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Letters to the editor should be limited to 500 words. **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.

**Classified ads** must be received at the **just out** office by 3 pm the Monday after the first and third Friday for the next issue, along with payment. Ads will not be taken over the telephone.

**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.

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 \$2. Advertising rates are available on request.

The mailing address and telephone numbers for **just out** are PO Box 14400, Portland, OR 97293-0400; (503) 236-1252. The phone number for the advertising department is 236-1253. Our fax number is 236-1257. Our e-mail address is [JustOut2@aol.com](mailto:JustOut2@aol.com).

# steppin' out



PHOTO BY LINDA KLEWER

Fans, worshipers and the merely curious filled Brew Sisters pub, 53 NW First Ave., to overflowing on Wednesday, April 30, to watch Ellen, as Ellen, come out on Ellen. Cheering got so loud that the police were called in to restore order. (Well, not really, but it was pretty loud.)

## guest editorial

# Merely human

*Identity-based community is too limiting when your place is in the whole wide world*

by Beth Hamon

The cover article on Ellen DeGeneres in the April 18 issue of *Just Out* was the final straw that compels me to break my silence.

I have been open about my orientation for 10 years. In that time I have wandered through the sticky morass of the lesbian and gay community, trying on various roles and trying out various activities to figure out where I belong. In the end, I have decided that my place is in the whole wide world. Out there with absolutely everyone else, living a human and humane existence.

As I went from one interest to another over this 10-year period, I attended Lesbian Forums, worked as a bouncer at Cafe Mocha, marched in the Rose City Gay Freedom Band (which I helped found in 1990), attended drag shows at the Embers Avenue and celebrated at Lesbian and Gay Pride each year. I met many people and learned a great deal about the gay and lesbian community throughout my explorations, and I wouldn't trade my experiences for anything.

In recent years something has become apparent to me, however, an observation that has disturbed me greatly since it came to my consciousness. My desire to create "community" in the place where I live seemed to be more and more at odds with the way community was being modeled in the gay and lesbian world. I finally realized why. There is community by geography, where people who live in a neighborhood can learn how to get along, and then there is community by identity, where people who share a common identifying trait can claim a sort of community-without-walls.

The more I examined the idea of community by identity, the more I saw walls being put up, not torn down. Due to our very human nature, we seek distinctions by which we form discrimi-

nating attitudes about how we live from day to day, and with whom. Community by identity always seems to be about differentiation, about "us" and "them." If I choose to become an "us" in one group, I will automatically become a "them" somewhere else. As a result, heightened attitudes of fear are created, along with the need to protect oneself from someone else.

I have really found myself at a loss for determining "where" I belong, and I can no longer embrace a vision of identity-based community. To me, it is a false and extremely limiting vision. Rather, I see myself as merely human, no greater or lesser than anyone else. I do not need any other label in life than the one my parents gave me at birth.

I know people will accuse me of being naive, but my perceptions are so rooted in experience that I cannot take such accusations seriously. I know that I am here on earth to experience life. I do so from the place of being human, and identities based on sexual orientation, skin color or religious history no longer carry the same weight they once did for me.

That is why I found the cover article on the coming out of a character on a television show to be so anticlimactic. The article's very existence—indeed, the existence of this and other identity-based publications—only served to remind me of how "somewhere else" I feel these days. In the end, I can only register a quiet sadness.

*Beth Hamon lives in Portland. Submissions for guest editorials should be typed, double-spaced and no longer than 600 words. Fax to 236-1257, e-mail to [JustOut2@aol.com](mailto:JustOut2@aol.com), or mail to PO Box 14400, Portland, OR 97293-0400.*

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