

just out
since 1983

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Ad policy. No sexually exploitative advertising will be accepted. Compensation for errors in, or cancellation of, advertising will be made with credit toward future advertising.

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steppin' out

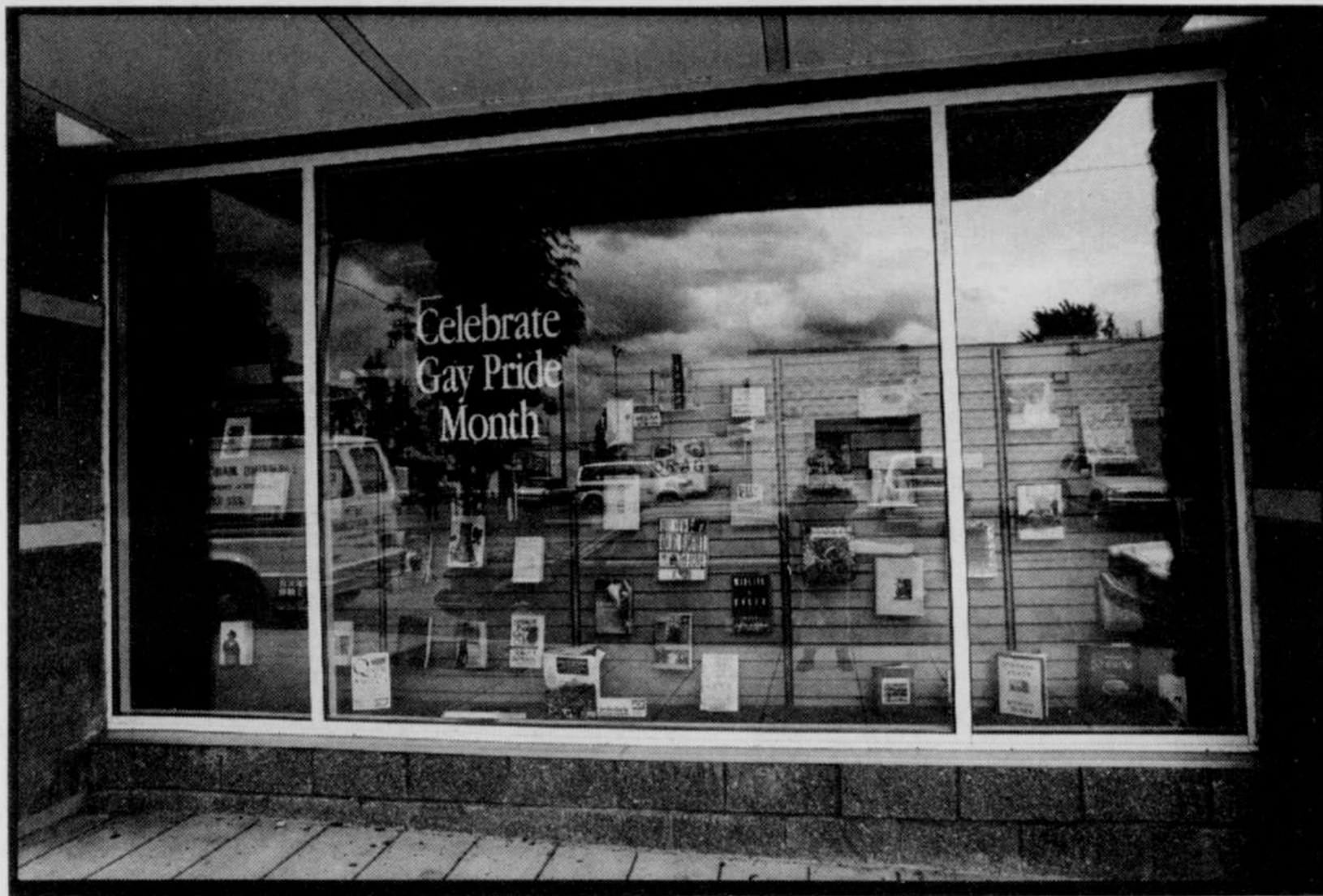


PHOTO BY LINDA KLEIWER

guest editorial

A letter to my community(ies)

The misfortune of a life-changing accident has given me a rare opportunity to truly experience the power of love

by Rupert Kinnard

The only measure of your words and deeds will be the love you leave behind when you're gone...

—The Flirtations, from "Everything Possible"

Even before the accident this past spring that crushed a portion of my spinal column and left me paralyzed from mid-waist down, I had contemplated what it meant to be a part of a community. I was pretty much aware of being a member of two specific groups—the African American and the queer community. Working for *Willamette Week*, buying a brick in Pioneer Courthouse Square, designing flyers for organizations like Oregonians Against the Death Penalty and the National Abortion Rights Action League in the early '80s made me feel like a part of the community-at-large. Being a part of the formation of *Just Out* and sharing the adventures of The Brown Bomber and Diva Touché Flambé with its readers, joining the Portland Town Council (one of Oregon's first lesbian and gay rights organizations) and as a board member creating a sub-group called the Diversity Alliance made me feel connected with the queer community. Involvement with Brother to Brother-Portland and working as art director of *The Portland Skanner* allowed me to feel more in touch with communities of color.

In 1992, having returned to Portland after seven fruitful years in the Bay area, I found a comfort here that was born out of knowing I had truly returned home. My partner, Scott Stapley, and I immediately started throwing house parties, partly in hopes of entertaining friends and tireless community workers. The farewell party for Donna Red Wing when she

moved to New York and the party to help send 13-year-old Portlander Jessie Clay to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women are just two examples. During the past three years I've had the opportunity to serve as DJ for the No on 13 Campaign, Queer Night at LaLuna and the Hotel Workers Organizing Committee. Even serving juice and cookies, as part of the Boy's Auxiliary, to participants of Portland's first Dyke March two years ago is one of the many activities that reflects a desire to remain involved my community. But I was unprepared to accept the intensity of what can happen when that same community decides to focus its energy toward one of its own. I found that I couldn't understand—could barely accept—the outpouring of love from such a wide variety of people since my accident.

Even in the midst of trying to define my own community—which includes people of color, queer folk, older folks, younger people, neighbors, family and extended family—I have been overwhelmed by support. From the cards, flowers and visits I received while I was at Providence Hospital to the trust fund established by friends to the volunteers who worked on making my home wheelchair accessible, I have felt blessed. From the incredibly entertaining benefit recently at the Echo Theatre to being a recipient of this year's Spirit of Pride Award, I have gained strength to work through this most recent life challenge.

And the upshot of it all is that I think we owe it to ourselves to embrace our community, however we wish to define it. Because I have learned that there is nothing quite like a love reciprocated, and I am grateful that I have been able to experience it.

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