

come when we have acted together to support civil rights. The Dec. 13 vote to extend civil rights protection on the basis of gender identity directly helped those struggling day to day with intolerance.

But this vote, coming at the close of the past century, was also an important message to all Portlanders. Discrimination of any sort and against any community has no place in the city I love and serve.

My decision to support the civil rights amendments to the City Charter is part of implementing my vision for One Portland. As a longtime social and civil rights activist, ensuring all citizens receive equal protection under the law is at the core of my personal values.

As an elected official, it is my obligation to serve all of the citizens and taxpayers I represent equally. Transsexual and transgendered people, along with other sexual minorities, have long contributed to our community by paying their taxes, voting, volunteering and serving without receiving the fair and equal treatment and protection from discrimination that all citizens are entitled to. This City Code amendment represents a first step toward correcting this historic wrong, and it is a reminder that our city is the better for its diversity of human experience.

I consistently have advocated for equal rights for all, and I will continue to do so as long as some are the objects of oppression and discrimination. When I voted to establish a domestic partnership registry and congratulated the first of our newly registered partners, I did so out of a belief that these actions were long-overdue affirmations of the inherent worth and equality under the law of all Portlanders. As I begin my second term on the Portland City Council, I will continue to work to ensure we move forward together, as One Portland.

JIM FRANCESCONI
City Commissioner

Slippery slope

TO THE EDITOR:

With Multnomah County contemplating a human rights ordinance inclusive of sexual orientation and gender identity, the time has come for sexual minorities to confront the fact that the concept of civil rights protection is being co-opted to promote and enforce second-class citizenship for gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transpeople.

The initial descent on the slippery slope began locally with the city of Portland's adoption some years ago of a human rights ordinance that enacted a broad prohibition of discrimination—on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, marital or familial status, national origin, age and mental or physical disability—yet specifically permitted religious institutions and certain types of landlords to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation (thereby

compounding the discrimination inherent to Oregon's civil rights law, which accorded religious groups preferential exclusion from the general prohibition of employment discrimination). This debasement of the concept of equal rights drastically was accelerated locally with the recent addition of gender identity to city ordinance, as yet another list of exclusions to legal protection from discrimination was codified into law to benefit employers and "health or athletic clubs or other entities" (in addition to the extension to gender identity of the existing exclusions pertaining to sexual orientation).

The concept of civil rights protection for historically oppressed people thus is being whittled away in a manner that favors property owners—such as religious groups, employers, businesses and landlords—to the particular detriment of sexual and gender minorities. Rather than meekly accepting a county ordinance that recapitulates—and thereby reinforces—the disparities codified into state and city law, we as an oppressed people owe it to ourselves to challenge the second-class status being imposed upon us by degree.

Why should we tolerate being singled out for second-class status on the basis of an innate trait such as sexual orientation or transsexualism while individuals embracing the lifestyle choice of one religion or another not only are accorded the full protection of the law but allowed to legally discriminate against us? Why should we accept the premise that an innate trait such as race—which includes white skin—is deserving of the law's full protection while the innate trait of homosexuality isn't?

Given the growing disparities between our civil rights "protection" and those of truly protected classes, we are deluding ourselves—as a people and as an oppressed minority—if we think the situation will change without our active involvement. Gender and sexual minorities need to organize, mobilize and vociferously demand that county commissioners adopt an ordinance guaranteeing equal rights under law. To accept anything less is to be complicit in our continued slide down the slippery slope.

MARGARET DEIRDRE O'HARTIGAN
Portland

Bound and gagged

TO THE EDITOR:

On his first official workday, Jan. 22, President Bush sent a clear message to the world: This U.S. administration will do everything in its power to deny women control over their own bodies. Women and their male allies will fight back with equal tenacity.

By executive order, Bush reimposed the Reagan-era ban on U.S. funding to foreign groups that provide counseling or otherwise facilitate abortions. President Clinton had

rescinded that order in 1992.

But since 1973, with the passage of the Helms amendment to the foreign operations appropriation bill, renewed annually, the United States hasn't actually funded any overseas abortions. Now, any organization that talks about or pays for abortions with its own funds will not get U.S. aid for any of its services.

The effect of the Bush mandate will be to impose a "gag rule" on any program concerned with women's health. Along with counseling and access to abortion, people will lose access to contraception, prenatal care and other basic reproductive services. Hundreds of thousands of women will suffer, and many will die.

Bush advisers probably realize that the murderous ban is actually counterproductive: Under the Reagan ban, the incidence of abortion increased. These people don't really care about women's well-being or human life, either. They are asserting their power over half the world's population.

What this U.S. government really wants is to build a climate of intimidation and repression and to send the clear message that women's lives are not our own. They have declared war on a whole gender.

Radical Women calls on feminists to fight back and continue to demonstrate full support for reproductive freedom at every opportunity. We are committed to working with others to demand the repeal of the Helms amendment and the equally oppressive Hyde amendment, which denies use of federal funds for abortions to impoverished U.S. residents. And we call on the elected politicians to publicly oppose the reactionary campaign of terror that manifests in women's clinics being bombed and the murder of abortion providers.

Radical Women believes the power of women around the globe can be asserted to overrule the despotic president who wasn't even the American people's choice.

JORDANA SARDO
Radical Women

Practice what you preach

TO THE EDITOR:

I was troubled by a letter from Anthony Wynn concerning his attempt to get coverage of an event in *Just Out* and the rude way he was treated [Jan. 5]. In spite of the impressive list of reasons he gave for qualifying for the calendar, it obviously fell on deaf ears.

You have espoused in many of your editorials the need for us all to work together, recognize our differences, etc., yet you seem to be going against your very own preaching. I do not see how *Just Out's* sharing of the Friends of the Parkinson's Center of Oregon benefit would be any different from an AIDS benefit, a breast cancer benefit or any other benefit to help humankind.

What I find even more appalling is the fact you choose not to address the letter with a simple apology. What could that have hurt?

Rather than mend a fence, you choose to exacerbate the situation by printing the letter and making no comment, compounding your rudeness and unwillingness to practice what you preach. I hope those who belong to the Friends of the Parkinson's Center are not as small-minded when they are in the voting booth in a short while voting on yet another measure put forth by Lon Mabon!

JOHN TALLERINO
Sheridan

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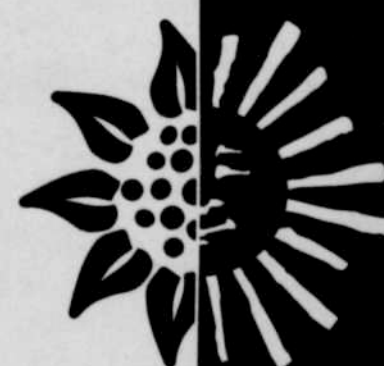
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