

Voices of the Vampire Community (VVC) Public Meeting – March 22, 2011

Attendees (15):

BoxDweller – The Pumpkin Order
Corvis Nocturnum – Dark Moon Press & Independent Representative
Deacon Gray – House of the Dreaming (HotD) & Graveyard Press
Ithril - Independent Representative
Lono – PsychicVampire.org
Mairi – ShadowLore
Merticus – Atlanta Vampire Alliance (AVA) & Suscitatio Enterprises, LLC
Mistress Mikyla – Vampire Church & Independent Representative
NyteMuse – House Rosa
Rune – House Rosa
SphynxCatVP – SphynxCatVP Real Vampires Support Site
Sylvere ap Leanan – Real Vampires Community Alliance (RVCA)
The Pink Lady – Vampirism eList
Vyrdolak – By Light Unseen
Zero – Atlanta Vampire Alliance (AVA) & Suscitatio Enterprises, LLC

Discussion Agenda:

I. Meeting Info & Introductions

Welcome to the first public meeting of Voices of the Vampire Community (VVC) for 2011. If you have not attended a VVC meeting before or are reading this for the first time please briefly take note of how this meeting will be conducted. The transcript from tonight's meeting is being logged and will be made publicly available.

Topics will be presented in the order they appear on the agenda (VVC members may refer to the forum or their e-mail for tonight's schedule). Please do not skip ahead and please do not suggest discussion of items not on the agenda until at the end of each major discussion topic.

Feel free to speak your mind on any and all topics in a civil manner and offer any supporting information, links, or material as needed. Thank you for coming and now let's begin!

II. Background & Introduction

VVC was founded January 2006.

The purpose of the Voices of the Vampire Community (VVC) is to develop friendly relations among the various Houses, Covens, Orders, and other organizations of the vampire community; to encourage cooperation in solving community related problems

and in promoting respect for the views, ideas, and opinions of others without seeking to establish a unifying or governing body; and to be a center for harmonizing the actions of groups in attaining these ends. – August 8, 2006

Voices Of The Vampire Community (VVC) does not assert itself as the exclusive organization of leaders or notable persons in the vampi(y)re community nor do we view ourselves or our actions as legislative or authoritarian.

The members of the VVC are representative of multiple groups, Houses, Orders, paths, beliefs, and segments of the vampi(y)re community who meet and are able to put aside personal differences to work together to discuss, suggest, implement, and support projects, ideas, and other intellectual works that help to improve the overall community.

For more information please visit our web site at:

<http://www.veritasvosliberabit.com/vvc.html>

We are available to answer questions through the community feedback form available at the site above.

III. Discussion

As a departure from the specific matters we discuss in business meetings, tonight's meeting will take a broader and more relevant approach to the vampi(y)re community. Opinions offered from members of the VVC who are unable to attend tonight's meeting will be posted first after the asking of each question. All present members please allow time for this to occur prior to posting your own response. Just as a reminder, conversation is to be kept civil, statements or claims backed by example where necessary, and in cases of insuperable disagreements; a concession between parties to respectfully agree to disagree.

Let's start the evening with these questions:

a. Sang/Psi Separation - A Two-Part Question: There has recently been a resurgence in debate and discussion across the vampire community regarding the differences in manifestations or personal interpretation of vampirism, most notably sanguinarian and psychic/psi feeding methods. (1) What are your thoughts about the creation of "type specific" forums or groups? (2) Do you think the division of the community into two or three distinct segments would improve or hinder the overall study and understanding of one's personal vampirism?

b. Custody Battles Where Vampirism Is A Factor - A Two-Part Question: (1) In light of the growing awareness of custody battles affecting self-identified vampires and donors where community involvement and/or the practice of vampirism is a factor, what can be done to help safeguard against or minimize the impact vampirism has in such situations? (2) What can be done, if anything, to protect oneself against reprisals by spouses, loved ones, or even third-parties should they choose to present evidence to the

court of blood drinking and other vampiric practices?

c. Academic Interpretations Of The Vampire Community & Real Vampirism:

Historically, the general public's awareness of and information about the vampire community and real vampirism has typically come from sensationalist media attention and literary works from colourful personalities on the fringes of or labeled to be associated with the vampire community and from high-profile individuals within the vampire community. More recently, several academics have started to garner attention, usually presenting less sensational, primarily external perspectives. These are typically of greater influence on the views of those in the outside world than perspectives generated internally. (1) How does this impact the external view of the community and vampirism (positively or negatively)? (2) In what ways can we impact what information and perspectives those outside the community are presented with?

d. Strengthening Ties With Other Communities - A Three-Part Question: There is a high degree of overlap between the vampire community and some other identity groups and subcultures (such as the Pagan, Wiccan, BDSM, and GLBT communities) both in terms of issues within and outside perspectives of our communities and in crossover of membership or self-identification. (1) Should we try to strengthen those ties and what would be the benefits and disadvantages of doing so? (2) In what ways could those connections be strengthened? (3) What could we learn from the Pagan, Wiccan, BDSM, and GLBT communities that we could apply towards community building efforts within our own community?

e. Other topics you'd like to bring up for discussion?

IV. Business Reminders

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- <Merticus> Let's start the evening with these questions:
- <Merticus> **a. There has recently been a resurgence in debate and discussion across the vampire community regarding the differences in manifestations or personal interpretation of vampirism, most notably sanguinarian and psychic/psi feeding methods.**
- <Merticus> **What are your thoughts about the creation of "type specific"**

forums or groups? Do you think the division of the community into two or three distinct segments would improve or hinder the overall study and understanding of one's personal vampirism?

