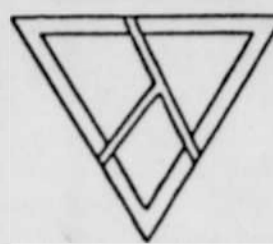


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## The practice of pride

*Pride is the greatest gift we can share with one another*

BY CATHY SIEMENS

Some mornings I'm just not able to make it all the way through *The Oregonian*. The realms of granola and gay bashers, burnt toast and T.J. Bailey don't mix. I haven't got the stomach for it that early.

We're all aware of these folks. They are always "out there" somewhere. On occasion, they are close at hand, picketing our gatherings. Sometimes, walking past them, I recall the Medusa myth and am momentarily frightened that if I look into their horrible hate-contorted

more difficult to discern. I have seen it in the mirror. When I was a sophomore in high school a rumor began to circulate about two girls "doing it" in the locker room. Although tantalized and intrigued, I joined in the viciousness. Both girls eventually left school. My friends seemed triumphant. I kept my own sense of shame about the incident very private. When I was ready to come out at 19, I made sure I was far away.

Most of us experience internalized homophobia in less dramatic ways. Raised in a society with profound prejudices against lesbians and gay men, we can only minimize, not avoid, its effects. Our struggle for civil rights, for simple human dignity, must always be waged on two fronts. We must confront our enemies both within and without. Pride is the antidote to internalized homophobia. It is one of our most potent strategies.

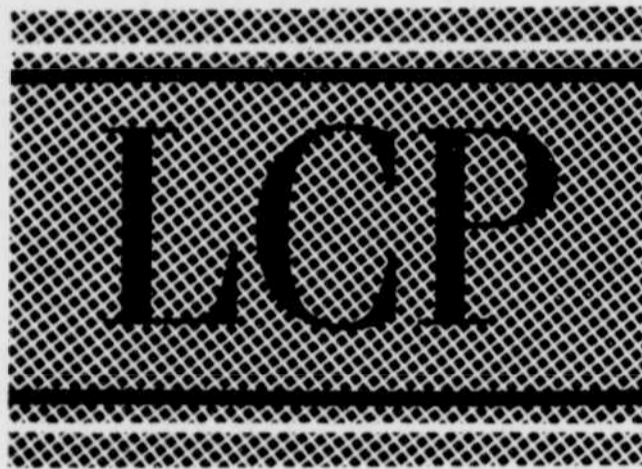
Pride speaks the truth. In response to all the lies claiming that homosexuals are unnatural, perverted, sick and depraved, pride says, "We have always been a part of the human community. We are happy, productive and loving."

Pride honors our lives in their entirety. We are lesbian and gay and workers and parents and artists and citizens. Our lives can't be parcelled into two categories, acceptable and non-acceptable. A neighbor of mine once said about me, "She has a right to live here, but she'd better not flaunt her lifestyle or bring strange people around." Over time this man learned that being a lesbian and being a good neighbor is not a contradiction in terms.

Pride is the greatest gift we can share with one another. In simple and concrete ways we can practice pride in our relationships and in our community:

1. Assume the best. Ascribe good intentions. Solutions to problems are much easier to find if we remember we're all on the same side.
2. Be generous with praise, sparing with criticism. Rules of thumb: praise what you want to reinforce and ignore what you want to change; give two positives to every negative; praise someone every day.
3. Enhancing self-esteem in ourselves and others should be the ultimate goal of every interaction. If a basic purpose in all our relationships was to make people feel better about themselves, we'd be "Rightfully Proud" in no time.
4. Building community takes all of us, including the people we're mad at and those we disagree with. It means letting go of prejudice, developing sensitivity and welcoming diversity.

If we were to measure the "Lesbian and Gay Year" from June to June, now would be a perfect time to make resolutions. Let's resolve to practice pride this year one day at a time. •



faces, I will turn to stone. Nonetheless, I always look — I want to recognize the face of my enemy.

There is another face to the enemy that is

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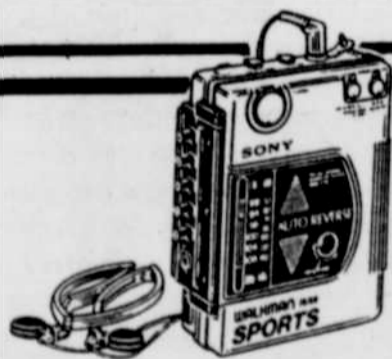
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