



ACT UP

This space is the newsletter of ACT UP and is made possible by a grant from the MacKenzie River Gathering and Just Out.

Postcards to the stars

The lesbian and gay community responded enthusiastically to ACT UP/PDX "Postcards to the Stars" campaign at Pride celebrations in Portland and San Francisco. Altogether, 500 people addressed postcards to over 70 different closeted entertainers and politicians, urging them to join the struggle for lesbian and gay civil rights by coming out of the closet. Almost twice as many famous dykes than famous gay men. Jodie Foster, Tracy Chapman, and k.d. lang were the top three women addresses; Tom Cruise, Greg Louganis and Arsenio Hall were the most popular men.

Actors, sports figures, musicians and comedians are idolized in our society, and can sell anything. Why not civil rights for gays and lesbians? If every closeted queer in Hollywood came out, imagine the challenge to damaging stereotypes and the change in people's attitudes that would have to take place in this country. It may be that many gay and lesbian entertainers feel locked in the closet; for some the closet may not be a matter of choice. We are sending those people a message that they have support and reminding them that in order to break down the walls of homophobia, they must come out.

The postcard reads:

"How can we gain civil rights if we pretend we don't exist? Come out of the closet!"

"Dear (fill in the blank), As a visible public figure, you have a tremendous ability to promote civil rights for lesbians and gay men. Every time you hide the truth, you perpetuate the misconception that there is something wrong with being a lesbian or gay man. Some people would like us to stay in the closet and keep our mouths shut. I feel it is time for all lesbians and gay men to openly and proudly speak out about our lives. By publicly identifying yourself as a lesbian or gay man, you can change the course of history and create a positive image of who we are. I support your step out, I do not support your silence."

"Love, your fan"

If you would like to join us by sending a message and would like a copy of names and addresses and postcards, please send us a self-addressed stamped envelope and a check for 25 cents per postcard.

ACT UP meets with the Oregonian

ACT UP met with Bill Hilliard, the Oregonian's top editor June 27. This was the first time a gay and lesbian group has ever met with an Oregonian editor. ACT UP asked for a meeting with Hilliard to discuss the Oregonian's policy on outing as stated in the June 22 edition. Hilliard said that the Oregonian resists printing allegations "about anyone's sexual preferences or behavior unless the allegations are supported by facts and can be shown to have some direct bearing on the person's public life or responsibilities."

The policy reflects a basic lack of understanding of the goals of outing as well as confusion about the critical difference between sexual preference/behavior and sexual orientation. (Sexual preference is what one likes to do in bed, whereas sexual orientation is how one identifies oneself.) Also evident in this statement is the persistent expectation of gays and lesbians to remain invisible. We urge the Oregonian to identify publicly out persons as lesbian or gay when reporting.

The meeting became a dialogue about many gay and lesbian subjects which need attention

in the mainstream media, beginning with the lack of awareness by Hilliard that lesbians or gay men who lack contractual protection in employment contracts or employer policy could be fired from their jobs without any legal recourse. ACT UP suggested that the Oregonian run a story comparing the voting records of Oregon politicians on lesbian and gay issues. Hilliard invited ACT UP to return August 1 for a meeting with the editorial board and publisher to talk about outing principles and lesbian and gay reporting issues. We are hopeful about developing a relationship with the Oregonian and giving input which will improve their coverage of topics critical to our community.

Deviants make-out at Federal Building

ACT UP/PDX held a rally and Kiss-in at the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) offices on June 19 to protest federal exclusion of openly gay and lesbian tourists and persons who are HIV positive from the US. The protest was designed to focus public attention on two separate US laws. One a 1952 law that excludes gay or lesbian visitors entry into the United States because Congress has deemed such persons to be "afflicted with psychopathic personality, or sexual deviancy" and another a 1987 law that denies entry or citizenship to any person who has a positive test result for HIV under the language "dangerous contagious disease." Demonstrations in other cities on that day focused on the law barring people with HIV from the US. During the Sixth International Conference on AIDS in San Francisco, many scientists, conference delegates and organizers supported ACT UP's INS protest but no one specifically addressed homophobia, the root of the HIV law nor did they mention the 1952 law.