- <CorvisNocturnum> Specific type of forums are good due to the fact people need a place to call their own, to feel others can relate and connect with them, as family going through the same things. But a shared community such as the VVC, Vampire Community News (VCN), Darkness Embraced (DE), etc. are as needed for people no matter the subtle differences, also need to not feel segregated. So in a nutshell, both are needed, not the exclusion of one for the other. Networking for similar, community interactions and shared causes/media front should be the focus. United we stand!
- <Mairi> I don't see where having "type specific" forums or groups would solve anything. If it did anything it would drive a bigger wedge between us. It all comes down to one thing. Doesn't matter what type of energy we feed upon we are all Vampires (vampiric). Feeding upon blood doesn't give one special talents or skills anymore than feeding upon psychic/psi energies does. And in my opinion those who says it does is just trying to be more important than another.
- <Rune> I think that if sangs or psis want private spaces to speak about their similarities, that's all to the better. I also think that it's good for them to congregate within common space, so that they don't get all cliquish and exclusionary. However, I don't think vampirism is as simple as defining it as "psi" or "sang" or what have you. I think there are a lot of kinds of vampirism and I think that we need to be open-minded about what kinds there are, and how they work. Not so open a mind that our brains fall out, but still... we're still working on hypotheses right now, let's keep our options open.
- <Vyrdolak> I have to admit that I'm kind of baffled at all the fuss this is causing.
- <NyteMuse> I was initially against, but having heard from Sphynx and some of the other sangs, I have to admit there does seem to be a need for "safe space" as it were to discuss topics away from outsider naysayers. I would like to hope that there would still be SOME common meeting places for all "types", but I think the moderation might have to be more carefully done.
- <ThePinkLady> I can understand why blood drinkers would want their own space to discuss matters that may put them in legal trouble.
- <DeaconGray> I am all for the idea!
- <NyteMuse> I wish there WASN'T a need for it, but, well...spilt milk and all.
- <Sylvere> The question in my mind is whether or not such boards will exclude someone because s/he isn't of that specific "type" or isn't purely so. Take the proposed "sang only" forums.

<Sylvere> Will they exclude hybrids who prefer blood but can get by on psychic feeding when they can't get the red stuff? How about hybrids who need to feed both ways?

<Vyrdolak> When people started moving into the multi-forum boards, you got this trend of everyone wanting to be all things to all.

<Mikyla> I am too, Vyrdolak. I believe there is no reason to not have different groups for different feeding styles. The Vampire Church has long been established as a place for psi vampires as has Lono's board. Why not sangs, too?

<DeaconGray> Most I have talked too are sang focused, not sang only.

<ThePinkLady> But there's a lot of spin by blooddrinkers and energy consumers saying that one side wants to leave the other out.

<Sylvere> What about someone who doesn't drink blood but wants to learn and, in turn, pass information on to others?

<Vyrdolak> Before that, there were lots of psi-only forums and a few sang-only forums.

<Merticus> Yes, I'm not aware of a hybrid only forum - sub boards, yes.

<Sylvere> If you hole up, exclude everyone who isn't pure sang, and only write articles without ever participating in a mixed-company dialogue, how exactly is this beneficial?

<SphynxCatVP> I don't believe it would hinder anything to have "type specific" fora; needing to discuss things that may squick other people, share experiences that (in the case of sanguines) others might consider potentially illegal or - to a degree - frightening to those who don't deal with it.

<Sylvere> And how are you going to eliminate those who claim there is some genetic or organic basis for vampirism when the current science says there isn't?

<Sylvere> Is the goal to get more people to engage in medical testing and share the results in order to find a common thread or is it going to be a big circle jerk where you don't have to worry about anyone calling bullshit on the pseudoscience some people still wave around like it's Truth From On High?

<SphynxCatVP> We have a large number of shared/mixed fora today; sharing information is certainly not that hard to do.

<DeaconGray> Wow many type specific and exclusive forums are in operation... actively?

<Merticus> I'm currently editing a 60 page list Deacon... I should finish at some point this month.

<DeaconGray> Not just in operation, but are also active?

<Merticus> There are probably two dozen or so active forums in the OVC. (not counting Facebook, Yahoo Groups, Ning, etc.)

<Merticus> There is also a Sang-only Ning group at the moment.

<ThePinkLady> @Sphynx: A forum like that would need tight control and agreement among participants for legal safety. Not impossible, but difficult.

<Vyrdolak> Let's look at the key tension.

<Vyrdolak> A lot of people seem to want separate forums, at least as an option.

<Vyrdolak> and the chief objection is that others feel "excluded". But no one is saying, close the global forums, or that the non-included group can't have their own venues, too

<BoxDweller> If the community was directed into a more separate group situation, where would tantric vampires find themselves? There is always a debate on where the individuals who don't really fit fully into one group have to defend themselves within each forum.

<SphynxCatVP> *says dryly* Where people are getting the idea of end-result information will never be shared, I haven't got the foggiest clue.

<DeaconGray> Got one... sexual vampires.

<ThePinkLady> @Vyrdolak: I favor hands-on moderation over separate spaces. I think people drag the whole psy/sang thing out whenever they want to troll around or cause drama.

<DeaconGray> Me too PinkLady.

<ThePinkLady> To foster a community, you need people willing to be the bad guy so the space can exist for everyone.

<Vyrdolak> I favor hands-on moderation *everywhere*. But we're not looking at the underlying cause for this yearning for separate space.

<DeaconGray> People want to feel special... let them.

<Vyrdolak> What are the "separatists" not getting in global forums that they need? Heaping them with abuse for wanting a space isn't constructive.

<ThePinkLady> @Vyrdolak: To explore different types of vampirism, right?

<DeaconGray> They will soon run out of sang only topics, or psi only topics and end up at Vampire Community News (VCN) on Facebook.

<DeaconGray> You guys realize every time someone screams... we should have our own forum and we say GO for it... they never do.

<DeaconGray> Well perhaps not never... but who's stopping them?

<Vyrdolak> Clearly it's not just to "explore". It's a question of affinity and feeling that they're not being heard, or are being judged, in global fora.

<BoxDweller> Would creating more sang only and psi only groups create more distance than some already try to create between different feeding methods?

<Vyrdolak> Used to be, Deacon, that people ran off and created their own forums at the drop of a flame

<Merticus> New forums and groups typically have a very quick shelf life.

<NyteMuse> I think the market hit saturation there, sort of.

<NyteMuse> There are just *too many*.

<ThePinkLady> Maybe I'm an insensitive lout, but are there legal issues with energy consumption? The way I read the question, it seems to

me that sangs want some place to discuss cutting and donors without getting arrested and the psis see that as elitism.

<NyteMuse> Nope, no legal issues with energy consumption.

<Vyrdolak> A lot of the longevity issues come from the motives for forming them in the first place--reactive, not well thought-out.

<NyteMuse> Worst-case-scenario is you get labeled as crazy for talking about eating energy.

<Sylvere> A private board is, by definition, neither positive nor constructive to the community as a whole.

<Sylvere> Those who wish to splinter off from the community, by definition, do not desire to benefit from or be of benefit to the community.

<Lono> I actually liked it because there were more groups back in the eboards/proboards days, you could easily jump from one board to the next and get a good cross section of the community.

<ThePinkLady> And even lumping as "sangs" and "psis" ruffles feathers.

<Merticus> Sylvere: I think you need to define private more, as in hidden posts and memberships or invitation only by feeding method?

<ThePinkLady> @Sylvere: Do you think it's possible to openly discuss the intricacies of your beliefs on a public board?

