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Speak Out

Where is the outrage?

TO THE EDITOR:

A special thanks to *Just Out* and its publisher, Marty Davis, for coordinating the forum with Portland Police Chief Mark Kroeker and members of the sexual minorities community Dec. 11.

That there is not enough public outrage to force his resignation underscores the marginalization of sexual minorities in our society. The truth is, we do not yet enjoy the same status of other oppressed groups, such as ethnic and religious minorities.

Had Kroeker made equally disparaging remarks about Jews or blacks, his termination likely would have preceded any thought of resignation. It is not yet politically incorrect to defame, discriminate against or even bash gays.

That is why the general public allows Kroeker to stand behind the cloak of religious freedom when we ask him to retract his comments of years ago. That is why he will remain our chief.

What disturbs me even more than this blatant reminder of our second-class status from the heterosexual majority is the complacency among many in the sexual minority. Before, during and after the Dec. 11 chat with Kroeker, I heard support for the chief from some of my gay brethren based on his right to hold personal religious beliefs.

You are degrading yourself and the rest of the gay community if this is what you believe. The chief of police is a leader and role model; therefore, any visible display of prejudice or intolerance on his part gives license to his officers to exploit their own prejudices on the job when dealing with gay citizens.

As a civic leader, Kroeker also validates homophobic sentiments in the community at large. By failing to retract his comments of a decade ago, he unwittingly has declared himself an unjust leader, and it is our duty to point that out to the world if we value our rights and our dignity.

It is also unfortunate that Mayor Vera Katz did not have the courage to stand by us in our time of need. Despite lingering calls for his resignation, Kroeker, with her full support, will remain on the job.

Our community must base further action on an acceptance of that reality if we expect to make constructive progress. The best tactic is to maintain an active dialogue with Kroeker, continually demonstrating the negative impact of his beliefs on our community. This dialogue should be consistent, positive and remain focused on how he can assure the population that he is fit for the job.

MICHAEL E. BARRETT
Portland

Progress takes time

TO THE EDITOR:

In the interest of rationality, I have two counterpoints on two separate issues.

First of all, I have been a member of both Transport (now seeming defunct) and North-West Gender Alliance for about six years. Secondly, I have been studying the field and the people of the entire nonstraight world including pre- and post-op transsexuals since the early '60s.

Despite the radicals with their "our way or nothing" approach and despite certain individuals' fits or tantrums, in real life things can take time, and difficult compromises are more often the rule than the exception.

If people actually know the history of various minorities—the Irish in the 1840s, the Jews, the Hispanics, the Orientals, natural-born women in general, the various Slavic ethnic groups and the many other minority groups—the advancement of protection of the nonstraight world has

been, relatively speaking, pretty damn fast. Compare the legal rights of the nonstraight world to just women, who spent centuries literally under the control of men and in many Third World countries still are just chattel.

Portland has taken steps to enhance the political, economic, social and physical safety of pre- and post-op transsexuals and the politically correct "transpeople"—whatever that means. We are living in a state that damn near passed Measure 9. We are living in a state where two lesbians were murdered a few years ago because they were lesbians. We are living in a state where, outside Portland, the vast majority of the citizens are very conservative. Instead of whining, carping, pouting and having another snit fit, we should be glad at what progress has been made.

The other issue is our new police chief. The Political Correctness Police—as expected of any knee-jerk liberals—are screaming for his head. Which is worse: a politician such as President Clinton, who said all the right things and then ignored the nonstraight world once in office, or a police chief who regardless of his personal views—and voicing his views is his constitutional right—shows by his actions he will treat all members of society with protection and respect?

There is not much difference between the screaming hyenas of the far left and the blood-thirsty roars of the jackals of the far right. At the

risk of earning the enmity of the self-appointed Thought Police—be their "judgment from on high" from one self-appointed siren or the group—I would suggest two things. Look up and write down 100 times the definition of the word "democracy," and—assuming the howling crowd can read more than *TV Guide*—read or reread George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

JOHN BOYNTON
Portland

Forefront or back burner?

TO THE EDITOR:

In the interests of correcting the record, in my Dec. 13 testimony to the Portland City Council, I condemned the gender identity ordinance as "a vile attack," not "a violent attack"—a perfectly understandable mistake given the acoustics of the council chambers ["Trans Action," Dec. 15].

As for the assertion made by *It's Time, Oregon!* in a letter to the editor that employers' "legal right to gender-specific dress codes... have been upheld by the courts," remember that courts also routinely upheld the obscene doctrine of "separate but equal," most notably in the U.S. Supreme Court's 19th century decision *Plessey v. Ferguson*.

notables



Joe Pennington, 1961-2000

Ernest Jo "Joe" Pennington died of HIV complications Dec. 26. He was 39.

He was born Nov. 30, 1961, in Cottage Grove. He served in the U.S. Navy and worked as a self-employed computer technician.

He moved to Portland about 1990. He raised birds and miniature pinschers.

His friends say he will be remembered for his caring and helpful soul and his way of seeing and feeling things not everyone saw or felt. They hope his passing will serve as a reminder that AIDS is not dead; it's just hiding around the corner waiting to surprise and scare us all again.

May we all take notice and fight this deadly disease and let the gay community start living again.

He is survived by his mother, Joan Pierce; brother, Barry; and sisters, Debbie Gaudette and Sherri Cotant.

A memorial circle was held Dec. 28 at Our House of Portland. Final disposition was by cremation. Omega Funeral & Cremation Service handled the arrangements.

Remembrances may be made to Our House of Portland.