

just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

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Letters to the editor should be limited to 500 words. Announcements regarding life transitions (births, deaths, unions, etc.) should be limited to 200 words; photos are welcome. **Deadline for submissions** to the editorial department and for the **Calendar** is the Thursday 15 days before the next publication date. Views expressed in letters to the editor, columns and features are not necessarily those of the publisher.

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GUEST COMMENTARY

BY MARK KROEKER

Some reflections from Mark Kroeker

Portland's police chief sends a message of peace



To me, becoming Portland's police chief was both the realization of a dream and a singular honor that brought along with it a profound load of responsibility. In this mix is a rich fulfillment that is difficult to explain.

Despite the controversy of the past few months, I want Just Out readers to know I remain content in my work and pleased to be your chief. My wife, Diane, and I both love the city and its people, and we are glad to have made Portland our home.

When the interviews, negotiations and all the inauguration moments passed and the work of leading a city's police force began, I became more and more convinced I made the right choice. As I reflected on the changes, the implementations, the adaptations, the steady growth on a strategic pathway, I became invigorated, encouraged, excited.

As to the gay and lesbian community, I sensed across the initial months a growing level of mutual respect and an enthusiasm to build peaceful solutions in Portland's intergroup mix. My overtures were accepted as sincerely as they were offered.

I made it my objective to ensure that people in every community could expect fair and just police service. I set out to model an exemplary level of respect inside and outside the organization.

I made it clear that opportunities for joining the Portland Police Bureau were there for all people, including gays and lesbians. I also wanted everyone to know that I am highly sensitive to crimes of bias, prejudice or hatred against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people and that I expect thorough investigations, careful reporting and restorative community policing efforts.

When the flurry of concerns arose around remarks I made many years ago in a religious setting, the forward momentum we all had worked so hard to create was interrupted. With the support of Mayor Vera Katz, I resolved to dig in, to meet, to listen, to respond to every question as best I could, to face any detractor, to attend any forum, to be present at countless roll calls, to produce a roll call videotape, to give numerous news interviews and to reach out to any who would respond inside and outside the police bureau.

I met with gay, lesbian and transgendered officers in my home, in my office and during impromptu meetings. I listened to their fears and concerns and addressed them in groups and individual meetings.

Among others, I attended a forum sponsored by Just Out. I spoke with leadership figures of the Portland Area Business Association, Oregon Gay and Lesbian Lawyers Association, Cascade AIDS Project, Sexual Minorities Roundtable and Metropolitan Community Church. Still ahead is a meeting scheduled with Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

I explained that the foundations of my faith remain unalterable but that the experiences of the past decade greatly affected my psyche and my approach to the world and its people. I reflected that experiences in close contact with the world's most tragic intergroup settings, such as in the Balkans, the Middle East, Haiti and Africa, profoundly changed my outlook.

I have fully integrated the role of "peace officer" into my "police officer" identity. Across the years, gay and lesbian friends and their life stories created in me a deeper awareness of their world and their perspectives.


I stated that I did not and do not equate gayness with criminality and that AIDS is not a "gay disease." The overarching philosophical energizer in my life, to all people, has become the pursuit of peace—always harboring within me the most profound respect for the flame of life that burns in every living soul.

As the new year has arrived with its continuing challenges, I remain convinced that there is much to do in making Portland the country's safest city and in making the Portland Police Bureau the country's finest police force. We have community policing issues to pursue. We wish to reduce crime and the fear of it, improve the quality of life in all neighborhoods and improve the community and police partnership.

This partnership, of course, includes that which is between the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community and Portland's police force. To do this, we must adopt common goals and share a common vision. We are in the process of building a wide network of neighborhood Block Captains and openly invite your involvement.

Before the recent turbulence, I was invited to serve as a board member for the Portland chapter of the National Conference for Community and Justice, a group dedicated to eradicating bias and bigotry. I readily accepted and, along with it, the offer to become government chair of the "Walk as One" march April 7 at the Rose Garden. I invite all Portlanders to join me.

