

His own private Portland

Just Out talks to Gus Van Sant and friends about fact, fiction and film

by Oriana Green
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PHOTO BY SCOTT GREEN

Sorry seems to be the hardest word

Kroeker apologizes but maintains his right to remain silent

BY JONATHAN KIPP

Portland Police Chief Mark Kroeker apologized to the gay and lesbian community for the first time since he was confronted about his bias against gays that was memorialized on audiotape more than a decade ago.

The apology came during a Dec. 11 community forum sponsored by *Just Out* and the Sexual Minorities Roundtable. "I am very sorry for the effect that my words have had on this community," Kroeker somberly said in his opening statement.

To some, his apology meant a lot. "It was very good to hear," said Reserve Officer Bob Ball, one of only two out gay men on the force.

But some quietly wondered why it took Kroeker so long, almost two months, to issue an apology. Others

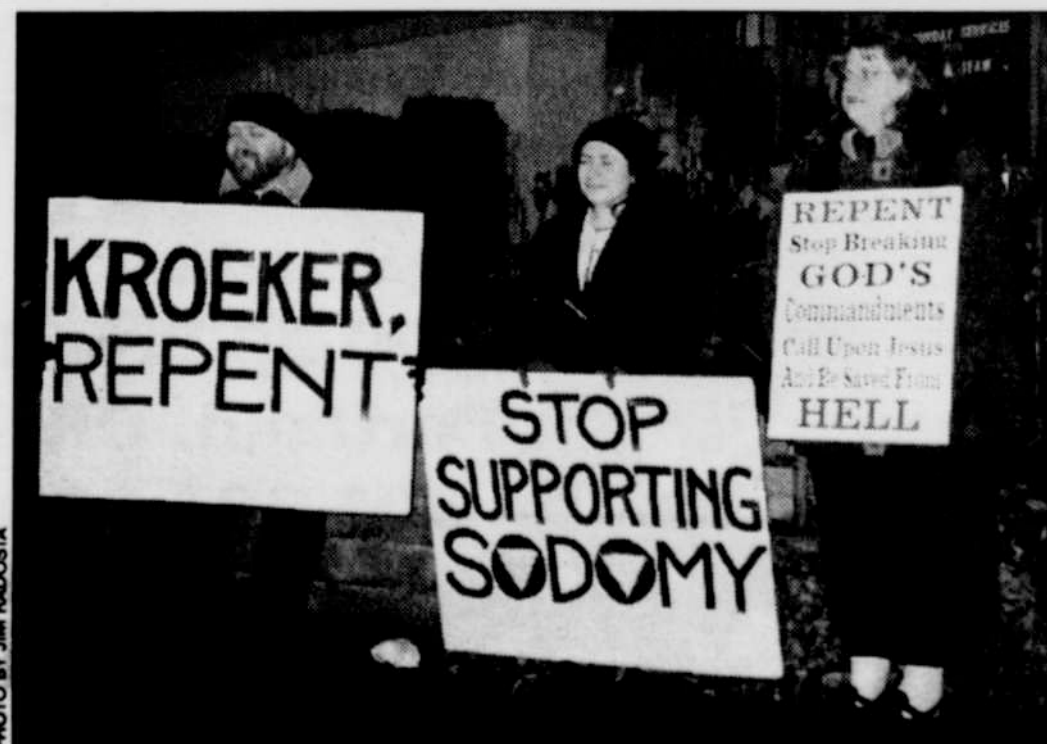
thought his apology missed the point—his words falling short of what needed to be said.

"You didn't apologize for the actual words," one woman said to Kroeker as the forum neared its end. "You only apologized for the effects of the words."

Almost 200 people packed the Metropolitan Community Church to meet with Kroeker. Outside the sanctuary, a handful of fundamentalist Christian picketers yelled in protest throughout the meeting.

"Kroeker is on his way to hell if he doesn't return to his Christian faith and stop supporting abominations to God," said one demonstrator, holding a sign reading,

PHOTO BY JIM RADOSTA



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Protesters encourage Kroeker to stick to his guns