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Speak Out

Give peace a chance

TO THE EDITOR:

The Portland Public Schools board vote to "clarify" the ban on recruiters because the military discriminates against lesbians and gays is a meager victory. The military now clearly is preparing to recruit counselors to be its voice in the schools.

The resolution to overturn the ban was a classic coalition between a Republican politician (Ron Saxton) and the lone African American school board member. Derry Jackson was strongly influenced by the needs of low-income African American students who often are left uneducated by public schools. His readiness to meet the needs of straight racial minority students at the cost of tolerating discrimination against all sexual minority students was encouraged by African American Republicans, businessmen and church people.

These divisions will continue until white lesbian, gay, bi and trans people take seriously the need to organize our full constituency—including African Americans and low-income people. The divisions will continue until people who are economically comfortable realize that a degree of economic security and future educational opportunity might be worth the price of enduring discrimination for those who see no other way out. This has been true for low-income people of color, women and sexual minorities for years.

We were only one group demonstrating at the May 21 school board meeting. The Education Crisis Team was there with more people, more signs and a louder voice.

Some of their leaders have been fighting for equal educational opportunities for low-income and racial and ethnic minority students for 30 years. Some people in "our" community might disagree with some of the crisis team's strategies and goals, but most don't even understand the issues.

"Leave no child behind." That is the essential issue for us and for the crisis team.

It is the motto of Portland Public Schools. It's a grand vision, but our schools don't have the teachers, they don't have the equipment, they don't have the textbooks to carry it out.

The question is: Do they have the determination? Will the board members maintain their stance against anti-gay discrimination by keeping military recruiters out of schools?

Will they prioritize resources so the students most in need of help get the best teachers? Will they challenge administrators to give up high salaries (and conduct themselves in a way to avoid administrative payoffs and legal fees costing hundreds of thousands of dollars) so we can keep counselors and custodians in our schools?

The issues are complex and interrelated. I'm as mad at Jackson as anybody, but he isn't the essential problem.

The problem is an underlying attack on public education and an underlying effort to set disenfranchised groups to squabbling with each other for the leftovers. We plan to stay active on this issue in all of its complexity.

Public education is a concern for everybody in a democracy, not just for parents. I hope you'll join us.

BONNIE TINKER
 Love Makes a Family Inc. Executive Director

Change of heart

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing in response to the May 18 letter "Young at Heart." I really don't want to burst the bubbles of the "youngsters," but it seems a matter of perspective on two counts for them.

First: Getting together at a young age only means you have things in common at this time.

Being older than "twentysomething" has nothing to do with having to change your ways. Trust me, you have to do that regardless of your "years of experience."

And being (ahem) "more mature" doesn't mean changing who you are just to be with someone. Yer gonna do that anyway, kiddo. It can't be helped.

What matters is whether you have to change who you really are or just some of the "fluff of life" you've picked up along the way. I'm 40-(cough) years old, and my life partner/significant other (what's the correct term nowadays?) is a little older than that. We've been together 10 years, had several homes, had several pets and had lots of friends (who have stayed/moved/passed on/whatever), and we are raising our adopted daughter.

Yeah, you gotta make some changes. Like the sign says, "Change is inevitable, except from vending machines." Our similarities and our differences brought us together and have kept us together, but we both have changed a lot since we first met (some good, some not so good—but, hey, that's life).

OK, time to switch soapboxes. Second: Folks here are no harder to make friends with than anywhere else.

In fact, after discharging (snicker) from the Air Force, I moved up here several years ago and thought I wouldn't have a friend in the world. (Sex, yes; friends, no.)

I was so wrong. I just needed to learn to look beyond the bars.

I'm happy to say that a now-nonexistent magazine similar to this one allowed me to meet people outside the "back bar." Its personals section (don't roll your eyes) allowed us to meet people who were "Gay Married with Children" friendly. *Willamette Week* (sorry, *Just Out*) is another good mag for doing the same.

