



Enough is enough

Tired of discriminatory immigration laws, binational couples get organized

BY T.K. MANTESE

Editor's note: Due to the immigration issues they face, most of the binational couples in this article asked that their names be changed and that specific identifying information be omitted.

Let's say you're a straight, single gal from Spokane and you bump into Fabio at a sperm bank in Las Vegas. As luck would have it, he's looking for a wife and you've always wanted children with exuberant hair.

Fewer than 24 hours later, you marry at the Hitching Post, and Fabio immediately becomes eligible for permanent U.S. residency.

This is a slap in the face to queer citizens, who don't have access to legal marriage, which confers status upon a foreign spouse that allows automatic entry. There is no route of petition for a gay or lesbian foreign national with a U.S. mate.

While foreign partners may qualify to enter the U.S. under nonimmigrant or immigrant visas, the requirements are daunting.

The New York City-based Lesbian and Gay Immigration Rights Task Force seeks to end this discrimination. Incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1994, LGIRTF provides support to lesbian and gay immigrants and their U.S. partners, and fights against discriminatory U.S. laws that grant immigration privileges to heterosexual couples but not to same-sex couples.

There are eight LGIRTF chapters nationwide, situated in New York; Boston; Chicago; Los Angeles; San Francisco; Seattle; Washington, D.C.; and, most recently, in Portland.

On Dec. 2, the Portland chapter is slated to host a kickoff social and informational forum.

Debby, who has been in the States since 1992 on a work permit, says the purpose of the gathering is to give binational couples, queers with asylum issues or HIV-related immigration issues, and other interested parties an opportunity to meet each other.

"The movement in Europe is to recognize same-sex partnerships. It is almost a nonissue in [European] countries," she says, pointing out that anti-gay rhetoric in the United States has politicized the matter.

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BY RUPERT KINNARD

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