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BY MARTY DAVIS

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**Be there or be scared**

We have two hours to express our fears and expectations

My office sits directly across the Willamette River from the Made in Oregon deer. He and I exchange meaningful looks year-round, and I know we both entertain notions now and then of jumping down from our respective perches to head off for the hills. December is not the month for either of us to run off, though.

My deer spends the holidays creating old and new memories as Rudolph, while I flounder through a year's worth of tedious tasks that should have been long completed by now. I stare at the deer as I procrastinate...perhaps we can both get away next month?

But before next month there is work to do here and now. Not the least of which is to continue working to resolve the confusion and dilemma of the controversy surrounding Portland Police Chief Mark Kroeker.

By now, everyone must be aware of what has occurred since the *Portland Alliance* published the story of the tapes in its November issue. Since the Nov. 17 issue of *Just Out*, there have been meetings, birthday parties, television cameras galore, community forums and a great many articles on the subject—and it's far from over.

Kroeker has agreed to attend a community meeting organized by *Just Out* and the Sexual Minorities Roundtable. This forum will start 7 p.m. Dec. 11 at Metropolitan Community Church of Portland, 2400 N.E. Broadway.

The meeting is being held to address the concerns of the sexual minorities community as affected by Kroeker's taped remarks. This is a single-item agenda with the sole focus of facilitating communication between our community and the police department.

Many citizens of Portland have frustrations, problems and concerns with the police department. These include residual anger from the May Day protest, lack of a civilian police review board, community policing, gentrification in North and Northeast Portland, racial profiling, child abuse, domestic violence and many other personal and deep-felt grievances.

All of these concerns aside, the simple fact is we have a two-hour meeting, and we are not going to solve all problems of the greater community during this one evening. Therefore, we are narrowing our focus to that which can be addressed and discussed reasonably.

It is our intent that agreements will be reached and that action plans will be made to ensure the long-range impact of this situation is as positive and productive as possible. We need to address such specific topics as recruitment and promotion of sexual minority officers. We need to know the "trickle-down" impact of Kroeker's anti-gay bias. We need to hear the chief acknowledge the rift and sorrow his words have created. We need to know whether trust can be rebuilt. These goals will be impossible to accomplish if the evening is splintered into myriad directions and concerns.

I want to acknowledge Bonnie Tinker and Love Makes a Family for the efforts they put into their forum Nov. 21. I came away from that meeting with a heightened understanding of the deep differences between people who should be neighbors but are divided by so many barriers.

As I listened to the frustration and anger of people detailing their experiences, I was suddenly aware that I never once have thought of fearing the police. In fact, I always have taken comfort in knowing they are there.

I recognize now that this is a privilege not available to all. Race, class and economics surely affect one's appreciation of the police department.

What was made clear to me that night was that the comfort zone I perceive as being created by the police is to others a virtual barrier—just one of many barriers that create an "us" and "them" society...or perhaps an "us"

vs. "them" society? I also came away with the question, "If hate speech leads to hate crimes, what then does more hate, and hating back, lead to?"

One additional problematic indicator has bothered me during the monthlong dialogue about the Kroeker tapes. And this is apathy.

I'm concerned about apathy and complacency on the part of the sexual minorities community. Too few people have been speaking out...too few people have shown concern...too few people view the contradiction between the chief's profession and his religious beliefs as a potential conflict of interest for our community.

This community needs to be present Dec. 11 to make a strong, positive statement about our values, our worth, our expectations and our goals. This is our opportunity to be heard. I hope to see you there. **JD**

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**REFLECTIONS**

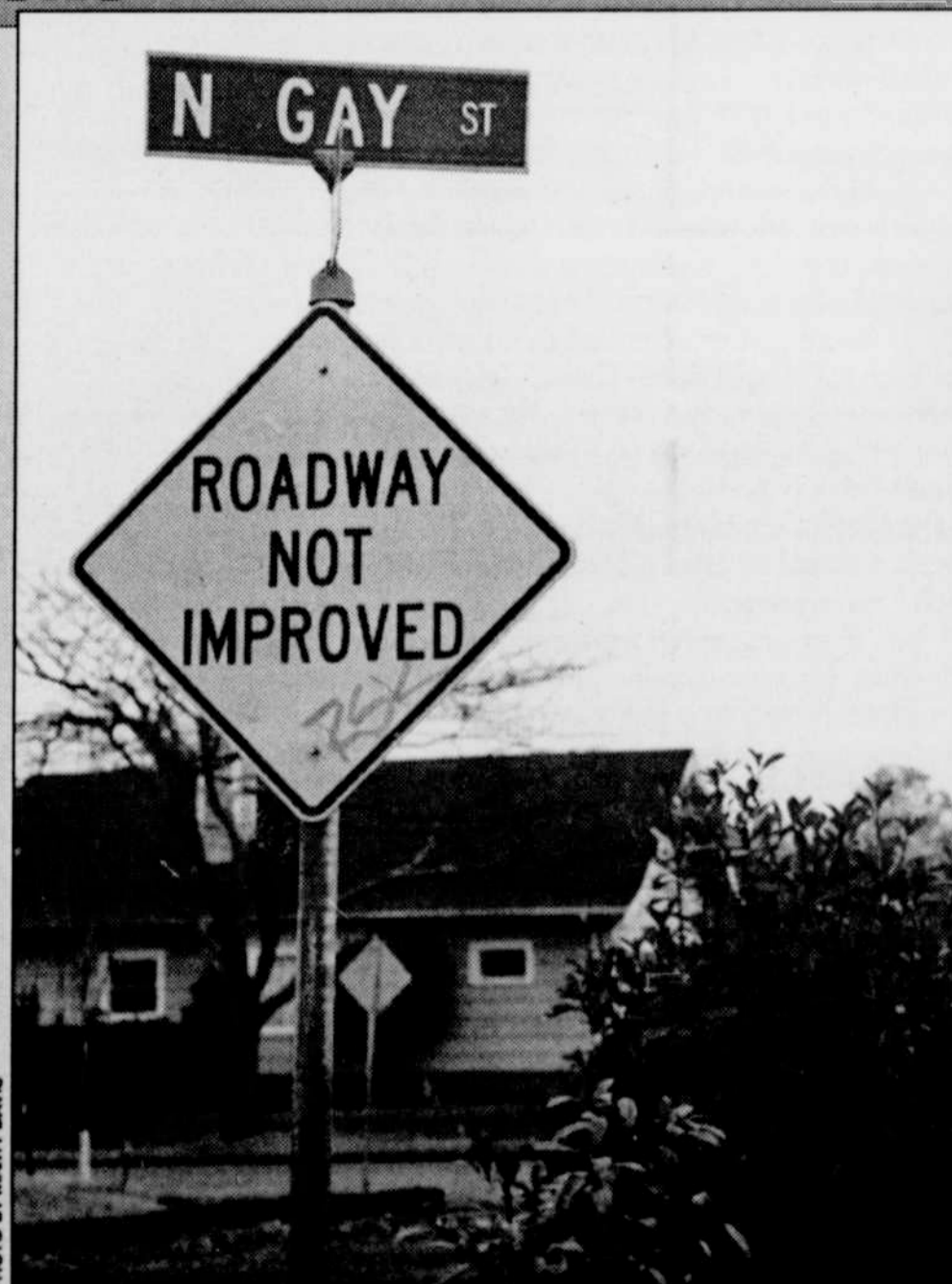


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