

just out
since 1983

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The **display advertising** deadline is the Monday after the first and third Friday for the next issue.

Classified ads must be received at the office of **just out** by the Monday after the first and third Friday for the next issue, along with payment. Ads will not be taken over the telephone.

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Subscriptions to **just out** are available for \$17.50 for 12 issues. First Class (in an envelope) is \$30 for 12 issues.

A copy of **just out** is available for \$1 and/or advertising rates are available on request.

The mailing address and telephone number for **just out** are PO Box 14400, Portland, OR 97214-0400; (503) 236-1252. Our fax number is 236-1257.

steppin' out



PHOTO BY LINDA KLEIVER

Olympic great Greg Louganis autographs photos at the Beaverton Nordstrom store last month to promote his new line of women's swimwear. Hubba, hubba.

editorial

Playing devil's advocate

Who really makes up the sexual minority communities?

by Ariel Waterwoman

I t used to be that there were gay men and there were gay women, and rarely did these groups meet with a common interest. Some believed that there was little, if any, common ground. With the onset of feminism, the chasm between the queer sexes seemed to widen. Gay women reclaimed "lesbian" and "dyke" as positive identifying terms, while also "losing their sense of humor." Bisexual people were largely invisible. Transgendered, transsexual, and cross-dressing individuals were misunderstood.

Now, there seems to be a big bandwagon that any individual who is not absolutely straight, 100 percent of the time, is jumping on. The term "sexual minority communities" seems to be the current catch phrase for us. But, who are we really?

When we talk about sexuality and sexual expression, that does not include gender issues—or does it? Calling ourselves the sexual minority communities could include members of the North American Man/Boy Love Association, as pedophiles are in the minority. Historically, transsexuals, transgendered and cross-dressing individuals were just considered gay, no matter what their sexual orientation happened to be. So, who do we mean when we say "sexual minority"?

There are some angry transsexual people who saw themselves included in the 1993 March on Washington banner, yet now feel abandoned because they are not included in the

federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act. And they don't see any national leaders stepping up to include them. Where does our responsibility lie? If we say we are struggling for the rights of transsexuals, are we? Or is it just the current politically correct thing to say?

Are we defined by who our enemies are? Is everyone jumping onto this sexual minority bandwagon to escape the fire from the right wing attack? Are we going to keep defining our struggle by our sexuality? What is the difference between a cross-dresser and a cross-gendered person? And what does sexuality have to do with it? Cross-dressers and transsexuals at one recent conference kept trying to reassure the hotel staff by telling them they weren't "gay."

Questions about who we are and how we define this struggle for human rights need to be answered. We all need to think and talk about whose life we're willing to fight for. We need to let the leadership in national civil rights organizations know how we feel. Do gay men and lesbians have the political strength and the energy to fight for inclusion of all the peoples now included under the banner of "sexual minority"? Because if we don't then we better own it now, instead of tricking people who are already oppressed with a bunch of P.C. rhetoric about how the gay and lesbian community is fighting for their civil rights too.

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