

letters

Support from another front

To the Editor:

For the past few months I have been reading—with increasing anxiety—of the progress of the Oregon Citizens Alliance and the growing public support for Ballot Measure 9. Having survived a few campaigns myself, I wanted to tell all of you how much I respect your determination in the face of this challenge.

I don't need to emphasize to any of you the threat posed by Ballot Measure 9. It is an appalling attempt to abridge constitutionally protected freedoms. What I do intend to highlight is how important your defense of freedom in Oregon is to lesbians and gay men everywhere.

I have been involved in politics and grassroots organizing efforts for most of my adult life. There are frequently times when frustrations can overwhelm the best of us. We cannot afford, however, to let our frustrations defeat us.

When I need special inspiration—to make one more telephone call, to stay one more hour distributing leaflets, to knock on one more door—I think of others whose lives and security are held in the balance. I suspect many of you, like myself, derive a unique power from the memories of those friends no longer around to share our victories.

Please know that while Ballot Measure 9 has attracted national media attention, your struggle against homophobia and hate has also gathered national admiration and respect. Gerry E. Studds, Congressman District 10, Mass.

A mouse that roared

To the Editor:

A warm thank-you to everyone who showed up and went ballistic in Portland's Coming-Out-Day Rally. Speaking in front of God and Everybody was the scariest thing I have ever done in my life. For 20-some years, I have been a mouse—to my family, my friends, my colleagues. Last night I roared. It felt so good that I will continue to roar in ways large and small until I die. Bless you all. Beth Hamon
Portland

A challenge

To the Editor:

In the October issue of *Just Out* there were two letters ("Everything's Important" by Don Minnerly of Portland and "Locked Out" by Jack Sharp of Salem) that made reference to an editor's note in the September issue that said: "...supports, accepts and joyfully embraces every 'fringe' element of the gay, lesbian and bisexual and queer-as-a-three-dollar-bill community." Both letters are so very true.

Jack Sharp's letter hits the nail on the head. I am also in prison and belong to that "fringe" part of our community in prison. Is it because we are not seen that we are not heard?

Here are a few things from this side of the forgotten. Due to who and what we are, the Department of Corrections' deliberate and homophobic discrimination—we are labeled (red-tagged), separated (not allowed to be in two-man cells) and denied access to areas of the prison.

When I read about the pink triangle [*Just Out*, October] I made one and placed it on my shirt. I was told by the guard, "Remove that and throw it away." I was then told, "You are not to make any more, and if you do you will be sent to segregation."

We go through this type of discrimination daily. Even though we are just a "fringe" element of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer-as-a-three-dollar-bill community. I challenge you, *Just Out*, to come to prison for a day. Meet some of us and tell the story from this side.

I hope and pray that Measure 9 goes down 10-1.

Randell W. Brown
Salem

Bashing? Not!

To the Editor:

I guess the gay and lesbian community newspapers can't think two steps ahead when it comes to politics. Instead of supporting a gay man—the only out-front gay [man] running for office—the lesbian and gay press bashes him. The fact that he is a Republican seems to stop the thinking process altogether.

But really, folks, state and national politics involve a two-party system. Anyone who thinks the gay and lesbian community can get ahead legislatively without the understanding and support of both parties is simply not thinking strategically.

The argument is that Jerry Keene can't change the Republican party. Bullshit. He already has, and to a perceptible extent. He can't do a complete job on the party, any more than Barney Frank can on the Democrat party, but the process has to start because visibility in both parties is the only way to bring the understanding we need.

Lee Coleman
Portland

Editor's note: In the political arena, Oregon is not isolated from the nation. The national Republican platform is the most repressive, oppressive, life-stealing platform to date. While we acknowledge the intense work and healing that needs to begin within the Republican Party, we disagree with the assertion that representatives of the party, gay or straight, should be elected to public office. People in government positions need to draw on their political parties for strength and support. Just because a person is honest about his or her sexual orientation doesn't cut it anymore. For years gay men and lesbians have been boxed into a single issue politic, fighting for our right to live and love. That narrow vision is a dead-end street. We are on this planet with a lot of other people. A broad, inclusive base is the only sustainable politic. The Democrats certainly aren't perfect, but they are at least on the path.

P.S. Lee, it's the height of irresponsibility to call the piece Just Out did on the District 11 race "bashing." You owe every beaten, battered and terrified queer in this state an apology. We are all feeling the real bashings of our real enemies and we are hurting from it. Disagreement does not constitute bashing.

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NO ON 9
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Enthusiastic signage

To the Editor:

Having been so moved by what the future implications are for Ballot Measure 9 and how its passing may affect all people, I thought it most

appropriate to send my message in my own hand.

Enclosed is a photo of my rear-window sign. I only hope the enthusiastic gestures I have seen translate into "no" votes when it counts.

Adrian Kalil
Portland