

Findlay clenches his fist and adds passionately: "Many closeted gay men come to our concerts, and we help give them the power to say they do not have to hide who they are. That is what's at the heart of the chorus."

If Findlay isn't singing, he is probably wearing his cowboy boots and is surrounded by dancers. He joins the Rosetown Ramblers for country western and square dancing and works as their activities director.

Findlay organizes the Halloween weekend Scares and Squares, an out-of-state hoedown that attracts about 150 gay and lesbian square dancers from throughout the country. He also dances with a more elite square dance group, Heads to the Center.

Although Findlay's social life is hopping, his personal life recently has undergone a revolution. The good news: He's got a new honey in California. The bad news: He's been downsized from his position as a marketing manager at Tektronix.

Whatever his new job might be, Findlay proudly will express his rainbow colors. "When we hide who we are from a friend, from our co-workers and even from the man on the street, we are living in shame. Pride is about singing out proud who we are."

—Peter Zuckerman

RAJU GADHER

Some of us have had to travel farther than others even to have the chance to celebrate Pride Weekend in Portland.

Raju Gadher came to the United States from Kenya in desperation last August. He is a second-generation Indian but was born and raised in Kenya. Well-educated, he speaks six languages and several dialects, graduated from Cambridge University in England and is in a one-year master's program at Lewis and Clark College.

Gadher's story of being gay in Kenya is frightening. The president has called for the eradication of homosexuals, and being convicted of "homosexuality" is a criminal offense punishable by seven years in prison. To go to prison there "is like visiting hell," Gadher says.

Prior to leaving Kenya he was under constant family pressure to marry. Socially and culturally, this is something firmly expected.

Several times his parents tried to arrange marriages for him. Now 36, he says, "For an Indian man to still be single at that late age is very unusual."

About a year before Gadher left Kenya, he became the victim of a con artist. He fell for this man and assumed the same to be true in reverse.



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

Blackmail resulted—then things got worse. Newspaper reporters started following him, also demanding money and threatening to print stories.

The Kenyan police began investigating and questioning him, and it became obvious it was time to leave. "I had reached the end of my tether."

Overcome by personal pressure and political oppression, Gadher knew he had no choice but to come to the United States, where besides getting a degree, he hoped to experience the openness and freedoms we enjoy as gay people. After he graduates from Lewis and Clark, he plans to move to England, where he also holds a passport, and specialize in environmental activism.

He says this will be his first Gay Pride celebration anywhere. He'll be marching in the parade with new friends he has made while here and celebrating a certain kind of freedom and relief—things we all might take for granted.

—Richard Bray

CM HALL

For CM Hall, April 30 is a date with personal historical significance. Not only does it mark the day she came out to her conservative parents in 1995, it turned out to be the day Ellen DeGeneres came out on national television in 1997.

Three years later, Hall found herself listening to DeGeneres address thousands gathered for the Millennium March in Washington, D.C. The date? You guessed it.

Fortunate coincidences are nothing new for this energetic activist, though. In 1999, during a stint as a bus driver for a political sideshow in Iowa, none other than Bonnie Raitt approached her to offer support—and free concert tickets.

Hall says her activist spirit came alive during

Catholic school, when she read about civil rights pioneer Harriet Tubman. "She freed people against great odds, and that was really attractive to me."

Hall went on to fight 1994's Measure 13 while studying to become an American Sign Language interpreter at Western Oregon University. As a student senator, she encountered one of her first frightening foes: a College Republican.

"He called me a pinko liberal—I didn't even know what a pinko liberal was back then—and a coward for not using my real name," she says. "He didn't even know me."

(For the record, Hall's real name is Cheryl Meredith; she goes by CM not for anonymity but because of finger fatigue when signing for the Deaf.)



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

Hall, an alum of the Human Rights Campaign Youth College for Campaign Training, tasted the agony of defeat as campaign manager during Salem Democrat Rick Stucky's highly contentious House race in 1998. "I learned that it takes money to run a campaign and that fund raising is a key element of any campaign work you want to do."

Obviously, the lesson stuck with her. Last year, Hall raised an impressive \$280,000 as house party coordinator during the No on 9 Campaign.

Afterward she immediately transitioned to Basic Rights Oregon, where as development director she also plans events, secures major donor gifts and writes grants. Some people might not be able to handle the constant barrage of anti-gay attacks from enemies such as the Oregon Citizens Alliance, but not Hall.

"I'm idealistic and optimistic about our

potential as a community," the 28-year-old says. "I think the majority of Oregonians are fair-minded, and that affirms my commitment to this civil rights movement."

—Jim Radosta

STEPHAN HERRERA

Stephan Herrera, 25, projects pride in just about every aspect of his life. An energetic guy, he puts his heart, spirit and action where his mouth is.

Herrera coordinates HIV outreach for the African American Health Coalition in Portland. In this capacity, he is also project coordinator for Brother to Brother, which reaches out to gay black men, providing both technical and capacity-building assistance. Working through the organization's board, he additionally handles outreach for men who have sex with men in the Portland area.

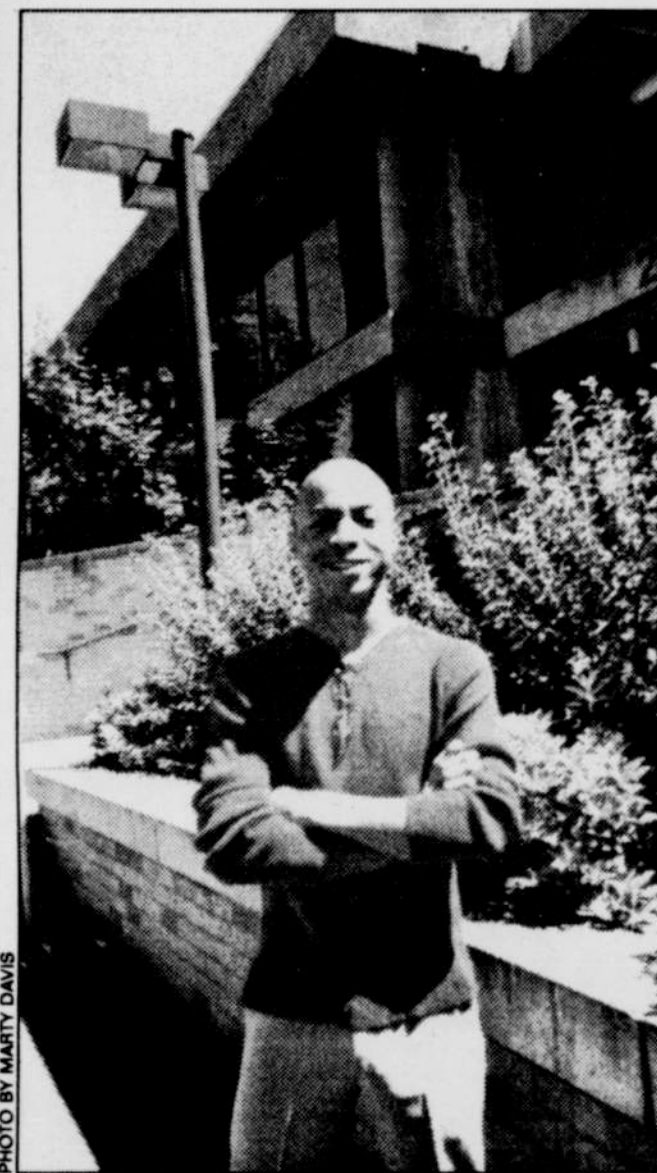


PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

Herrera says much work needs to be done with young gay black men in our community. Recent statistics verify his concern: New HIV infection rates are higher for young black men

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