

## On getting involved

*Our legal system allows individual involvement. Our lives and rights depend on it.*

BY BRADLEY J. WOODWORTH

This writer has observed and participated in the Oregon gay rights movement since 1975. In that time there have been the ups and downs, ins and outs, unity and backbiting that accompany most political movements. There have also been long periods of apathy where it seemed as if no one cared any more. But apathy and non-involvement are going back into the closet now — it's really not fashionable to sit on

## Counsel

your bar stool and act oh-so-tired about the life-and-death struggle against AIDS and against those who would discriminate against us. This column invites you to *get involved and do it now.*

There is no American political institution older than that of direct action by the people to assert our rights and make the government and power brokers respond to our needs. From the Boston Tea Party, Revolutionary War and Shay's Rebellion to the anti-war movement of the late '60s and the Stonewall Riot, our people have a proud history of speaking loud and clear to the government, to those in power and to each other on the important issues of the day. The right of the people freely to assemble, to associate, to picket and protest, to make noise and to demand action is uniquely American. Perhaps no other people in history have had such sweeping rights to control their own lives and political destinies and to fight for change.

Right now there are countless ways one can be involved in the struggles for gay rights, for the rights of AIDS patients and for fair reporting of lesbian and gay news. If you are not yet involved, please get busy! Your time, energy, ideas and money are needed now.

A huge effort is needed to beat back the religious right and ultraconservatives who have placed on the ballot a measure to overturn Gov. Neil Goldschmidt's executive order banning job discrimination against gays in state executive-department employment. This executive order is the one solid achievement

we've won in this state, and those religious zealots want to take it away from us. But what can you do? Plenty: donate money, get others to donate money, get ready to do door-to-door campaigning and education this fall, join Oregonians for Fairness (the gay community's organization to beat the initiative measure), talk with your straight friends and family about the measure, write letters to the editor, read the gay press, bring your friends and join the marches and rallies that are announced and attend the fund-raisers — even sponsor a fund-raiser of your own.

But do electoral politics leave you cold? Then join the direct-action group Queers United Against Closets. QUAC sponsored the highly successful picketing of Hinson Memorial Baptist Church and *The Oregonian*, and will organize other fun — yes, *fun* — protest actions this summer and fall. Those who were involved in the anti-war or free-speech protests in the late '60s recall the exquisite exhilaration that comes from a mass of people united in purpose and struggling together. Those who never were in a real protest march don't know what they've missed. You'll remember your first demonstration for the rest of your life, and you'll feel good about being involved.

Don't like politics? Then get involved in a service organization. Phoenix Rising, Cascade AIDS Project, Outside-In, the Brinker Fund and others all have needs that *you* can help to meet. If you don't have money, donate time, equipment or food. The CAP fund-raiser "From All Walks of Life" is coming up; so is the second annual shopping-cart parade for the Brinker Fund. Contact these organizations to learn how you can become involved. Not only will you be helping others, you will help yourself by taking power, taking control, making a contribution. You just can't lose, unless you sit on your hands and do nothing!

The time to sit and whine is long gone. This is the year for action. Our political and legal system permits it, and our lives and rights demand it. Do your part today!

*Bradley J. Woodworth is a lawyer in private practice and maintains an office in the Oregon Trail Building in downtown Portland.*



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