Although I do want to move ahead as your chief of police, I do not wish to close the door on this matter or on the pain, anger and frustration that might remain. Rather, I wish to keep a door open to continuing dialogue in order to build better and stronger relationships and more effectively enhance public safety initiatives for all communities, including Portland's gay community.

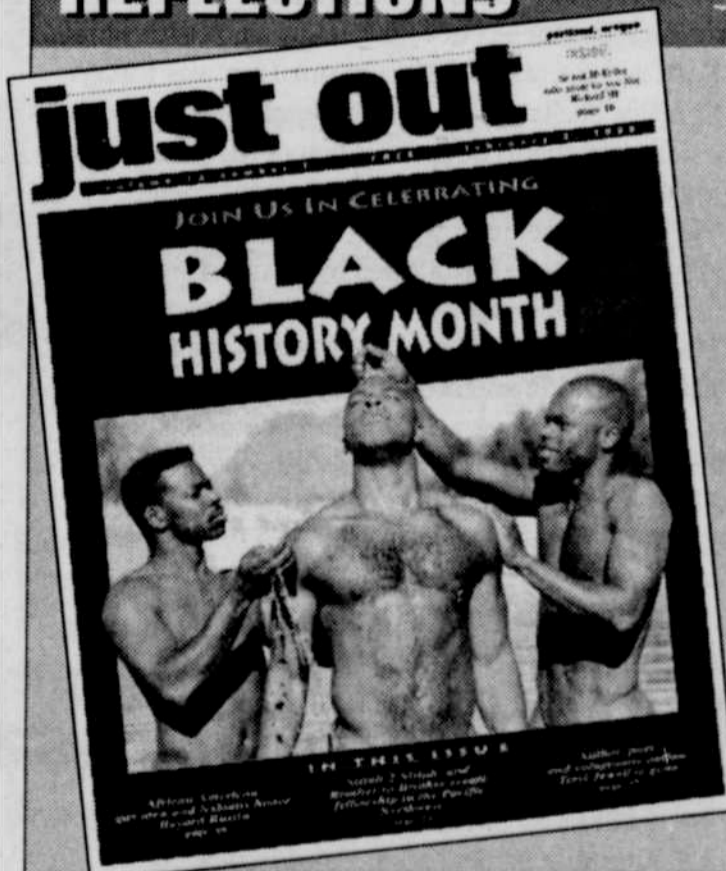
Here is my hand, offered in peace. 

MARK KROEKER is the Portland Police Bureau chief. He can be reached at chiefkroeker@police.ci.portland.or.us.

REFLECTIONS

5 years ago in just out...

VOL. 13 No. 7, FEB. 2, 1996



- Activists hammered out an AIDS contract with America. The 1996 AIDS Emergency Plan focused on voter education, registration and mobilization. It set the ambitious goal of turning out 1 million people to vote on AIDS issues Nov. 5.

- The Los Angeles City Council agreed to investigate allegations that the city violated the civil rights of a lesbian police officer by demanding that she name her past sexual partners. Virginia Acevedo was on disability for stress she claimed was caused by harassment she suffered because of her sexual orientation.

- Right to Privacy executive director Barry Pack and fellow performer Erin Boberg presented a body of new and repertory work exploring travel abroad through dance, theater and music.

- Portland lesbian mom Debbie Caselton filmed a segment for MTV's *Unfiltered*, a show

designed to give viewers an opportunity to share a slice of their lives minus the filter of a mainstream media lens.

- Adrian Kalil of Team Portland Aquatic Club realized the completion of a dream Oct. 7, 1995. He was one of 1,441 men and women who began the Hawaiian Ironman World Championship Triathlon in the warm waters of Kailua-Kona.

- Maria's Show, featuring the only lesbian empress in the United States, was Feb. 3 at City Nightclub.

- The East Vancouver United Methodist Church exhibited a portion of the Names Project Quilt through Feb. 18 and presented a special benefit concert by the Vancouver Men's Chorus and a dramatic presentation by the REAL Kids on Feb. 9.

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