<Vyrdolak> I think all the redundant global forums do more to prevent cohesion than would themed forums.

<Sylvere> @Merticus: I see no benefit in either case.

* NyteMuse agrees with Vyrdolak

<ThePinkLady> Feeding methods, donors, etc.?

<Lono> I kind of disagree Sylvere, pv.org has private boards that are 18+ and 21+

<Lono> For topics that just aren't for younger eyes too discuss.

<Sylvere> @PinkLady: Yes. I think it's possible since I did it on various Otherkin forums and Real-Vampires for over a decade.

<ThePinkLady> How was the response?

<Vyrdolak> Right now, we have a number of active forums and then smaller ones, and they're almost all registration-required, and there's very little overlap among *active* participants.

<Merticus> Many of the current VC forums do not have visible posts without having an account, something to keep in mind.

<NyteMuse> @Sylvere: Are you defining "public board" as something like AVA has, where you don't need a membership to read?

<Sylvere> @Lono: Real-Vamps was always 18+ specifically so we could discuss blood drinking and tantric feeding.

<Sylvere> We discussed them in detail.

<Vyrdolak> So we already have a whole bunch of individual "gated communities" and it doesn't matter what the cross-section of their membership is.

<Lono> Registration required helps prevent trolls, and random flaming.

<ThePinkLady> @Sylvere: Did anyone make fun of anyone else's beliefs, and

how was that handled by the moderators?

<BoxDweller> Having too many forum cliques, can really keep information that could be helpful to the community as some individual feeding methods can overlap.

<Merticus> The AVA forum is read-only public, post-only registered, hidden personal info/intros/and local sections.

<Sylvere> Registration is fine if you want to do that. It's how you go about the screening process that is in question.

<ThePinkLady> I have a feeling that people worry about the "other side" making fun of their practices and that's what's causing the rifts.

<BoxDweller> That's a good point.

<DeaconGray> Seriously...Merticus posted the piece I did on sexual Vampires and the doors nearly fell off... no you cannot discuss the details on public forums without people going on all drama.

<NyteMuse> @Sylvere: All right, so when you say "public", you mean no hidden forums/groups, and any registered member has access to any post, yes?

<Vyrdolak> What it seems like to me is that people somehow feel like one faction will discover the Holy Grail of The Truth About Vampirism and not share it with anyone else.

<Sylvere> @PinkLady: Occasionally people said things that got them made fun of but in the majority of those cases it was something outlandish like they were able to shape shift into a bat or that they were 300 years old.

<DeaconGray> Not so much as feeling like there is a private group only the most popular are invited too and they were excluded.

<Merticus> We welcome discussion on sang, psi, sexual, sang/psi, and everything in-between. I see no need to isolate as far as the information sharing is concerned. Of course I recognize the disagreements in opinion and drama that sometimes surfaces. Though the basic article/info I believe should be viewable to all parties.

<Sylvere> On the Otherkin forums, it ran more to the "I was a fairy princess in my past life so you will all bow to me now" or "I'm a unicorn/mermaid/were-feline" that got them called out.

<DeaconGray> Most sanguinarian vampires are just not going go into it when they have people firing nukes at them...

<Lono> Very true Sylvere.

<Sylvere> In those cases, the moderators didn't do much of anything unless it got to the point of verbal abuse. Then we/they called a halt to it and told everyone to be civil.

<BoxDweller> I agree, Deacon.

<ThePinkLady> I believe there needs to be a blood drinking group with semi-exclusive membership because of the legalities surrounding it. In Virginia (and several other states), injuring someone even with their consent is considered assault, and someone feeling really

nasty could use that information against someone.

<ThePinkLady> But ever since SapphoWolf spontaneously combusted, everyone's looking around wondering who's secretly a nutcase and not to be trusted.

<Vyrdolak> But how does this apply to the question of themed forums for people with specific self-identities? They ALL have their problem people.

<Lono> The only thing I discourage is conversation on bloodletting, this is due to the disclaimer on my site, and because of the field I work in (not any superiority complex).

<Sylvere> @PinkLady: But every state and nation has its own laws. How are you going to keep the people in states where it's illegal out?

<Sylvere> Are you going to keep them out even if they are of the "right" type?

<DeaconGray> Most places are focused, not exclusive.

<Sylvere> Honestly, there are going to be net trolls no matter where you go and an exclusively sang board is not the answer to that problem.

<ThePinkLady> @Sylvere: That's just it. How can such a community--a needed community--be safe from dickery?

<Vyrdolak> I don't think that has anything to do with the push for sang-only boards, though.

<Sylvere> It can't.

<DeaconGray> The biggest push has not been sang only boards.

<DeaconGray> It's been sang focused boards.

<Sylvere> Whipping someone with a flogger or doing knife play is illegal in most states too because it's assault.

<ThePinkLady> @Vyrdolak: The idea that drinking blood makes me better or more special than someone who consumes energy like Sylvere or DeaconGray?

<Sylvere> It doesn't stop the BDSMers from having a plethora of groups/boards/etc.

<Merticus> Or the many groups on Fetlife.

<Sylvere> No one excludes on the basis of "you can't be in this group unless you're doing blood play" because it would be stupid.

<ThePinkLady> So if it's not about legalities, what IS it really about? Stars on bellies like Sneetches?

<Vyrdolak> @PinkLady: You're projecting. Wanting an affinity group does not mean "we're better than you." It means, "we're different from you, and we'd like to be able to talk about that ourselves."

<Merticus> Has everyone at least offered an opinion yet on the first topic?

<ThePinkLady> Haven't seen one from Ithril or Mikyla.

<Mikyla> This might sound silly, but it seems to me that if the freaking gangs can have a website (Which we saw just recently) then we should be able to have forums for adults who are sang. I mean, which is worse - consensual feeding or gang activities?

<Lono> nods

<ThePinkLady> Agreed.

<Sylvere> What has become problematic, at least for me, is the statement that an exclusively sang space is needed because there are no safe places for sangs since the evil psis have taken them over and driven all the sangs.

<Mikyla> I said I don't see why we cannot have separate forums - the Vampire Church has been "psi" specific for years and no one cares about that?

<DeaconGray> Don't care about sangs either.

<ThePinkLady> I guess I haven't seen any of the major spaces as driving the sangs out.

<Mikyla> I don't like the idea of exclusive but that's because *I* don't want to be left out, LOL!

<DeaconGray> I don't mind...

<Sylvere> What has become problematic, at least for me, is the statement that an exclusively sang space is needed because there are no safe places for sangs since the evil psis have taken them over and driven all the sangs

<Sylvere> away, coupled with the insinuation that sangs are the "real" vampires and that psychic vampires are only allowed to participate in *your* community at *your* sufferance.