There are numerous venues for get-togethers for game nights, coffee/tea Saturdays, art walks, etc. I've heard one group even gets together just

to go garage sale-ing. (My house looks like I'm a charter member.)

You just gotta look around. Don't judge the rest of the family by a couple of lousy "cuzzins." You're gonna do fine here (said the aging Grandpa, while soaking his dentures).

After 15 years here, I'm still learning about new places and people. So, c'mon, give us a chance.

Perhaps you could get to know some of the older couples, who just might know some younger couples, who just might know.... Get the picture?

But don't just take my word for it. Like I said, we've got a 3-year-old daughter, so we've been grounded for the next 15 years. (Sigh.)

JIM PRICE
 Portland

Bush screws up—again

TO THE EDITOR:

Vermont Sen. Jim Jeffords' departure from the GOP is major blunder No. 3 for President Bush, which means he screws up at least once every 40 days. His major blunders are: (1) Attorney General John Ashcroft, the all-purpose bigot, (2) government alliance with faith-based bigotry and (3) not playing ball with Jeffords (and other moderate Republicans).

Bush's minor blunders include (1) a dishonest budget, (2) dishonesty in promoting a tax program that doesn't provide early tax relief and actually sweeps 40 million U.S. citizens into higher taxes via the Alternative Minimum Tax, fails to help married couples, phases most tax relief in well after he leaves office in 2005 and misdirects tax relief away from the middle class and (3) utter failure to do anything at all about high gasoline prices, including even an attempt at jawboning the industry. His failure to come up with an adequate response to the energy crisis might qualify as blunder No. 4—either major or minor.

Although elections have consequences, the most recent presidential and senatorial elections—being essentially 50/50—have had their own peculiar sets of consequences. In the case of Bush, he's proven to be a liar when he proclaimed he would be a "uniter, not a divider."

Here's what Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., has to say about the great divider: "If you're going to threaten retaliation, revenge and punishment to people because they don't vote exactly how you want them to, you're going to pay a price." We now have to endure three years and nine months more of that charlatan.

LEE COLEMAN
 Founder and former member of Log Cabin Oregon (resigned after the Ashcroft nomination)

Lose track

TO THE EDITOR:

Stop carrying ads for Multnomah Greyhound Park, aka The Fast Track to Death. The people involved in greyhound racing really suck, and not in a good way.

Please see www.grey2kusa.org and www.greyhounds.org. Thank you.

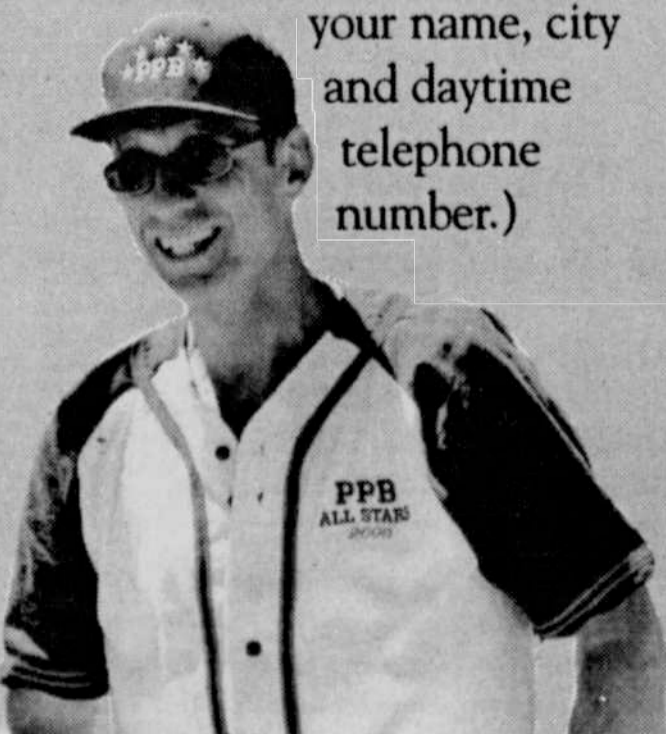
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