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since 1983

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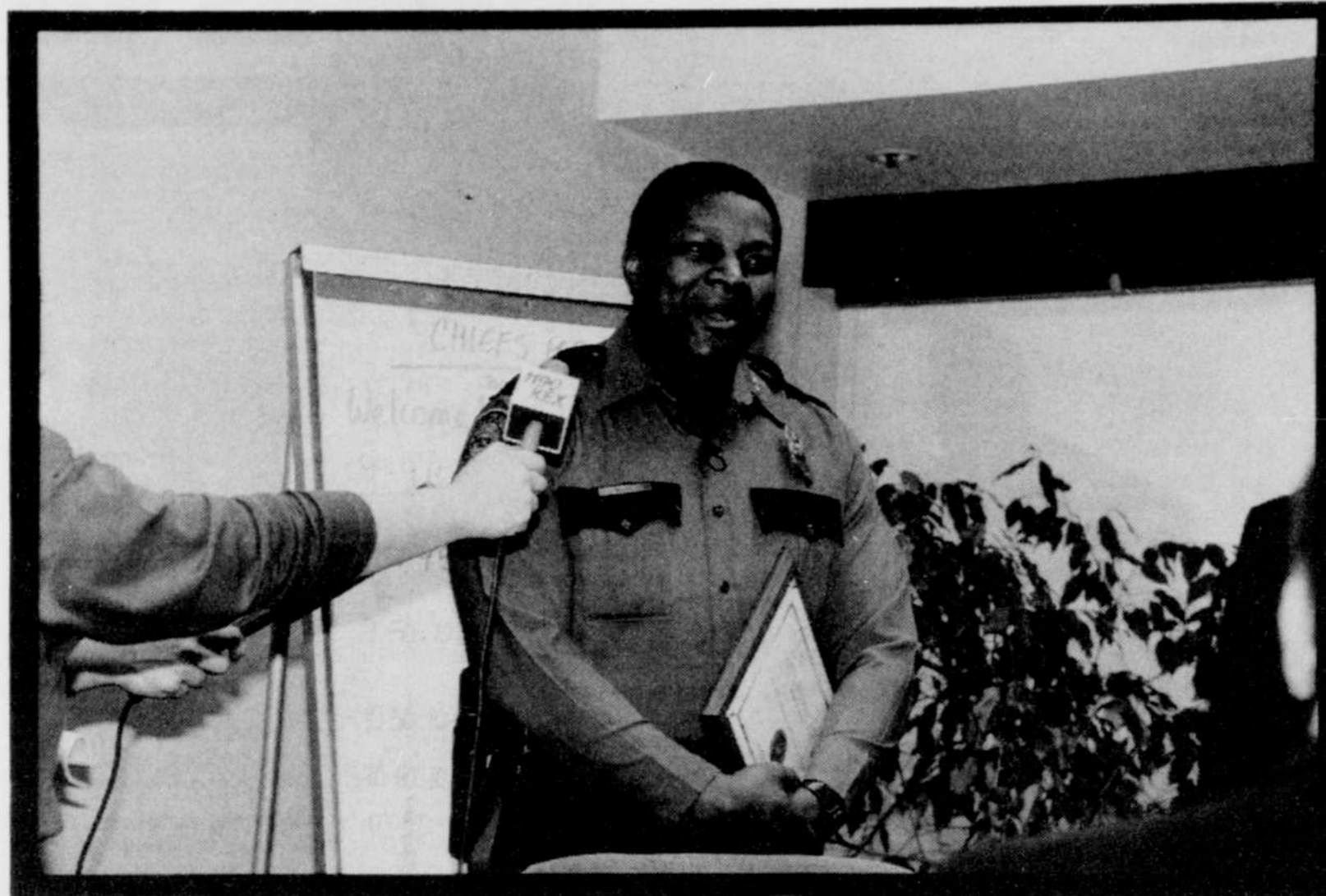
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A copy of **just out** is available for \$1 and/or advertising rates are available on request.

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



Portland Police Chief Charles Moose received the FBI Director's Award on Tuesday, Jan 17.

## guest editorial

# Redefining victory

*It is time to put ourselves on the line for one another*

by Kathleen Sadaat

*"Any real change implies the breakup of the world as one has always known it, the loss of all that gave one identity."*

—James Baldwin,  
*Nobody Knows My Name*

When I hear gay men and lesbians talk as though fighting the Oregon Citizens Alliance is unrelated to other human struggles, or when I hear only thoughts about changing the machinery of the "system," I worry. The first thought assumes our struggles are *not* connected, the second, that changing mechanics (laws, procedures, processes) somehow means we won. Laws (and elected officials) express the philosophy, understanding and attitudes of a group. A change in philosophy, etc., is the only way to have "real" change. Real change means completely new ways of examining issues, formulating problems, developing plans and solutions. The struggle against the rise of the right in the United States requires of us real change. As part of that real change we must reexamine our definition of a victory. If, as lesbians and gay men, we know that to retain our basic rights and to gain our full civil rights we must support and work for the human and civil rights of all, then we already know we are connected to other struggles. If we know our freedoms are connected then we know that our victories must be defined by those efforts that help make liberty, justice and equity more accessible to all.

Victory must mean more than getting 50 percent plus 1 in an election. The OCA uses its initiative work as an organizing tool. It motivates and inspires frightened people to feel powerful by voting to legalize their prejudices. If we don't make a real change, and organize, we will lose ground and "they" will eventually get the 50 percent plus 1 they need. We must start now, educating and organizing real and potential allies and get them involved in advancing the cause of human rights.

Victory must mean more than changing the Oregon initiative process to make it harder to get issues on the ballot. (And if we exchange access to the initiative process for a false sense of safety and security, we lose big time.) If the OCA continues to successfully organize and we don't, it will eventually meet any fair requirement of the process. If it needs more signatures to put a measure on the ballot, that means it must work harder. It does not mean that I am safer. I'll be safer when more of us step outside our circles of comfort to work with, organize, motivate and inspire more people to get involved.

Victory must mean more than just waiting for courts to decide the constitutionality of measures the right wing has passed. Waiting will work only as long as judges and justices are not, themselves, part of the right wing. We already know that right-wing groups are busy getting people appointed and elected into positions of power and influence. Instead of waiting for the courts, we must actively seek appointments to boards, commissions and task forces and continue to elect people (including judges) who understand and support human and civil rights.

We must support the people doing work to help heal our urban-rural split, and we urbanites need to get directly involved in helping heal that split. It is time to work with rural people. It is time to stop using the word "redneck." There are groups and organizations that have worked for years in the struggle against bigotry. Some have it as their very purpose for existing. It is time to learn from them. It is time to talk with new people. It is time to talk about the rights of sexual minorities and about child and elder care, education, health care, jobs, choice, and surviving in a time of fear, anger, and diminished regard for human beings. If, as Martin Luther King Jr. said, "A threat to freedom anywhere is a threat to freedom everywhere," it is time to ensure your freedom by working for mine, and vice versa. It is time to put ourselves on the line for one another. It is time to define victory as each time we walk forward, together.

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