<ThePinkLady> I haven't seen *many* new blood drinkers around, but the old ones are still there.

<DeaconGray> Bah, victimized drama...

<Lono> One thing is certain, the community will do what it wants to do.. and if something is successful and based on something many people agree with then it will flourish, if not, then it probably wont last a year.

<Vyrdolak> Well, Sylvere, I just can't agree with your framing of the issues. It goes both ways, you know.

<Sylvere> I understand the frustration that can happen when some clueless twit tries to tell you what you should be able to do just because xie can.

<ThePinkLady> Lulz. This is assuming that there isn't some medical or scientific reason behind all this that explains causes and symptoms better than the vampire label.

<Lono> *waits for the next edition of the DSM*

<Sylvere> When I'm told I can't understand because "the sang experience is just too different," I call bullshit.

<DeaconGray> But there is RED STUFF!!!

<Merticus> Haven spoken with a number of people offline, they are honestly looking in on this with confusion. Especially in our local community where sangs and psi congregate, exchange dialogue on both methods, feed together, play together, and such divisions don't become part of the equation.

<ThePinkLady> Is it an online kerfluffle?

<Lono> Most likely.

<NyteMuse> Aren't most of them?

<Merticus> I can only speak to what I observe in these parts. Haven't traveled to community events outside the state this year.

<Vyrdolak> It really seems like it's a "kerfluffle" among a very few specific people, and it's being generalized to sound like a community-wide conflict

<Lono> Very true Vyrdolak.

<Merticus> I think the viral nature of the internet has fed much of this over the past several months. And the articles on TopSecretWriters didn't help matters.

<Vyrdolak> I REALLY don't think everyone who might enjoy a sang-only or psi-only venue is so emotional about it. They'd just like to have it, as an option.

<NyteMuse> Not to mention the anonymity of the internet gives people license to be more prickish.

<Sylvere> @Merticus: Offline, none of the blood drinkers where I live have a problem with the psychic feeders and vice versa.

<DeaconGray> Can we exile people to a Sang only forum?

<ThePinkLady> Rather than have communities for people, can there be communities for topics? A sang-only forum that only discusses blood and all other topics are curtailed?

<Vyrdolak> I DON'T think that sometimes wanting to have a private forum for people more similar to you implies "having a problem" in general with other vamps. I really don't!

<DeaconGray> Me either Vyrdolak.

<DeaconGray> Look how it has turned out... they end up at VCN regardless.

<Sylvere> Private boards and the people who take part in them have a history of doing nothing to benefit the community or even wanting to be a part of the greater community.

<Sylvere> @Vyrdolak: You must have missed LadyCG's hissy fit.

<Vyrdolak> Sylvere, who says they have to? To whom is their obligation? I self-identify as a vamp. What do I owe anyone else just because of that?

<Mikyla> I kind of agree with that, Vyrdolak.

<Vyrdolak> You and LadyCG are two of the most emotional people in this debate. Most of the rest of us are going, "huh?"

<Sylvere> @Vyrdolak: I've heard the argument that private boards will somehow benefit the "greater community" by allowing people to gain greater self-awareness.

<ThePinkLady> Like a sang/psi boot camp?

<Sylvere> It's an irrational leap of faith to believe that the people who splinter off, in particular those who are pushing for it, will still take part in the greater community or bring anything positive to it.

<Merticus> Ok, let's wrap up our final thoughts on this topic and move on to

the others. This is an issue that for some will never reach resolution.

<Vyrdolak> *shrug* So? That's probably a self-serving rationalization. Doesn't mean "private boards" (and they're ALL "private" in the general sense) are bad

<Sylvere> @Vyrdolak: I stopped being emotional when I realized that none of the people I'd considered friends are actually friends.

<Sylvere> Now I don't give a fuck about any of them.

<Sylvere> Emotion gone.

<Vyrdolak> If you say so, Sylvere *sigh*

<Lono> Okay.. but aren't houses technically (splintered off sections of the vampire community?)

<Lono> I see a bunch of ones communicating tonight.

<NyteMuse> How are Houses "splintered off sections of the vampire community"?

<ThePinkLady> I can see a need for exploring blood play without fear of legal repercussions. Perhaps through a Q&A format rather than a forum? Other than that...

<Sylvere> I've always been anti-house.

<Mikyla> Me too, Sylvere.

<Merticus> Ok, on that note let's move on to topic B.

<Merticus> **b. In light of the growing awareness of custody battles affecting self-identified vampires and donors where community involvement and/or the practice of vampirism is a factor, what can be done to help safeguard against or minimize the impact vampirism has in such situations?**
<Merticus> What can be done, if anything, to protect oneself against reprisals by spouses, loved ones, or even third-parties should they choose to present evidence to the court of blood drinking and other vampiric practices?

<CorvisNocturnum> Typically I would suggest one be very careful in relationships in providing information of so sensitive a nature until you are positive it is an aspect of yourself that you want to risk leaked. Secondly, should the worst happen, be able and willing to present your facts as a belief system reported in professional a way as possible. The legal system makes good and bad judgments all the time and you do yourself a disservice out of the gate if you look more the fool on the stand by not being able to articulate what you are in scientific manner – citing experts such as Joseph Laycock, Melton (who has helped in a lot of communities behalf in courts, see Irving Davis vs. State of Texas), Michelle Belanger's work as she has been on respected documentaries (HBO, History Channel). DO NOT speak of it in reference to modern cinema or you will be made out to be another Jonathan Sharkey.

<CorvisNocturnum> By making it clear it is more akin to already established religions

of other countries and traditions/martial arts it will be subject to less ridicule. Chi, Gon qui, Tantric/Kama Sutra, etc in other words, stretch the truth to appear as normal as possible. That's right, if you feel it is lying to disguise it, too bad – face hard facts people, this is the United States government versus YOU and it can in some cases land you in a mental institution, loss of a child into Child Protective Custody (I grew up that way due to drugs/hippie counterculture movement, so WHAT do you think this would be looked on as?)

<CorvisNocturnum> Finally, make a conscious effort to be as clean cut and above board in your everyday life so that legitimate aspects of who you are does not hamstring you in the battle, as the other is the subtle reason you are viewed but the law will force no contest and dismissal of charges should there truly be no merit for a court litigation. Seek counsel and be honest with them...they cannot help you prepare a defense if you bring them in blind.

<Mairi> I would suggest keeping it to yourself. If you are married to another vamp and there is a custody battle then you each have enough to use against the other if you want to make it messy. People do and say strange things in extreme situations.

