unattractive, lonely women who prey on young, straight lovelies.

Now, I can experience moral outrage with the best of them, and I love when people take it to the streets, but really—all that energy expended on a movie?

It reminds me of a phone call I received from my sister back in 1970 about a burgeoning demonstration in front of the Mattel factory. "The Moral Majority has descended upon Mattel en masse because the company just introduced the Barbie & Ken camper—and they're not married. Would you believe, they're protesting the morals of dolls?"

It drives me crazy when people go ballistic over fiction, when it's reality that should scare us to death. And yes, I understand that fiction breeds vicious stereotypes and props up lies that influence reality. Of course, art is powerful. But it seems that we sometimes get overly sensitive.

I know most Italians aren't in the Mafia. And straight men are the usual suspects in pedophilia or predatory sex. I also realize that women are more endangered by the men they know than the stranger lurking in an alleyway.

Pop culture doesn't reflect our world. Instead, it dulls our sense of reality by blanketing us with endless tidbits on the rich and the famous.

Let's face it, more lesbians live their lives like my spouse and I than like the characters on the *L Word* or Barbara Covett (Dame Judi's character) in *Notes on a Scandal*. But no one would pay to see my life on the big or small screen. Viewers and readers are drawn to...the unique, the innovative, the bizarre, the surprise. As the media can attest, "Man Bites Dog" sells more newspapers than "Dog Bites Man."

I haven't seen a wave of protestors in front of our local theaters, leafletting moviegoers on the way to see the film. But for that matter, I haven't seen tons of

folks at local vigils to end the Iraq war. And the One Campaign (www.one.org) or the Save Darfur Coalition (www.safedarfur.org) hasn't sprouted wings here.

Perhaps the flurry of e-mails about Notes is indicative of human nature. For the most part we are a whole lot of bluster about principles, with little action and follow-through. Our species doesn't like to be inconvenienced.

Yet on the other hand, there are heroes in the Hudson Valley who have put their bodies on the line for equality, peace, and justice. Like Maureen Ford, Natalie Korniloff, and Cheryl Qamar, who took on the Ulster County Legislature to ensure that same-sex domestic partners of Ulster County employees would receive benefits equal to those of their straight colleagues' spouses. Or Joan Monastero, who, every year during Easter week, travels to Nevada, where civil disobedience outside the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Nevada Test Site gets her thrown into the slammer. Or Dr. Willie Yee, who has made repeated trips to New Orleans to ameliorate the trauma of Katrina survivors. And let's not forget the busloads of people from here who traveled to D.C. on January 27 to end Bush's madness.

Their lives aren't flashy enough to make it to the silver screen. They'll never be seen on American Idol.

But who cares about American Idol? The sad truth is, far too many of us.