

Just out

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The submission of written and graphic materials is welcomed. Written material should be typed and double-spaced. Graphic material should be in black ink on white paper.

Deadline for submissions is the 15th of the month preceding publication.

Out About Town is compiled as a courtesy to our readers. Performers, clubs, individuals or groups wishing to list events in the calendar should mail notices to *Just Out* by the 15th of the month preceding publication.

Listings will not be taken over the telephone. Display Advertising will be accepted up to the 17th of each month.

Classified ads must be received at the office of *Just Out* by the 17th of each month, along with payment. Ads will not be taken over the telephone.

Editorial policies allow the rejection or the editing of an article or advertisement that is offensive, demeaning or may result in legal action. *Just Out* consults the Associated Press Stylebook and Label Manual on editorial decisions.

Views expressed in letters to the editor, columns and features are not necessarily those of the publishers.

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steppin' out



Steven Apodaca, a tenor, sings with the Portland Gay Men's Chorus during the opening of the Oregon Convention Center last month

PHOTO BY BETH A. ALLEN

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E D I T O R I A L

October has the gayest holidays

Put on a mask for Halloween, take it off for Coming Out Day

The two gayest holidays of the year are upon us: Halloween, Oct. 31, and National Coming Out Day, Oct. 11. Both can be pretty frightening and a whole lot of fun.

Halloween, like no other day of the year, has become a gay holiday filled with fun and frivolity. Our practice of feigning to be someone we're not finally pays off and the rest of society has to take a backseat to the pros of pretending. Fantasies become reality, if only for one night. Vampires, pirates and Joan Rivers stalk the streets.

Unlike Halloween, National Coming Out Day gives gays and lesbians a chance to quit pretending. Weeks before donning the masks, all the masks can fall. Of course, there is no guarantee that coming out will always be fun and frivolous. But as often as not, the experience is a lot less horrifying than the imagination has envisioned. For some the thought of coming out strikes fear into the very bowels of their being. Coming Out Day isn't sanctioned by all of society as Halloween is. But it can be a joyous and freeing experience. Especially if we have each others' support.

We all come out at different speeds and to different degrees. Some people come out as soon as they understand their sexual orientation. Some people never quite make it out of

the closet. For some, being out means being out to everyone and at all times. For some, being out means telling close family members and friends. For some, realizing and accepting the reality of their sexual orientation is as out as they can ever imagine being.

What we can do as a community is support everyone's personal speed and degree of outness, while gently prodding our friends on. We need to help each other to come out as far as feels safe. We can do that by accepting our sisters' and brothers' individuality and understanding that no two persons' circumstances are the same.

If someone is locked tight in a closet, the thought of coming out to the whole world will likely make him or her throw up on the shoe tree. For totally closeted people, coming out to one friend or one family member will be a great success.

Many gay men and lesbians fear losing their jobs if they are out. That fear is often justified because discrimination is socially acceptable and also, unfortunately, because discrimination is still on the record as lawfully acceptable. Perhaps a good first step for these folks would be to celebrate Coming Out Day by writing a letter to their representative in Congress and let them know of another vote that will be tied to

their record on gay and lesbian rights.

Many gays and lesbians consider themselves out, but still hide behind a mask of anonymity when relating to people they come into contact with on a casual basis. At work, at school or while shopping, the subtle lies or omissions are like a hand gripping the closet doorknob. Tell the florist why you're sending flowers to another woman. Tell your buddies at work why you want to get home early on the night of your anniversary. Don't just say no when someone asks if you are married, tell them your actual status: I'm a single lesbian; I'm a gay man in a committed relationship; whatever the truth may be.

If you're one of the fortunate few who is out with no holds barred, find someone who is ready to come out a little farther and share your stories, your strength and the freedom that being totally out brings. Practice patience, though, because no two people's coming out will be the same.

Remember, this is a day of celebration. A holiday of major consequences. Take off your mask and throw away your costume. This is the one holiday where we can celebrate being who we really are.

come out! come out! wherever you are!
October 11th is national coming out day.