<Rune> I have really no solution to offer here. One part of me wants to just say that the child care system and the legal system are unlikely to be comfortable with vampires, and more sane public exposure will help to remedy that. Another part of me doesn't see that as a feasible idea at the moment, so I loathe suggesting it.

<Zero> First of all, I am not a lawyer, and this is not legal advice; it is instead a combination of common sense and the secondhand information that a lawyer told me. The first step when you find yourself in a legal battle is to retain a lawyer who can give you advice specific to your instance and your local legal system.

<Zero> Something to keep in mind: I'm not personally aware of any custody conflicts in which one party's Paganism, participation in the vampire subculture, or BDSM interest has come out in family court and the person accused of non-mainstream interests has come away with so much as supervised visitation rights. Maybe someone's been shown to be "a Satanist" in court and still retained some kind of visitation, but never in my personal acquaintance.

<Zero> The judge doesn't need to be a religious bigot to have been influenced by religious bigots - in a custody dispute, he or she will be looking for the best, most positive, stable, and healthy environment for the child in question. Christians are disproportionately privileged in our society - their beliefs and practices are treated as the norm, so they will be the standard against which other ways of life are judged. It's not necessarily a

matter of active religious prejudice; Christianity occupying the privileged "normal" spot in most Americans' minds means that any other configuration will have an uphill battle in proving why they're NOT crazy, deviant, or violent, whereas mainstream Christians get a free head start in the social approval race.

<Zero> In other words, whether your judge is a religious fanatic or not, he or she will almost certainly have an unconscious prejudice against non-mainstream lifestyles and philosophies. You are starting at a disadvantage. Where other couples merely have to discuss in court their family life, financial stability, job history, and parenting theory, any person with the stigma of a "deviant" lifestyle, no matter how actually harmless, will not be able to have that discussion until they FIRST have the discussion about why they're allowed to be who they are in the first place.

<Zero> Yes, this is riotously unfair. That's the nature of privilege - mainstream people get a head start; you may find yourself having to justify aspects of your life that have no bearing on childrearing whatsoever, just so that you'll be allowed to have the conversation everyone else gets to have -- the one about who will be able to provide the best place for the child.

<Zero> So I'll talk about the common sense part, which takes the form of general advice, not particular to custody cases; PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY. And the secondhand-advice-from-a-lawyer; what a lawyer I know told me I should tell people who ask this question, when it's already gone to court.

<Zero> PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY. As best you can. There are little to no laws out there to protect your privacy. If you use a free email or social networking service, these services have no legal obligation to keep ANY of the info they have about you private. The info they keep about you includes all the emails they have stored, all the emails you have ever sent, your search and browsing history, your contacts lists, address books, calendars, and your social network "Friends" groups.

<Zero> Almost every free service has at some point outward-faced users' private data. Google made your contacts list public and told everyone in the world who you were most recently emailing. Yahoo and MSN both used your contacts lists and browsing/search histories to create an ad-hoc social network for you without your knowledge. Ever signed onto a free email service and seen a message that someone in your contacts list has a new friend, or has a new favourite movie? So did all of your contacts see info about your interests and habits. Your PARENTS might be seeing what your FRIENDS are doing.

<Zero> Consequently, your angry ex-spouse can often see your friends and what they are doing, can see your Facebook posts, and probably, so can their mom and their lawyer. Even if all the

strangers on Google can't (at the moment).

<Zero> The best solution? No one anywhere should have a Facebook account, or participate in any other social networking. Period. These are tools designed to make someone else money off of your loss of privacy. If you really want to protect your privacy online you will have to give up your social network playtime. The one and only way to make sure that you haven't done something on the Internet that will put you or your family life (or your family, your job, etc) in danger is to not do anything visible on the Internet.

<Zero> Barring that, don't use your real name on the Internet. This should be common sense for anyone, and it used to be back when the Internet was new to people and they remembered what privacy was. Safety and ID theft experts everywhere sang the same song: don't use your real name anywhere on the Internet.

<Zero> If you think have to do social networking to keep in touch with your family, you probably don't. But if you insist, then keep that totally separate from an account you use for your friends. Keep THAT separate from any account you use for your community activities.

<Zero> Whatever you do, regardless of whether or not you expect it to cause you any trouble, don't do anything on the entire Internet under your real name that you wouldn't want posted on the bulletin board at work and passed around your kid's school's PTA.

<Zero> The Advice I Received From A Lawyer:

<Zero> Ok, sometimes you can't keep the ammo out of a character-assassin's hands. They read your blog, they were a trusted friend and then turned on you without warning, they had access to your online screen name, they read your blog, they took photos of you at the club last Friday. Now you're facing defending your hobbies in court.

<Zero> I asked a lawyer and psychologist who works active court cases and is familiar with family law. This lawyer told me that a person vying for custody and is being threatened with denial of custody because of a strange-looking interest should consider:

<Zero> 1) Retaining a lawyer ASAP. Preferably one who is not in active disapproval of your lifestyle.

<Zero> 2) Paying a licensed psychologist or psychiatrist for an "evaluation" for the court. Again, you will need to find a professional who doesn't believe that "different" equals "dangerous," and who will make accurate assessments based on rational criteria. You want an evaluation that says that you are not dangerous or delusional, that you don't have extreme beliefs or ideologies that will cause you to harm the child or make terrible life decisions.

<Zero> 3) Finding academic experts willing to testify as to the non-extremeness of the vampire community and lifestyle. Several scholars have written extensively on the fact that the vampire community is not an extreme or anti-social identity group. Putting this material into the hands of a lawyer is helpful, getting the expert to make a statement is potentially more helpful.

<Zero> 4) The lawyer I spoke with also recommended digging up all the dirt possible on the other party. If you're a vampire but the ex-spouse is a drug addict, you being able to get your act together, put together a reasoned case, and demonstrate greater ability and desire to prove to the court that you're the best caretaker, you stand a better chance.

<Zero> The lawyer also estimated that defending yourself in a courtroom in this manner might cost "a few thousand dollars." Be prepared to spend some money.

<Sylvere> There's really not much anyone can do except to exercise good judgment regarding who they "come out" to.

<ThePinkLady> People entering relationships or long-term commitments with others should be upfront about their vampirism and discuss the fallout should someone give up the practice.

<Sylvere> The BDSM community deals with this issue too.

<Sylvere> There's nothing to be done if an ex wants to drag your private life into open court.

<Mikyla> Rationally written documents by community members? And how does the BDSM community deal with it?

<Lono> Especially with online footprints.

