

Open letter from Oregonians for Fairness

Thank all of you who worked on the No on 8 campaign. Thousands of you answered our call for help by giving your money, your time, and your support. All of you did a terrific job. The talent and dedication that came together during this campaign was truly impressive.

Yes, we did lose the Governor's executive order. The other side ran a dirty campaign which relied on lies and scare tactics. It was hard fought and it was close. Although there is no way to change the outcome of this election, let's take a minute and look at what we accomplished.

- In a very short time, we came together as a broad-based coalition that joined business and labor, Republicans and Democrats, churches, political, and civic leaders, and people from all walks of life.
- We ran a high visibility campaign that raised the issue of discrimination against lesbians and gay men.
- Our fundraising efforts were an enormous success.
- Hundreds of us came out to our friends and relatives and found love and support.
- Oregonians know that there is a large gay and lesbian community in this state. We are no longer silent or invisible.

All of you should be proud of what you contributed to the campaign and what it accomplished.

Some of you have received phone calls from people who represent themselves as the "successor group" to Oregonians for Fairness. We very much regret any inconvenience these calls may cause. A list of volunteers and donors was taken from the Oregonians for Fairness office the day after the election. While we are pleased that new groups are forming, we want to make clear that the use of the list is unauthorized.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Many of us are still feeling frustrated and angry at the way the vote turned out. Others are saying that it only confirms what is no surprise to most gay people — there is a lot of homophobia out there.

We recognize that members of our diverse community and our supporters will respond in many different ways to the outcome of the election. Many existing groups, and perhaps, some new ones will continue the struggle for lesbian and gay rights. We must all try to learn as much as we can from this campaign and put that knowledge to good use.

To help us evaluate the lessons from the campaign, Oregonians for Fairness invites you to a community meeting on December 7. The meeting will be held at the Metropolitan Community Church, 24th and NE Broadway, beginning at 7:00 pm.

Meantime, Oregonians for Fairness is pursuing a lawsuit to challenge Lloyd Center's refusal to allow us to distribute campaign literature. The suit is underway in Multnomah County Circuit Court. The American Civil Liberties Union will also undertake a legal challenge to the ballot measure itself. State employees, especially those who have experienced discrimination because of any sexual orientation, are needed as plaintiffs.

Again, thank you for all your efforts. We make valuable contributions to our state every day through our jobs, our volunteer work, and our churches. We have shown that the gay and lesbian community can raise a substantial amount of money. We have shown that we have a broad base of support. We will not stop fighting for fairness and, one day, we will win.

OFF Steering Committee

Janice R. Wilson	Joan Binninger
John Banker	Phyllis Oster
Scott Lieuallen	Liz Kaufman,
Terry Bean	Campaign Manager
Jann Carson	Cathy Siemens,
Keeston Lowery	Deputy Campaign
Kathleen Bogan	Manager

