

Speak Out

A mockery of democracy

TO THE EDITOR:

Excuse me if I fail to find credible Tom Stevenson's assertion that the "dedicated people" of the Rural Organizing Project "have made a profound impact on the lives of every...trans person who calls Oregon home" ["So Far, So Good," July 6].

Short of canvassing every trans person in the state, he has no grounds for such a blanket characterization—and this is particularly true given his recent and more modest characterization of ROP to be "involved in a large number of efforts...of immense concern to the gay and lesbian community" ["Queer and Far," March 16]. Similarly problematic is Stevenson's unquestioning repetition of ROP's assertion that the organization's "broad-based goals include: build[ing] statewide power for democracy."

Just Out readers should be provided factual information with which to make their own assessment of ROP's capacity for building democracy rather than simply being expected to accept such claims. Therefore, they might find it enlightening to know that according to ROP's own bylaws adopted by its board Jan. 13, 1996:

1. Full voting membership is limited to vaguely defined "autonomous groups"—individuals as such aren't permitted to join and vote.

2. Nor does ROP allow its autonomous groups to select candidates to the organization's board of directors—candidates are preselected by the existing directors.

3. Candidates for ROP's offices similarly are selected by the board of directors and elected by that same board—not by votes cast by the autonomous groups' representatives.

Such rules preclude the most basic tenets of democracy (one person/one vote, representational government, etc.). If our state and local

governments were held to the standards ROP applies to itself, individual citizens would not be permitted to vote for governor, mayor, legislator, school board or any other elective office. Nor would citizens be allowed to step forward of their own accord to run for office—our future officials would be preselected by current officeholders.

Although ROP claims to support "the values of democracy and inclusion," such an assertion is belied by its own bylaws and its method of selecting officers and directors. Isn't it rather presumptuous—to say the least—for ROP to claim to support democracy while failing to run itself in a democratic manner? And isn't it rather naive—at best—for Stevenson to repeat such claims unquestioningly?

MARGARET DEIRDRE O'HARTIGAN
Portland

Unholy alliance

TO THE EDITOR:

In President Bush's latest efforts to discriminate against sexual minorities he has entered into an unholy alliance with the Salvation Army. I for one will cease all donations to the Salvation Army until it denounces its present anti-gay stand.

I hope all other sexual minorities, our supporters and those who believe in the need to maintain a separation between church and state will join me. Let our charitable dollars speak out against discrimination.

Pass this on to others. Maybe the word will get out that U.S. citizens will not tolerate discrimination based on sexual orientation and that Bush's "faith-based charities" scheme is a bad idea.

GEORGE EIGHMEY
Portland

Family ties

TO THE EDITOR:

I think a community center is a great idea ["What If?" July 6].

But how about including gay and lesbian families with children, too? A day care center and various children's programs would be very welcome.

My partner and I adopted our son, Dominic, last year (Bob is about to bring home our second son, Jack, in two weeks!), and we know many other gay and lesbian families with children in Portland who would welcome that kind of community support.

By the way, a day care center or children's programs also would attract progressive local straight families that want their kids to develop values of tolerance, respect and inclusion. We know many of those families, too!

Again, I think a center is a great idea. Thanks for bringing it up!

BILL GRIESAR
Portland

The show must go on

TO THE EDITOR:

This is not really a letter to the editor but more a thank-you and an update. First of all let me say thank you for mentioning the triangle productions! show *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* in your recent commentary ["If You Must March Naked at Least Dress Warmly...It's Been Chilly Lately," June 15].

I am one of the actors in the show, and we all appreciate the mention! We were delighted at the Drammy Awards to be honored with five including Outstanding Production.

What makes it so special for the entire cast and crew, director Greg Tamblyn and producer Don Horn is that the show has been a true labor of love for all of us. The set was secondhand, many of the costumes we brought from home, and the microphones initially were purchased out of the director's pocket.

Somehow, this small budget and small team came through with fantastic success. We all feel honored and blessed to be part of the show.

Now for the update. Your article mentions that "this production no longer is playing."

Actually, we reopen July 27. (Drammy Award-winning actor Leif Norby will be joining the cast this time around.) Our run, which began Oct. 20, 2000, as a four-week engagement, already has played 26 weeks, and there is no slowing down.

We took a short "breather" and are returning for at least four weeks this summer before we open in Seattle for a five-week gig. The "pride" in triangle productions! still is shining bright!

Now you didn't hear this from me, but talk is when we return from Seattle we again will reopen in Portland and run until the audiences stop coming. Some of our diehard fans have seen the show five times—and have tickets to come back.

Well, again thank you for acknowledging our show. We all really love every minute of it.

I just wanted you to know that *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* is still alive and "pridefully" kicking with no signs of stopping. This show has something for everyone; maybe that's why we still are playing—until "everyone" sees it, I guess.

GARY WAYNE CASH
Portland

just asking Do you think the Burnside Triangle should be declared Portland's official gay district?

I want to see the Burnside Triangle saved. I don't want to see the rents go up—or whatever it is that would force the businesses that are now there to move or cease to exist. It is great just the way it is.

A gay district designation is so limiting. It's the same as trying to have friends who are only GLBT-designated.

However, if such a designation would save the businesses presently there, I say go for it. It would break my heart to find it eliminated.

SUE HOLTER
Bend

that in 2001 we've moved beyond that. Instead, why not proclaim the entire city an "official gay-friendly district" and find some other way to improve the Burnside Triangle?

DANIEL SAPON-BORSON
Portland

The Burnside Triangle should be "our" official gay district. If "we" have to become a recognized minority to retain an area of entertainment and social gathering, then Southwest Stark Street should continue in that vein. Perhaps such official recognition will add to the variety of businesses in the area.

RICH KIBBONS
Portland

No! Why does the gay district have to revolve around a bunch of gay bars, strip clubs and a bathhouse? Not to mention it's not exactly the cleanest part of town anyway.



PHOTO BY MARY DAVIS

Why not declare Northeast Broadway/Irvington the gay district? There are respectable, gay-owned/operated businesses, nice stores, restaurants and a nice neighborhood nearby. Maybe things will improve with the development in that area, but in my opinion, until the bathhouse and all the trashy strip joints are gone, there's nothing to be proud of there.

JASON PETRE
Portland

3. There should be a place where you can shop for your cultural needs.

4. There should be a place where you can meet other people like yourself.

PAUL CHRISTENSEN
Portland



NEXT ISSUE: Sinéad O'Connor, Anne Heche and Julie Cypher rediscover their heterosexuality. What's going on here? Is "lesbo temping" some trendy phase, a rite of passage for straight women or a publicity stunt? Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)