<Sylvere> @Mikyla: Individually according to their cases, legal advice, and laws of their state.

<Sylvere> It's too individual to have a blanket answer.

<ThePinkLady> And I agree with Sylvere, there's little to be done if someone wants to make your life hell through court. Plenty of other divorce cases air dirty laundry.

<Mikyla> I figured that. Here, too, it's rather individual.

<Merticus> Any other advice to give?

<Lono> Get a really good lawyer?

<Sylvere> Be smart, know the laws of your area, know your rights and have the number of a good lawyer.

<Merticus> Are we ready to move on to topic C?

<Sylvere> Sure

<Lono> Yes

<Mikyla> Yes

<Merticus> **c. Historically, the general public's awareness of and information about the vampire community and real vampirism has typically come from sensationalist media attention and literary works from colourful personalities on the fringes of or labeled to be associated with the vampire**

community and from high-profile individuals within the vampire community.

<Merticus> **More recently, several academics have started to garner attention, usually presenting less sensational, primarily external perspectives. These are typically of greater influence on the views of those in the outside world than perspectives generated internally.**

<Merticus> **How does this impact the external view of the community and vampirism (positively or negatively)? In what ways can we impact what information and perspectives those outside the community are presented with?**

<CorvisNocturnum> It positively is not all bad, at least the news media gives credit to authors such as Laycock, Belanger and myself who are either very close to the community or like Michelle and myself ARE part of the community. Father Sebastiaan and our own Lono join the ranks as authors on both forms of vampirism, so it is not so stacked against the community in comparisons to outside academics. We are slowly leveling out the playing field.

<CorvisNocturnum> As for how we can play a part in the public opinion and perspective, make it a goal of yours to educate, or get speakers to events to teach, to answer questions. Some will be colorful, some will be subdued professionals. We need both personality types, but all need to be eloquent and knowledgeable. Of course, we will always have the Mad, Mad House freak factor to contend with in the public eye, that is what they wanted for shock value and that is what they got. Don Henrie, good or bad in your personal opinion, is a moot point. He was merely the first of many targets by the public to point to as time moved on. Be thankful it was not Mr. Sharkey instead. We will always have sensationalism, from both the media and from our own ranks, so it is up to us collectively to stand up and do something – or staunchly support those who do by promoting their efforts.

<Mairi> I don't think we can control it. Given the opportunity there will always be someone willing to tell their side of the community for whatever reason. And we won't always agree with it. Just like the rest of the world's inhabitants we are all individuals with our own opinions and we seldom agree.

<Rune> Well, obviously the sensational exposures are positive, until they're not interesting anymore, and then they're negative. Or, they're entirely negative, if they're being used as a cultural freakshow to remind people of what abnormality looks like.

<Rune> The more scholarly approaches may prove to be more of the same, or they may prove to be helpful. We'll have to see - we don't know for certain what these people might have as agenda for their interest. Time will tell.

<Rune> So far as how we can impact this- we can't prevent people from

talking to them. Someone will eventually speak to them, and if it's not someone rational, it'll be someone ridiculous who makes us look bad. So, I suggest someone rational step forward and take a few of these projects. I also suggest that it might be wise to have certain representatives be backed by the various sane and rational parties of the vampire community, so that they are seen as 'official' representatives.

<Rune> I also suggest, just as a political foil, that we send out someone of our own to act as nay-sayer and rebel, to attract the attention of the other less-rational types, to garner their attention and distract them, so that they don't get in the way of the message. However, that's my Machiavellian side speaking, so do with that advice as you will. *chuckles* I rarely take these things too seriously.

<Zero> So far, this has been nothing but good news for the community, in my opinion. The general public's understanding of the vampire community is at best a goofy Goth backed by spooky music on a Halloween documentary special. We're the once-a-year freaks, might as well be Santa's elves. At worst, it's the Christian Fundamentalist vision of a satanic panic - as if the community were some cult out to corrupt and/or eat good Baptist babies or something. In other words, the general public has ZERO understanding of the vampire community, just superstition based on religious hysteria.

<Zero> The mass media is not interested in accurately portraying anything. Period. They want to attract the lowest common denominator to look at their shiny media products. The utter failure of the news industry should demonstrate that exactly as vividly as does the rise of "reality" television. The vampire community will not get accurate portrayal in media outlets; the best we can hope for is that the tint of the reporting runs toward the favorable and doesn't take up flavors of cult-scare or witch-hunt. I'm in favor of positive media appearances, because in general, the public will never understand the vampire community, any more than they understand other minorities, foreign cultures, or social issues of any kind. The "general public" is not the venue for nuanced understanding, and so a positive approach to the mass media is helpful overall, but won't contribute to "understanding" in a population that's too broad to absorb nuances anyway.

<Zero> The greatest potential to generate nuanced understanding of the vampire community is held by academic experts -- the people whose job it is to create nuanced understanding. If our target is the "general public," academia's effect will definitely be less direct and more trickle-down; media looking for quotes and soundbytes consult the closest source to hand, and so it behooves

the community to try to ensure that the most accessible voices out there are the ones who actually understand what's going on (as opposed to a teenaged roleplayer or Twilight fan, let's say).

<Zero> Where the community will truly benefit from the academic, as opposed to insider or media, viewpoint is in cases like in topic B above; when fighting a legal battle to retain custody of a child, when suing because you've unfairly lost your job, when defending yourself against harassment from others who disapprove of your existence, the insider's perspective is not helpful nor is it respected. Professional, credible analyses by acknowledged experts is key when dealing with other professionals.

<Zero> Academic analysis directly refutes and helps us to discredit the spurious "Ritual Crimes experts" who routinely go around telling police departments across America that the vampire subculture is a cult, a gang, or a dangerous teen delusion. We can bitch about these idiots all we want, *we* know they're wrong, but denials coming from within the community don't mean much to a poor beleaguered Law Enforcement officer who's trying to figure out whether that kid down the street wearing a black trenchcoat is really in a Twilight-influenced murder cult or not.

<Zero> In what ways can we impact the information presented by outside experts? First, rigorous enforcement of low-BS-content within our own community helps keep outsiders from analysing BS. The vampire community, for all that we complain of drama and interpersonal conflict, is often admirably clearheaded; cutting back on our tolerance of roleplaying-derived terminology would help even more; while the community is actually one of the more rational identity groups I've encountered, and has a culture which intrinsically values and rewards rational discussion, sometimes that gets lost in the community's equal love for symbol and metaphor. Both the researcher and the community would benefit if analysts could get a fast-track to the emic perspective on these deeper aspects of the community's culture as opposed to the window-dressing that analysts usually get distracted by.

