

just out

since 1983

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Letters to the editor should be limited to 400 words. Graphic material should be in black ink on white paper. Deadline for submissions is the 15th of the month preceding publication. Views expressed in letters to the editor, columns and features are not necessarily those of the publisher.

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A free copy of *Just Out* and/or advertising rates are available on request.

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steppin' out



PHOTO BY LINDA KLEVER

Mona Lisa as a dyke. Art Media window goddess Rhonda Wheeler, created this display showing many women as Mona Lisa. The one in the middle, sports a "dyke" tattoo and a pink triangle.

editorial

Diverse by nature

Our community is diverse by nature. Sexual orientation cuts across all lines of race, religion, economic standing, education, and nationality. We have a built-in bridge for coming together, if we will only use it. We have an opportunity to learn from people and share with people who may be very different from ourselves, or who we perceive as different. In at least one way we are alike. We are queer.

Understanding and reaching out to people unlike ourselves, is an important step in healing this world. If we choose to isolate ourselves and think we know what others are like then we are doing exactly what the Oregon Citizens Alliance is doing, and we are only hurting ourselves.

In this issue of *Just Out*, many gay men and lesbians from a variety of cultural backgrounds, not usually represented, speak their own truths. They have all been brave enough to be honest and open about their lives.

As editor, it has been an enriching experience to call on people and ask them to participate in this issue, to tell others about their lives. As an European-American dyke it was a scary experience to ask people of ethnic origins different than my own to participate in this project knowing that many people of color do not feel represented by this paper. My fears were met by an overwhelmingly positive response from everyone I contacted, even those who didn't choose to contribute to this issue. My thanks to each of you.

Many of the people who participated in this issue and many of the young lesbians and gay men who wrote articles for the September Youth Issue don't consider themselves writers. One needn't be a writer or a speaker to have something to say. It is important for each of us to value our own truth and to value the truth of others.

This will be my last issue as editor of *Just Out*. My decision to leave has been a very difficult one and I still question it even as I write this editorial, perhaps especially as I write this editorial. The work of being the editor of a lesbian and gay newspaper has been a joy to me, especially working on editions of the paper like this one. After 14 years in mainstream television news, it is a wonderful experience to finally be covering stories that reflect my life, and that are as important as any story on the 5 o'clock news. To be able to include people as writers because of their bias and what they have to offer as

experts on their own life experiences, not to exclude them because they are "too close" to a story, has been a wonderful change. I love this job, I also need a break. I miss working with Philip Anderson, who died of AIDS-related causes in July. My preference would always be to work with another editor with complementary skills and different life experiences.

In other news related to coverage of the Oregon Citizens Alliance, I wish more reporters in the mainstream media, particularly television, would look beyond what is spoon-fed them. In a recent news story about the OCA's new "No on Hate" initiative, which increases penalties for hate crimes, adds "political activities" to the list of protected categories, and changes sexual orientation to "engaging in abnormal and unnatural sexual behavior," KGW-Channel 8 News reported the story as if the OCA really cares about hate crimes. Pete Shulberg even made note of the "special mention of homosexuals," as if it were positive. Don't they read the fine print, or even the second page of a press release? Didn't they see the deletion of "sexual orientation," the addition of the words "abnormal behavior?" Doesn't that sound familiar? Things are not always what they seem. I was taught that reporters need to examine material and question things, not swallow them whole.

This initiative is a way for the OCA to get the language, "abnormal sexual behavior," referring to homosexuality, on the books in Oregon. This is a public relations move on the OCA's part to appear as if they care about a group they are trying to erase from the face of the planet. Through the added classification of protection for political activities, they, themselves would be covered by a law intended to protect disenfranchised people. To top it off, using the name, "No on Hate," which has been used since July by a lesbian and gay political action committee that is fighting the OCA, is meant at the very least to confuse the public. If the OCA were serious about its initiative, why would it change "sexual orientation" to "abnormal sexual behavior," language completely out of context with the rest of the wording? To be consistent, the rest of the law would refer to other protected classes in derogatory terms as well. In my opinion that is totally inconsistent with a law that is intended to protect people from being assaulted because of negative stereotypes.

If you haven't done it already, I encourage you to come out now, while it is still legal to be and say "queer."

Linda Kliever

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