

## Accept differences

TO THE EDITOR:

We all could benefit from seeing in others our own dilemma of living in a society that takes exception to our way of life.

I attended the Sexual Minorities Roundtable this month. Many people spoke asking for an apology and a recanting of the statements Portland Police Chief Mark Kroeker made 10 years ago—the very reversal some fundamentalists ask of us queers.

We need to allow those we disagree with the right to be different. At the same time, we must defend our right to be who and what we are now.

None of us would tolerate people questioning our own private beliefs or way of life, yet that is what happened at that meeting—not to one of us but to the chief. Perhaps we all could use some sensitivity training about fundamentalists.

I have been fired from jobs a number of times just because I am a dyke. Harassment always goes with the territory, at first, for those of us who are different from the majority.

The police in general are people who easily could be worse than the original problem. To have some of them sit down with us to reach some sort of an understanding and settle our differences is a real mind-bender—a reality check for all of us today.

Instead of confrontation, let's acknowledge the differences and get on with the program. Who knows how long we might have in today's world to live our own lives openly?

Freedom has to be won on a daily basis. Each of us comes out again and again in different situations.

Being out and proud is an inner to outer process that always takes courage and the willingness to accept the truth of ourselves and of others. Let's accept the differences, guard our back and get on with establishing our right to be here and queer.

CATHY BRAY  
Portland

## Accountability counts

TO THE EDITOR:

It is inherent to all public officials' jobs that wherever they speak, they are speaking as that official. They do not get to take the mantle of authority and its responsibilities on and off.

From what I have read about Portland Police Chief Mark Kroeker and his credentials, he is a politically savvy man and a skillful communicator. There was no argument from him that "what I said was taken out of context" or that "it's not what I meant." Therefore, for me, his statements stand as if they were said yesterday.

I did a lot of soul searching to lift myself out of a reactionary place to cope with his statements. I talked with friends and colleagues. I chose to follow Albert Einstein, who tells us you cannot solve a problem with the same mind-set that created it.

Personally, I cannot hate Kroeker back; it only leads to more hate. But as a citizen of Portland, I can expect him to be accountable to the community for the problems he creates and to actively resolve them. His words, not his thoughts, have damaged my trust.

I supported giving him a chance to repair the public trust. I felt patronized when he told me he loves and has compassion for gays and lesbians. Love and compassion are the foundation of all spiritual and religious traditions; however, they do not give me basic civil rights and due process under the law.

I do not expect Kroeker to recant. I think he is entitled to hold whatever religious thoughts he chooses, but because his personal statements crossed the line into a public official's behavior in a public arena, I would like him to be accountable for that error in judgment and to rectify it.

Because we all need to learn to live together, I sincerely hope Kroeker will take the opportunity to reduce fear, rebuild trust and do his job effectively for all Portlanders. As a law enforcement official, his career has been about holding people accountable when they violate the law.

Now, it is his turn to be accountable and not deflect. If he does not begin this process with us, he risks further diminishment of his moral authority to lead, manage, coach and recruit.

KIM ROTH  
Portland

## Search and destroy

TO THE EDITOR:

This letter is an update to my previous letter to the editor [Dec. 1]. I just finished a phone conversation with a Sgt. Chamberlain of the Portland Police Bureau.

I had sent an e-mail to Mayor Vera Katz detailing my treatment by her police force as well as my unhappiness about her endorsement of Chief Mark Kroeker. My e-mail was forwarded to the police in the form of a complaint.

Chamberlain told me that the police have the right to detain and search a private citizen simply on the basis of one phone call from someone who states he or she has seen a person who looks like the suspect in a crime. In my case, just because I have brown hair and a broad nose, they were justified in their actions. Further, I was told that if the police had chosen to, they could have drawn their weapons and put me on the ground to do their search.

During my interrogation on that day, one of the officers called for a Polaroid camera. I never saw one; however, another person at the scene later said he did see one. I have been assured the police did not take a picture because they did not have a camera in the cruiser.

If there had been one available, however, one would have been taken regardless of my wishes. I am told all of this is within Oregon and federal law.

I am private citizen who never has had so much as a parking ticket, and I am treated in this manner. The next person could be you.

PAUL BENNETT  
Portland

## A giant step forward

TO THE EDITOR:

Gender identity rights often are misunderstood in our culture, and there always will be negativity and denial to their advocacy, however reasonable.

Those invested in the exclusion of gender minorities will object to change. A lot of people have been confused and misled, but now it is time for the truth.

Let's be clear about what has been proposed as a revision to the city of Portland's Civil Rights Ordinance. It's not a threat to the rights of any person or community.