<Zero> Anyone dealing directly with academics could be conscientious to point out that the community's penchant for poetry (Houses, Courts, Elders, Goth fashion, etc) is internally recognized as just that -- an attempt at elegance (whether or not you see elegance being a result), rather than an attempt to literally create a new kinship system and culture. Our ideology (or what passes for an ideology, anyway) lacks assertions of the fantastic (when compared, for example, to evangelical Christianity or the ideology of UFO cults), and runs toward "figure it out yourself;"

we freely admit that we have far more questions than answers. Focusing on these truths can help separate the vampire community from the "new religious movement" scholarship that used to plague us so doggedly.

- <ThePinkLady> Thanks to researchers like Joseph Laycock, we're getting more scholarly traffic through our watering holes. However, the community needs to produce more original works for this continuing scholarship instead of rehashing old topics. Also, I am pleased by the rise of community-driven media projects, as we've finally learned that only we can do ourselves justice.
- <Vyrdolak> There's a tendency for academics to glom onto vampires as a way of getting attention, and I think we need to be aware of this.
- <Sylvere> I think it's great that we're being taken seriously enough to get the attention of academia.
- <Sylvere> However, I don't know that it's going to influence the media at all.
- <Sylvere> The same sensationalistic crap is going to be produced no matter what we do.
- <Mikyla> I agree. I love the serious attention. I like some of the internal interviews, as well.
- <Lono> I think it's great that we have some media projects in the works that the vampire community is producing.
- <Lono> Unless we do it ourselves Sylvere.
- <Sylvere> I don't know that community-produced works are going to be taken seriously.
- <Sylvere> In fact, I think the opposite will happen.
- <Merticus> We're currently working with five different academics and I'm generally pleased with the interactions we've had. It's a process and involves a great deal of communication and transparency.
- <Sylvere> I think a lot of people will view anything we produce as more kooky shit from the sideshow freaks.
- <Mikyla> Why do you think that, Sylvere?
- <Lono> Possibly... Which is why it might be a good idea for critiquing projects, and giving helpful feedback before releases.
- <Sylvere> Academicians with *credentials* are the people who are going to produce the work that the average person takes as something worth paying attention to.
- <Sylvere> @Mikyla: Producing our own material is more likely to be viewed as self-serving propaganda than a "real" study.
- <Mikyla> Ok, I get that.
- <Sylvere> Producing our own material benefits other people in our community but has little impact on those outside it.
- <NyteMuse> Getting more outsider academicians involved seems to be a step in the right direction. Also agree with Sylvere with self-production.
- <Lono> Sometimes the focus has to be within, as long as it's not campy.

(hence critiques) , I rather enjoyed your critiques Sylvere on my book... it made my focus go in a different direction and get rid of some of the camp.

<Sylvere> I think your book is going to be great. I have people who ask me about advanced psi feeding techniques on a semi-regular basis.

<Sylvere> Now I'll be able to point them in the direction of some quality material.

<Merticus> Shall we move on the topic D?

<Sylvere> Yes

<Mikyla> Yes

<Lono> Yes

<Merticus> **d. There is a high degree of overlap between the vampire community and some other identity groups and subcultures (such as the Pagan, Wiccan, BDSM, and GLBT communities) both in terms of issues within and outside perspectives of our communities and in crossover of membership or self-identification.**

<Merticus> **Should we try to strengthen those ties and what would be the benefits and disadvantages of doing so? In what ways could those connections be strengthened? What could we learn from the Pagan, Wiccan, BDSM, and GLBT communities that we could apply towards community building efforts within our own community?**

<CorvisNocturnum> First and foremost, realize how you yourself happened to be connected. Are you personally involved in the BDSM community, GLBT etc? I was a much librarian (public/private meeting for a BDSM group in Indiana for years as well as VP.) I vend artwork at Gay Pride to support GLBT, and was cochair on The Fort Wayne Pagan Alliance for three years with 300 members run through our occult shop, we began the city's first four pagan pride day events with Dagonet Dewer...so when you are involved in these things, network! For example, I sold books, had Michelle Belanger come out and lecture at my shop as well as at the Much group several times. As we voice our beliefs we can educate and expand, showing the different people how we are similar yet different. The struggles of acceptance and legal matters/rights are the same, it does not matter where and how you identify as in religion or what Goth club/Fetish Ball you attend. Our wants, needs, and goals usually are the same. If Christain Day and Laurie Cabot in Salem can make peace what excuse do we have in not playing a bigger part in making connections stronger?

<Mairi> We can offer an olive branch but it doesn't mean it will be accepted in the manner it was offered. The benefits would be a greater understanding of both subcultures. The disadvantages would be that the more that was known, the less understanding

and tolerance there would be. The only way I can see to strength it is to show more tolerance. But it would have to come from all sides towards all sides. We can show tolerance for other groups and subcultures but this doesn't always mean that they will do the same.

<Rune> Of course, we should try to strengthen ties of commonality and support wherever we can. The disadvantages are nearly nil, where we're concerned, in 'hitching our star' to the various metaphysical communities. Likewise with the nonstandard sexuality groups. They are currently a good place of support, and if we move into those groups and offer genuine support in return, it can only end well. These groups deal with the concept of predation, and showing that we support their efforts and embrace their philosophies as being valid (if not entirely synonymous with our own philosophies) is an excellent message to the world.

<Rune> More importantly, by doing so we will demonstrate that we embrace a life that is life-affirming and not nihilistic, thereby encouraging others to be supportive of our efforts. We will do so in a non-religious fashion; no matter how religious some pagans can be, the movement of paganism is not a standardized one, and therefore we are not bound to a standardized dogma. Those areas of paganism which are more standardized and doctrinal (Wicca, Asatru, etc.) can be areas we put a layer of separation from, through which we can still offer support and respect, but show that we don't necessarily "drink the kool-aid" as it were.

<Rune> And there are an awful lot of little teaching tools and mental models that we can borrow from these groups that could be of aid to us. BDSM offers the Color Code and the Safeword, which has been successfully used in a great many forms of communication outside the BDSM community. Paganism offers the "whatever floats your boat, so long as you don't hurt mine and me" ideology of tolerance, which is highly needed in our community. And the list goes on.

<Rune> I suggest that to strengthen these ties, we start to enter these communities as strong independent entities. Those of us who are pagan can go to the pagan communities where we live and make an obvious, outright presence of vampirism in a healthy manner. By becoming strong upstanding members of these communities, and by living above reproach, we create good role models and exemplify our community's positive vision. Offering aid, protection, teaching... these are the best method of turning the opinions of others in a lasting fashion towards a positive outlook on vampirism.

