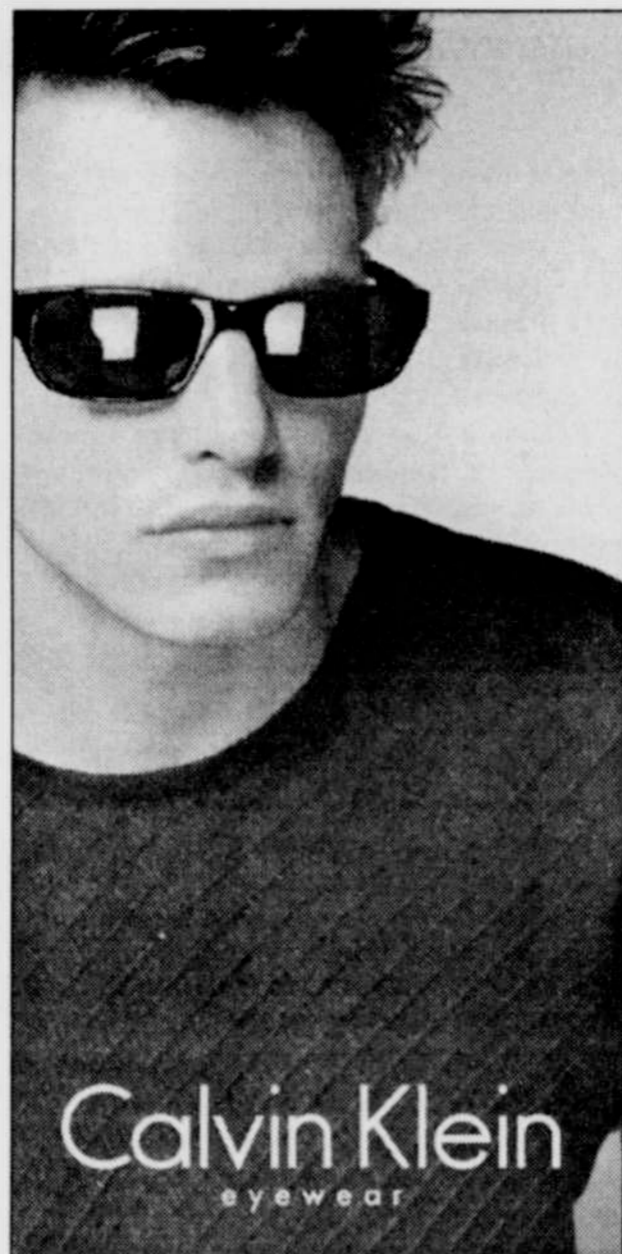


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## NORTHWEST news

### ON THE TABLE

Continued from page 7

"The act of speaking out empowers us," she said, holding up a copy of the roundtable's annual survey.

The roundtable, in conjunction with the Portland Police Bureau, released the questionnaire at the meeting.

The "Survey on Bias, Violence, and/or Discrimination Related to Perceived Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity," in its fourth year, will be distributed by volunteers throughout June. Roundtable members are eager to find new volunteers to present the survey to members of sexual minority communities.

Roundtable members and police want to know about community members' interactions with officers when reporting crimes and about discrimination and violence perpetrated against sexual minorities.

"I believe there's tons and tons of stuff going on and they are not reported," police Lt. Michele Tish said at the meeting.

Tish, a lesbian and roundtable regular, wants to know why her community isn't reporting crimes.

"There's a lot of things that can be done," she added.

Tish reviewed the survey and offered informal training to volunteers willing to help others fill out the form correctly.

"I think we're going to find some real eye-openers here," she said about the reasons people don't report crimes to the police.

Data collected from the surveys will be used by police as a tool in planning prevention and education programs, Assistant Chief Mark Paresi told the gathering.

Paresi said the data is needed to inform decisions, to provide direction and to create the momentum to address the situation.

"We know it is terribly underreported," Paresi said, referring to anti-gay discrimination and bias-motivated crime.

The survey data will also be presented to public officials.

Buckwalter said giving this information to public officials delivers the message: "Don't you see what is happening?"

Social service agencies are also interested in getting the survey data to help with program planning, according to roundtable members.

But the survey's aim is not only to generate statistics. Paresi wants to know what the bureau's officers are up to on the streets when dealing with sexual minorities.

Paresi said the bureau has questions "that are not currently being answered," and he wants the answers.

Kroeker, a transplant from Los Angeles, said it is important that the community establish a climate in which violence, harassment and discrimination won't be tolerated.

The chief said he has lived in places where he saw the results of one group hating another. It is devastating to human life, he said, and all of society.

In addition to the survey, the roundtable presented updated literature that will be distributed throughout the community: a new green safety card (giving important phone numbers and security tips), a guide for sexual minority victims of bias crimes, and Portland Police Bureau's citizen complaint forms.

### ANGER

Even while acknowledging progress in Portland, at least half the forum attendees—most apparently under age 25—seemed angry.



Some drilled Kroeker and Paresi with questions and complaints. Others were angry with the committee itself.

Mel Rudd has attended the roundtable before. People know Rudd's name. Rudd knows the roundtable encourages participants to speak up—and that people are supposed to feel empowered.

But, for Rudd, just speaking up isn't working. "If I speak up and I'm silenced, I feel disempowered!" Rudd said at the meeting.

The young people who showed up for the special event at Multnomah County Central Library clearly want more positive action out of the roundtable and police.

Rudd wants the roundtable to be a place where people can get angry and express their feelings. The ground rules, however, require that participants "communicate with each other respectfully," according to the group's literature. Rudd angrily suggested several times that it may be time to go elsewhere to facilitate change.

Buckwalter, a longtime trans community activist, encouraged everyone to stay involved despite their frustration about the slow pace of change in the community.

"The burden of leadership," Buckwalter said, "is to take the anger and frustration and turn them into action."

Some people in Portland will never change their minds about sexual minorities, Buckwalter added. But she doesn't care. She explained that her goal right now is to work with institutions and groups, such as the police bureau, and to make a usually private conversation public.

Paresi agreed with Buckwalter's assessment and added that hate can't be stopped with legislation.

"Ignorance is a terrible disease," the assistant chief said.

### HOPE

In the end, with some tension still lingering in the room, came commitment and recognition.

"There is probably no other city that does this," Paresi said about the roundtable and the working relationship between his bureau and the sexual minorities community.

Buckwalter acknowledged that, despite her upbeat demeanor and obvious optimism, she is very aware of the work that still needs to be done. She assured the group that she experiences pain every day and still is angry.

Despite those feelings, Buckwalter said, she continues to wake up each day and try to make a difference. She clearly doesn't want to do that work alone, as she made a final plea for the frustrated and angry to return and continue the fight.

"I really believe in this group," she said.

■ The SEXUAL MINORITIES ROUNDTABLE is open to all who are interested. The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month in the Justice Center. For more information, call (503) 823-0546.

To find out how to file a CITIZEN COMPLAINT with the Portland Police Bureau, contact the Internal Affairs Division at (503) 823-0236.

For information about BIAS CRIMES, contact Sgt. David Yamasaki at (503) 823-0434 prior to the roundtable meeting so he has time to research specific incidents.

You can reach Just Out reporter JONATHAN KIPP at [jkipp@teleport.com](mailto:jkipp@teleport.com).