

People with AIDS are not victims

To the Editor:

I disagree with Harold Moore's suggestion that the first "Won't They Ever Learn" award go to *The Oregonian* for their use (misuse?) of the word "victim" in regards to people with AIDS. I would like to put up for vote that the award go to *Just Out*'s own Jack Riley.

In his article, "Let's resolve to fight for gay rights," Riley berates the Food and Drug Administration for dragging its feet in not releasing more experimental drugs to "AIDS victims." Shame on you! I had hoped that a writer with the gay press was more sensitized and informed.

Let's resolve to honor a request made years ago from people living with AIDS [Founding Statement of People with AIDS/ARC (The Denver Principles)]. They asked not to be called "victim." They asked not to be thought of as passive or helpless, not to be defined solely as a disease. They asked to be respected as people who are living with compromised immune systems. They asked us to personalize AIDS by not distancing ourselves with labels, such as "victim," and to a lesser degree, "patient." And it seems, Jack Riley, with your recent article, that they are still not being heard, because you are not listening!

I find it unimaginable that I could think of my friends with AIDS as "victims." As a volunteer in the AIDS community, I find the term ludicrous. As a person who was part of the support team featured in the *Oregonian* article, I found their use of "victim" disappointing, but not surprising. But to find such twaddle in your column makes me very, very angry. There are no victims. Anywhere. Of anything.

Let us resolve to educate ourselves. Let us resolve not to use terms such as "AIDS victim" or "AIDS test" or "high risk group" or "fatal disease." We know none of these terms to be true. Education is our greatest tool, let us use it wisely.

Steven Keenan
Portland

Unity or apartheid?

To the Editor:

I attended the City of Unity Rainbow Rally on January 17, 1989 as a gay man concerned with racism, homophobia, and all bias-related hatred. I heard many proud and powerful voices from blacks and women. Each speaker was a leader from one of the minority communities in Oregon — every minority except the gay and lesbian community.

Not one publicly identified gay man or lesbian spoke at the rally. Why didn't the organizers extend an invitation to the gay and lesbian community to send a representative to

speak? Did the organizers engage in gay and lesbian *apartheid* by keeping the rally program segregated?

In the future, when I attend such events confronting prejudice and hatred of minorities, I hope to hear a publicly proud gay man or lesbian give voice to my concerns.

Michael Petrelis
Portland

Party joins community

Greetings:

On New Year's Eve, the Echo Theatre was the scene of a great party hosted by the Portland Lesbian Choir and the Lesbian Community Project. More than 400 people came to eat, drink and mostly dance their way into 1989.

The project was the first joint effort for the two organizations; it demonstrated the power and productivity in our diverse lesbian community. While the Choir meets weekly and is a more accessible and cohesive group from which woman-power can be found, the LCP has the networking, publication and funding capacity to make events possible. Neither organization could exist without the continued support of the lesbian and gay community — especially the LCP pledgers and members.

The party also only came about with generous donations of materials and time by many persons. We would like to acknowledge those people and show our gratitude to these supportive, lesbian-positive persons and businesses.

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Shape-up Tanning
Teddybear Express
Janna MacAuslin of
Alternative Sound
Nancy Vanderburgh
Heidi
Meg Grace
Sheryl
Dianna Long
Janice and Carol for
the great music
All the folks at Echo
Theatre
And a special thanks
to the Women of
Color Potluck
Group

The Lesbian Community Project is a membership organization which seeks to strengthen the social and political role of lesbians throughout Oregon. We publish a monthly newsletter and sponsor a wide variety of events throughout the year. Jane Rule, author of *Desert of the Heart*, made an appearance to benefit LCP. In mid-February the LCP will sponsor an exciting conference on the Lesbian Family at Portland State University.

For information on membership, which includes our newsletter, monies off at events and access to our networking capacities call 233-9079 or write Lesbian Community Project, PO Box 5931, Portland, OR 97228.

The Lesbian Community Project Board of Directors meets the fourth Thursday of each month and is open to all. We encourage women to join.

We are open to your input; let us know what's on your mind.

Lesbian Community Project
Portland Lesbian Choir

OFF database

To the Editor:

"Methinks he doth protest too much."

Just for the record (in reference to Carl Goodman's December letter in *Just Out*), the Oregonians For Fairness volunteer database was "lifted" without permission from the campaign manager's desk. When she discovered its absence, she asked for its return. Goodman promised to return it and has not. In other words, by removing campaign property that was not personally his, the office manager acted in an inappropriate manner, without permission; and failed to return it when asked.

In his letter, Goodman also asserted no claims were made as to any successor group to OFF. But in fact, just such claims were made. We received several irate calls from people on the list. They told us that callers trashed the campaign, along with particular staff by name.

Callers also claimed to be with a successor group to OFF that would finally do things "right." Goodman may not have made those calls but someone did.

The people on the list were volunteers and supporters of the campaign in the first place. Needless to say, many of them did not appreciate the tone and spirit of the phone call even though they did want to be involved in post-election organizing.

We agree that broad based community coalitions must be built to respond to the current situation. But when they're shakily built on the basis of trust-destroying subterfuge and irresponsibility, they are inherently weakened.

Liz Kaufman
Cathy Siemens
Portland

Valentine healing

To the Editor:

My lover, Meg Rowe, and I met at the Tabor Hill Cafe for a quiet lunch Friday, January 6. We were feeling very open and safe in a place we each frequent often. We leaned across the table and kissed. Almost immediately, an owner came over and asked us politely to be more discreet. Her friendly approach did not keep me from feeling all the homophobia that I assume is present when I am affectionate in public with a lover. I felt indignant, shocked, hurt, and angry.

An exchange followed — we demanded to be given the same respect and rights as a heterosexual couple — her response, that we could do it out there (she pointed outside) but not in here. We questioned her consistency in monitoring the behavior of male/female couples in her restaurant, and her understanding of the impact this form of discrimination has on gays and lesbians. We also reminded her of the many lesbians and gay men who eat at her restaurant daily.

When we left I was shaking — the feelings of that day are still with me every time I go to kiss a lover in public. I wonder who will come over and tell me "NO, YOU ARE WRONG, YOU CAN'T DO THAT HERE."

I want to heal. I want to stop internalizing this fear and lack of respect. I want to do this gently and with love. Join me at the Tabor Hill Cafe, 38th and Hawthorne, for a Valentine's lunch, Tuesday, Feb. 14. Come as you are, come with your lovers, come with your friends.

Linda Kliever
Portland

Editor's addendum: Just prior to press time, Linda met with the other owner of the Tabor Hill Cafe. She said that he listened to her concerns and he indicated more sensitivity to these issues in the future. The Valentine's Day lunch is still on.

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