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since 1983

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Letters to the editor should be limited to two double-spaced typed pages. **Deadline for submissions** to the editorial department and for the **Calendar** is the Thursday before the first and third Friday for the next issue. Views expressed in letters to the editor, columns and features are not necessarily those of the publisher.

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

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

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# steppin' out



PHOTO BY LINDA KLEIVER

Outside In is part of an entire city block that declared itself a hate-free zone.

## guest editorial

# Razor-thin victory

*Let's hope the community doesn't press the snooze button*

by Donna Red Wing

Once again, the citizens of Oregon have voted against discrimination and bigotry. Oregonians have decided—at least for the next two years—who we are and who we get to be, as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual and transgender people.

Since the Ballot Measure 8 campaign in 1988, Oregonians have had the opportunity to vote for or against us. And, because the Oregon Citizens Alliance has already filed its initiatives for 1996, we know that, again, our friends and our families, our neighbors and our co-workers, and lots of people who don't even know us, will have another opportunity to decide our fate. We know, too, that we will spend millions of dollars and that we will expend thousands of volunteer hours over many months, all over the state. And the best that we can expect to do is run in place.

We must create an agenda and a strategy that moves us forward. We must figure a way to do the work so that there is a place of entry for everyone who wants to engage. We must figure out where we, as queer Oregonians, go from here.

The first thing to understand is this: We are engaged in a 'holy war,' a 'cultural war'—that is the language of the radical right. We have won one battle, one skirmish, for which we are grateful. The OCA has 26 municipality wins and we cannot dismiss that reality. We can, however, be thankful for HB 3500, the legislation that prohibits those 26 municipalities from acting on their votes of discrimination.

We must understand that the radical right is gunning for us in every referendum state, in school boards around the country, with discriminatory curricula, and with their work against AIDS education and First Amendment rights. We must understand that the issue of lesbian and gay rights has become a primary part of the radical right's national agenda.

We must also understand that the radical right has taken on the task of defining us. And for many in the United States, that is the only information they have. As gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual and transgender people, we must find the courage to tell our country who we really are. We must become part of the definition. We must replace the lies and the misinformation with the reality of our extraordinary lives. We must tell the truth about ourselves—and the truth about us is the right's worst nightmare.

To find that courage, we must start from a place where we agree that our rights are worth fighting for, where we believe that our lives are worth fighting for, and where we believe that we have a right to win this 'holy war.' When we acknowledge our worth, we can begin the job of reaching out and touching the lives of the people around us. We can begin the job of changing hearts and minds.

I am indebted to the work of the No on 13 staff and volunteers, friends and funders. They have given us a reprieve for another two years. The Rural Organizing Project, African Americans for Human Rights, The Equity Foundation, The Lesbian Community Project, and the long list of community-based organizations and community activists who worked towards our victory must be acknowledged and appropriately supported for their efforts.

Now we must begin the task of creating a community response and a community agenda.

Our razor-thin victory was a wake-up call. Let's hope that the community doesn't press the snooze button.

*Donna Red Wing is the national field director of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.*

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