ACT UP eats lunch with police

November 9, 1988, 200 demonstrators blocked the Burnside Bridge to protest the passage of the "No Special Rights" Committee's Ballot Measure 8. The police responded with the 'special' rubber glove treatment for the lesbian and gay demonstrators. Since that time ACT UP has been pursuing the police bureau to publicly recognize the homophobic root of this policy and has been pushing the bureau to develop an educated HIV policy. Our requests have been taken to the Chief's office, Police Internal Affairs Auditing Committee, the City Council, and the Mayor's office. The City Council mandated a meeting between ACT UP and the Community Policing Division. ACT UP invited representatives from other gay and lesbian groups (CAP, LCP, MCC, Phoenix Rising, and Right to Privacy) to attend the lunch time meetings (now held monthly) with Captains Schrader (liason to the gay and lesbian community) and Potter.

Issues to be discussed in future meetings include: reinstatement of cultural competency training for officers and inclusion of cultural competency questions in recruitment exams; development of policies within the bureau that facilitate lesbian and gay officers ability to come out on the job and to openly recruit in gay and lesbian community (see ad this issue) and development of a comprehensive HIV policy addressing education for officers about HIV transmission and treatment of HIV infected officers, arrestees and prisoners. We are confident that the ongoing constructive dialogue will result in an improved relationship between the Portland Police Bureau and the lesbian and gay community. Thanks to Captain Potter who rode in the Lesbian and Gay Pride parade with only a few days notice!

Ten members attend AIDS conference

Ten members of ACT UP/PDX joined hundreds of other demonstrators in San Francisco for a week of protest during the Sixth International Conference on AIDS. The day before the Conference opened, over 1,000 people marched through downtown San Francisco's rush hour to the INS building protesting discriminatory immigration policies. A highlight of this demo was the spontaneous storming of the Marriott's lobby. Many delegates stayed at the Marriott and the Marriott supported the bill before the Senate that would bar people with HIV from working as food handlers.

Demonstrations during the week were topical: Wed. — Protest of restricted access to medical research, treatments and the conference for People with AIDS; Thurs.—A march to expose the crumbling "San Francisco Model" of AIDS care, government inaction, and corporate profiteering; Fri.—Demonstration against the exclusion of women, children, and people of color from research, treatment, and services; Sat.—an HIV/AIDS March: A united call to action; and the disruption at Louis Sullivan's speech at the closing ceremonies on Sunday. Two PDX ACT UPers were arrested for civil disobedience in the course of the week. We took time out from voicing our anger to attend "official" and "satellite" conference sessions (free and open to all) in hopes of learning more about AIDS.

ACT UP/PORTLAND's own t-shirt

Our new t-shirt is black with an exploding pink triangle over which is written, ACT UP FOR YOUR LIFE! Call us at 775-4763 to place your order. We have lots of other merchandise (shirts, buttons, stickers) and no outlet! Please give us a call if you would like to sell our wares in your store.

We need you

We hope that the gay and lesbian community will join us to fight AIDS, homophobia, racism, sexism and classism! Whether you join ACT UP, join us in coalitions or lend support with contributions, we want you to know we appreciate your support. ACT UP/PDX stays busy pointing out what's wrong and demanding and working for what's right. Keep ACT UP acting up! Send contributions (make checks out to ACT UP) to our PO Box! Thank you for your support!

Calendar

ACT UP meets the first, third and fifth Wednesday of every month at 7 pm in the basement of MCC, 24th and NE Broadway.

August 1 — Open discussion on media relations.

August 15 — Guest speaker, Linda Shirley "The Dyke Behind the Mike" from KBOO.

August 29 — Guest speaker: Donna Redwing, director of the Lesbian Community Project.



ACT UP/Portland, PO Box 6352, Portland, OR 97228. Please write or call Laura White at 775-4763 with questions or comments regarding this newsletter.



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