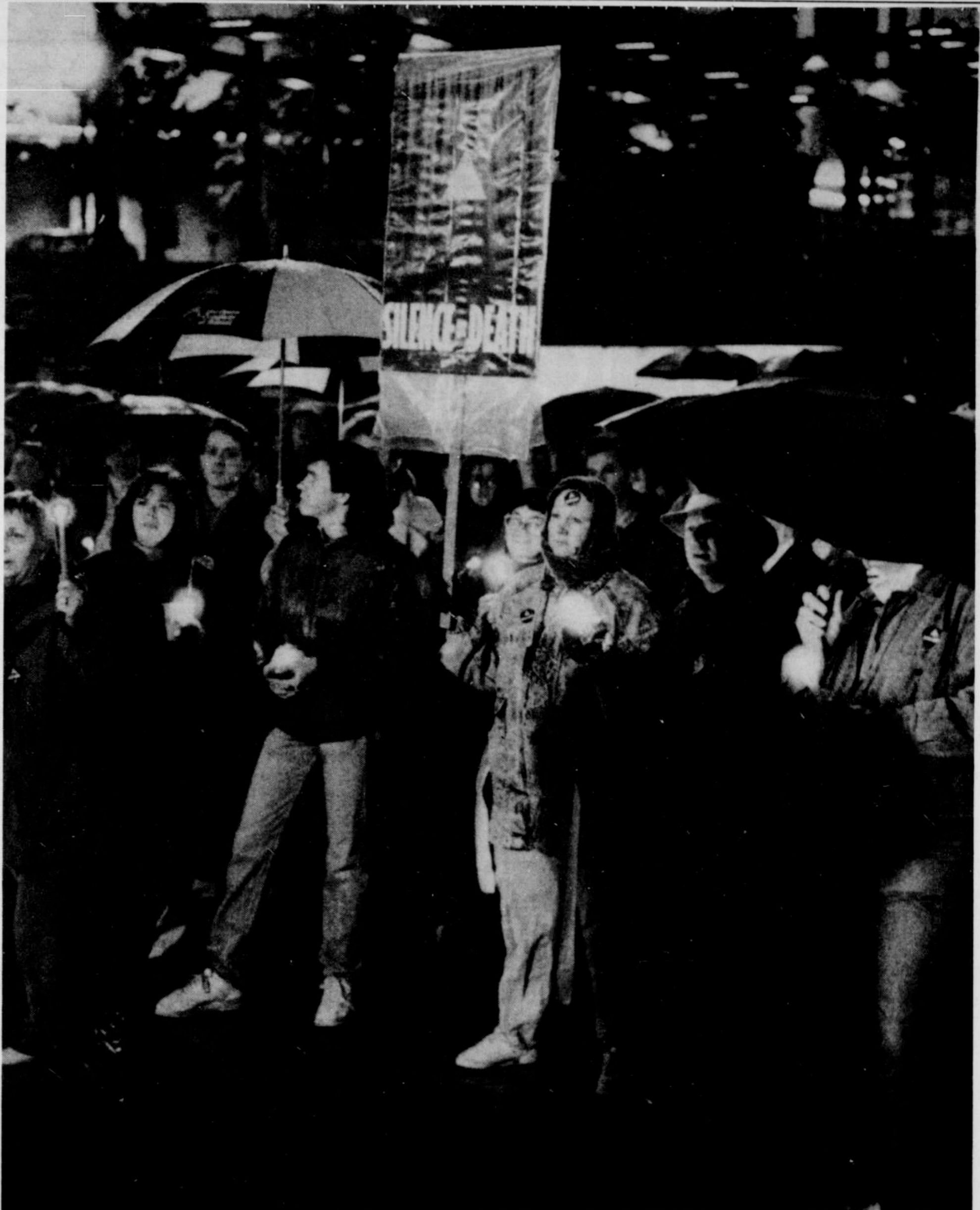


photo by Bonnie Tinker

Pioneer Courthouse Square, Portland, November 9, 1988.

What about AIDS?

After reading about the campaign being waged against gays and lesbians by the right-wing in Oregon, Michael Petrelis traveled to Portland to fight the right. An AIDS activist in New York City, Petrelis is a PWARC and a member of ACT-UP. What Petrelis found in Portland disturbs him.

"Pitiful! Pitiful. Portland. A monster without a brain. I walked into the No on 8 offices and in the process of getting to know the staff, I asked what it was like being a lesbian in Portland in 1988. 'I'm straight,' the person in charge of the campaign answered.

"So I looked at the heterosexual woman and inquired, 'How many AIDS cases have been reported in this state?' When she said 'I don't know' and exhibited no interest in knowing, I was flabbergasted.

"As I got more involved in the campaign I couldn't believe the hypocrisy on the part of the

No on 8 people. They wanted the voters to hear the message that this was not a gay and lesbian issue but a human rights concern. They wanted the lesbian and gay community somehow to avoid the fact that the OCA attack was aimed directly at Oregon's homosexual community.

"The homophobia on the part of the No on 8 people was incredible. And in this homophobic haze, Cathy Siemens and the rest of the OFF talking heads led the campaign to polite failure.

"But what about AIDS? What about the 50 human beings who die from the disease every day? What about the fact that AIDS is the issue swallowing up all other issues in the gay context. What about it, Portland?

"Portland is a city with a phoney reputation. It's not the progressive haven we read about in the East. What you really have here is an entire city's gay population hiding behind neat, well constructed walls that protect the individual from having to be involved in real solutions.

AIDS is a prime example of this neat approach to problem solving.

"The community's conscience on the AIDS issue is focused through the work of Cascade AIDS Project, CAP. Now there's a 'neat' little solution. We can all relax because CAP is on the job. Let's be serious. Who's leading the fight in the streets? Where is the leadership that forces the community at large to recognize the importance of a unified front fighting AIDS? Certainly not Cascade AIDS Project.

"If Oregonians for Fairness failed the community and the Cascade AIDS Project won't take risks, then where does this leave Portland?

"Portland needs an ACT-UP chapter. The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power exists to serve communities in the vital task of making AIDS issues number one. A community like Portland cannot survive politically without an immediate recognition of the AIDS issue.

"It might not be too late for Portland, but the clock is ticking. I always return to the catchphrase used so effectively around the country, indeed around the world, Silence = Death."

— Harold Moore