

quandary. Senate Bill 577 is labeled, as you say, the Defense of Marriage Act. But deep beneath the surface it reinforces the defense of a whole system. A system of inequality that rewards—through acceptance, discounts, resources and benefits—a particular form of behavior (i.e., heterosexual unions and/or breeding).

So imagine, if you can, a world of total equality. Not just one form of marriage or another, with or without children. But equality of all people—all ages, genders, races, creeds, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations and economic conditions. Don't you think there could be more time spent on, and more fulfillment in, helping each other, including children already born, to deal with the problems of this complex world? If you look at the big picture, maybe the whole system needs an overhaul.

All too often I see people with attitudes like the editor's, who are so concerned about coveting the rights, rewards and safety nets of one group or another. Then the real thinking and reasoning about the rights themselves is lost in the shuffle.

State Sen. Marylin Shannon may not have much choice: Heterosexual family values are capitalist values, however self-important, oppressive and unequal they seem. It is just a way of thinking—one that is more prone to conquering and taking than it is to equal sacrifice for the good of all.

Mark Rulon Fairbanks
Portland

Visibility is crucial

To the Editor:

Thank you for publishing the photo of our Gorilla Theater event for National Condom Day as the Steppin' Out photo in the Feb. 21 issue. It is so important for our youth to see themselves accurately portrayed by the media. The youth involved in the Valentine's Day condom (and dental dam) distribution event conceived the idea and worked on every part of the production themselves—creating their costumes, their backdrop, the greeting cards and taking the pictures. Dozens of street youth were involved in this safer-sex event.

A much larger percentage of the youth who participate in programs here at Outside In are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning than the numbers found in mainstream youth programs. It is a priority for us to provide safer-sex and HIV-prevention messages for our clients who find themselves at higher risk for STD infection due to homelessness, survival and addiction issues, insufficient access to hygiene, and other factors associated with street life.

Despite the closure of our allopathic clinic, Outside In continues to offer naturopathic and chiropractic clinics as well as acupuncture treatments for those who could not otherwise afford them. We have a drop-in center and offer case management, transitional housing and emergency services, employment education, and other services to support homeless youth. We have support services and a housing program for HIV-positive young people, and we provide clean syringes in exchange for used ones to injection drug users 18 and older. We also provide two peer-education programs for HIV prevention and health awareness, and a support group for sexual minority youth.

Visibility is a crucial part of providing these services—letting the kids and the community at large know we are available and we care. Thank

you for helping make us more accessible.

Zarod Rominski, Assistant Director
Outside In

Not dead yet

To the Editor:

"Reports of my death," Mark Twain once wrote, "are greatly exaggerated." After reading Diana Courvant's guest editorial ["I can't hear you," *Just Out*, March 7, 1997] accusing me of having fallen silent, I think I know how Twain must have felt.

Let's take a look at the record, shall we?

The last week of January, I met with 13 Oregon senators and representatives to specifically discuss civil rights protection for transsexuals. So much for Courvant's claim that I would prefer the Oregon Legislature to remain ignorant of the state of civil rights protection for transsexuals.

On Feb. 20, Metropolitan Human Rights Commission Chairman Lowen Berman assigned me the task of drafting a chapter of the MHRC's amended fact-finding report on discrimination against transsexuals. On Feb. 25, the Olympia City Council, at my request, specifically added transsexuals, transvestites and transgenders to that city's unfair housing practices ordinance. And on March 6, I was one of four transsexuals on a panel at Lewis & Clark College's 16th annual Gender Studies Symposium.

If I am slowing down, as Courvant claims, God help the transphobic should the pace of my activism ever pick up.

Of far more concern to me is Courvant's claim that Oregon transsexuals do not have civil rights protection in the areas of housing and public accommodations. I would hate to think a transsexual misled by Courvant would fail to file a complaint with the Bureau of Labor and Industries should he or she be discriminated against. The fact of the matter is that transsexuals are protected from discrimination in housing and public accommodations, as well as employment. (If you believe yourself discriminated against for being transsexual, file a complaint with BOLI!)

I also disagree with Courvant's assessment of the activism in Portland: transsexuals [here] are far more active today than at any time in the three and a half years I've called Portland home.

If Courvant is concerned at the level of Portland activism in general, then a call to action—rather than a eulogy—would have been in order. Community organizing is best accomplished by engendering enthusiasm and a sense of pride—not by whining about how no one seems to be doing anything. Don't just sit there, Diana, do something! It might just bring you into contact with those activists whose demise you are prematurely lamenting.

Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan
Portland

CORRECTION

Due to an editing error, the subhead accompanying our March 7 cover story on the Portland Power stated that the American Basketball League was the first national women's basketball league. There have been four previous attempts in the United States at establishing a women's professional basketball league. *Just Out* regrets the error.

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