It is the result of years of careful consideration and research, consultation with the foremost authorities on gender rights and an ongoing process of education and constructive engagement between the community and the city. It recognizes the implemented successes of similar measures in other jurisdictions. It does not exclude or limit other protections but adds to the protection of all people.

Gender identity rights are human rights, not special rights; they are not limited to any particular identity or community. This is crucial to their equal inclusion as civil rights.

The definition used in the ordinance revision, drawn directly from West Hollywood's, is powerful in its clarity and inclusiveness: "a person's actual or perceived sex, including a per-

son's identity, appearance, expression or behavior." Although gender identity protections commonly are associated with transgendered people, they are important to other gender-variant people as well and applicable to all people.

Gender identity rights can't be based on psychopathology. Gender identity is not a mental disorder. It is an immutable characteristic and a part of full human diversity.

Rights based solely on medical identities such as transsexual, transvestite, etc. become viewed as compensations for diminished capacity and are viewed with suspicion. The ordinance will affirm an individual's gender identity as an intrinsic, inalienable quality of full dignity.

Any realistic proposal recognizes a society that expects an individual's commitment to responsible social actions. Where access to gendered public space is needed, it can be qualified with reference to people's expression of their gender identity.

Such is the case in accessing restrooms. Some further conditions exist for full use of sex-specific facilities such as showers and locker rooms, for public safety and to respect the rights of others; these apply to all people equally, with reference to legal, medical and other official documents.

Employers now must provide reasonable accommodations for transitioning and transgendered employees, while retaining the legal right to gender-specific dress codes, which have been upheld by the courts, and a consistent presentation of identity within the workplace is a reasonable expectation for employees. All employees have the right to be identified at work, however, solely according to expression of their gender identity.

The city is mandating that bias crime incidents based on gender identity be tracked and specifically reported. This marks a real advance

in the visibility of and attention to such incidents. (Oregon statutes do not recognize gender as a basis for bias crimes.)

When the initial draft of the city ordinance revision was distributed nationally, we received many thoughtful and considerate responses and suggestions and a consensus that we were on the right track. These responses allowed refinement of the proposed language to add clarity.

I am proud to have worked with the city to craft an ordinance proposal that puts Portland on the forefront of gender rights. We already have affected affirmative action, equal opportunity, police training, prisoner's rights and fuller acceptance for transgendered people here.

Now, we must recognize our wider commitment to this community by speaking truthfully, acting responsibly and affirming the dignity of every citizen. For legalized bias to end, we must take positive action, and this ordinance revision is one giant step on the road to that end.

LORI BUCKWALTER  
It's Time, Oregon! Executive Director

## Consumer alert

TO THE EDITOR:

Please remove us from your list of drop-off locations. Every week this publication is recycled into the Dumpster due to lack of interest.

We are not interested in receiving your publication at this time. Your immediate attention would be appreciated.

JAVA HOUSE, MERCANTILE COLLECTION,  
WILLOWS, TOMMY O'S, ALTMAN GALLERY,  
ELITE MUSCULAR THERAPY  
Vancouver, Wash.

## notables

### Grace Schaefer, 1933-2000



Portland resident Grace Schaefer died Nov. 30 with loving friends at her side.

She packed many experiences and adventures into her 67 years. She was a surgical nurse and a policewoman in Detroit, Mich., then moved to the San Diego lesbian community, where she did carpentry and car repair.

In 1976, Schaefer moved to Portland, where she started Ladybug Unlimited, a women's construction company. Next, she sold hearing aids for Willoughby.

From 1990 to 2000, she lived in Monterey and Salinas, Calif., where she ran her own hearing aid company. Knowing she was ill, she recently returned to Portland to be close to her chosen family and friends for the last part of her life.

Schaefer was a trailblazer for lesbian and women's rights. In 1973, she brought a class-action suit against the Detroit Police Depart-

ment for sex discrimination. The suit finally was settled 22 years later for more than \$10 million. She was described by an admiring co-worker as "tough as a boiled owl," a description she claimed proudly ever after.

Schaefer was a brave lesbian feminist pioneer who touched many lives and was a role model for many people. Acquaintances say that there was nobody like her and that she will be missed.

She is survived by her companion, Mary Forst, and adopted grandsons, Matthew Durham and Jesse Emerson.

All of her family and friends are invited to celebrate Schaefer's indomitable spirit and optimism, her energy to plow on without worrying about consequences and her generous and outrageous spirit during a memorial gathering from 2 to 4 p.m. Dec. 17 at the Laurelhurst Club, 3721 S.E. Ankeny St.