<Sylvere> I'm ambivalent about trying to "strengthen" ties with any of

them.

* NyteMuse agrees with Sylvere

<Sylvere> None of them are exactly "communities" any more than the VC is a "community".

<Sylvere> We're all just a bunch of people who happen to share a handful of traits/interests.

<Mikyla> Why do we need to strengthen these ties?

<Sylvere> However, they are no more open-minded or accepting than we are.

<Sylvere> I don't think strengthening ties with a broad group is a good idea.

<Lono> Why is that Sylvere?

<Sylvere> Because a Living Gorean is going to look at us like we're crazy and/or role-players just like people look at Goreans in the same way.

<Sylvere> As a group, we share some philosophies with Goreans - be true to yourself, live free and abide by your personal code of ethics.

<Sylvere> But that's where the similarity ends.

<Sylvere> Beyond that, we have nothing in common and some of our views are going to be diametrically opposed.

<Sylvere> Same for the Pagans/Wiccans who already see us as dangerous leeches in many cases.

<Sylvere> Can you imagine trying to get a fluffy white lighter to stop being squicked by the idea of drinking blood long enough to even have a rational discussion?

<Sylvere> I have a hard time envisioning that.

<NyteMuse> Well... for the Pagans, all save one of the Pagans I've spoken to have changed their minds, having gotten the non-party line.

<NyteMuse> Granted, none were whitelighters.

<NyteMuse> But still, I've seen more willingness to accept from Pagans and kinksters because they at least have an understanding of life energy

<Lono> Is there no room for open communication then? (I've been trying to change that in the minds of pagans/Wiccans actually Sylvere... because of my experiences).

<Sylvere> In my Pagan community, the Heathens (Asatru) are the most accepting of what it is that we do.

<Sylvere> The Wiccans... yeah, not so much.

<Sylvere> Although the girl at one of the new age book stores was really nice to me when I went in to sign the copies of Vampires In Their Own Words.

<Sylvere> As individuals, I think it's a great idea to network with the Pagan/BDSM/whatever folks. But as *groups*, no.

<NyteMuse> Fair enough.

<Mikyla> That sounds about right to me, too.

<NyteMuse> It's true that most of the 'people' I spoke to knew me as a person first, which is the way I prefer it.

<Lono> I was promptly kicked out of my coven and "binded" upon my awakening..(it made me very hostile, I've been cultured since) I've been trying to encourage that they(pagans/Wiccans) point those in the right direction because hostility only leads to more hostility.

<Vyrdolak> My perspective on this is probably unique, and hence not generally applicable.

<Sylvere> I think if we're going to build bridges, it's going to have to be a one-on-one, grassroots thing.

<Sylvere> Share anyway, Vyrdolak.

<Lono> True Sylvere. Yes, share Vyrdolak.

<Vyrdolak> Well, I came into the vampire community from the Pagan community, where I was kind of well-known.

<Vyrdolak> and "Real Vampires" was published in a Pagan journal.

<Vyrdolak> So, for me...the divisions seem rather artificial. And I certainly think networking is a good idea.

<Vyrdolak> I think there's always a problem in stressing the negative so much, within the VC and outside it.

<Vyrdolak> People are far too quick to use derogatory language and pounce on whatever they see as offensive or rejecting of themselves.

<Vyrdolak> It's more helpful to highlight and work with the positive elements, and don't give energy to the negativists

<Vyrdolak> Pagans have their fundies, and you're not going to change them. But plenty of Pagans are open to learning more.

<Vyrdolak> If Pagans and vamps don't see eye to eye, the reasons are usually more complicated than simply, Pagans are ignorant and prejudiced and hate vamps

<Sylvere> @Vyrdolak: Do you think the fact that you were already a known quantity in your pagan community made it easier for you to discuss vampirism and/or for others to accept what you said?

<Vyrdolak> A lot of Pagans are very fearful of being associated with "evil" stereotypes and worry about PR repercussions.

<Vyrdolak> I don't know the answer to that, Sylvere. I wasn't like this revered personage, I sure wasn't Selena Fox or something.

<NyteMuse> I think any time you can start as a person before a label, things will go more smoothly.

<Sylvere> Part of the reason I ask is because I know a girl who tried to bridge the gap between the vampires and pagans in my city.

<Vyrdolak> That's a very good point. The thing is, subcultures tend to have a lot in common

<Sylvere> The witches flat out told her they didn't want her around because she was "too dark" and they didn't want her to influence their kids.

<Sylvere> This is someone they had, until that point, trusted and even asked to help look after the kids at the family-friendly events.

<NyteMuse> Sounds like a case of prejudices running too deep

<Vyrdolak> It's tough to be all on your own in these things.

<NyteMuse> Though it might also be a result of how she presented things

<Vyrdolak> But one person's experience can't be turned into general protocol. That was one individual and one group, and whole lot of unknowns

<Sylvere> Someone in one of the local BDSM groups tried to have me banned from the others because I'm a vampire.

<Sylvere> They made up a lot of crap about me telling a young (19) girl that I was going to cut her open and drink her blood.

<Sylvere> *eyeroll*

<Vyrdolak> Maybe we need to look at why people have these reactions instead of simply decrying them as ignorant bigotry and feeling all oppressed.

<Sylvere> This is why I don't think trying to build bridges with *groups* is a great idea.

<Vyrdolak> The VC does tend to have a problem understanding its audience when it does outreach--this happens constantly.

<NyteMuse> This is old news, but I think the V-word has something to do with it...

<Sylvere> I was fortunate that I'd already built my rep with *individuals*.

<Sylvere> In my case, it was personal vendetta by someone who felt threatened by me.

<Sylvere> It was stupid and annoying as hell but the damage has been done.

<Vyrdolak> You can't communicate with people who you hold in contempt, you have to understand where they're coming from, and speak to that.

<Vyrdolak> The mean reason I cringe at so many earnest, well-intended interviews by members of the VC is because they're saying what they want to say instead of what their audience needs to be told, to get them to really listen.

<Vyrdolak> It's hard to get a handle on that, but it's very important or you're just wasting your efforts.

<Merticus> **e. Other topics you'd like to bring up for discussion?**

<Merticus> If there is nothing more to be said for topic D and nothing else to be brought up for discussion (topic E) I think we can leave it there for tonight.

<Mikyla> Thank you, Merticus!

<Merticus> **IV. Business Reminders**

<Merticus> Refer to the forum for all current discussions.

<Merticus> Thank you all for coming!

<Merticus> <<<<<<END MEETING LOG>>>>>>>