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Speak Out

Homegrown terrorism

TO THE EDITOR:

The tragedy that has befallen our country has put a face on terrorism. In President Bush's address to our nation, he swore that the United States would bring reigns of terrorism to an end.

I do not wish to detract from the tragedy that has touched the lives of so many, nor do I wish to abuse this word that holds so much power at this moment. But what has happened to us has made it all too clear that gay, lesbian, bi and trans people continue to be terrorized, beaten and killed by religious fanatics and others with the same motivations as the terrorists who have attacked our nation.

Yes, hate crimes legislation has been introduced. But in light of recent events I would like every leader and citizen of this nation to urge Bush to acknowledge these hate crimes for what they are—terrorism against gay, lesbian, bi and trans Americans—and push for legislation banning and punishing acts of terrorism within our own country.

I would be remiss if I were to continue in this vein without commenting that African Americans, Jewish Americans and others who continue to be terrorized, beaten and killed by religious fanatics within the United States also must be included in this effort. If we, as a nation, are to act outwardly toward terrorism, we must be able to look within and rout terrorism from our own soil—our own heart.

LONNY PARR
Vancouver, Wash.

Can't get no satisfaction

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to respond to the person who wrote the "New Patriotism" letter in the Sept. 21 issue. First, I am extremely appalled that a so-called American could have any kind of feelings of "satisfaction" that so many people suffered and died in the brutal attack Sept. 11 for whatever reason he tries to justify it with.

But let's look at the reasons you claim. You say you have been "afraid" and "live in fear" here in America.

I guess I would have to ask, why don't you just live in another country if this one is so bad for you? Move to a place maybe where you can be executed for watching television or being a homosexual.

Gay, lesbian and trans people have come extremely far through the years, and yes, we still have a long way to go. But don't put the blame of the word "faggot" on America.

It's not all of America. It's a few religious radicals who will preach hate against certain groups and will have followers who will act upon it.

I am a gay man and feel very much a part of America and always have felt safe in my life. I do not condone it in any way, but there always will be people who don't like other people.

Have you liked everyone you ever have met? I doubt it.

But putting all of that aside for now, I would like to know how you feel you have "suffered" half as much as the victims and family members of the Sept. 11 attacks. Do us all a favor and don't be so selfish and arrogant actually to try to make this all about you.

KELLY FARRIS
Portland

Silence speaks volumes

TO THE EDITOR:

I am concerned about the silence of our political leaders. Our country is running to war

while the government bails out already poorly managed businesses. The tragedy of Sept. 11 should not encourage us to create more tragedy in every corner of our nation.

Our political leaders are now publicly silent, talking behind closed doors about the nation's future fiscal, economic and military directives. Our leadership should be more vocal, not less, and return to open discourse.

The majority of the nation was concerned just four weeks ago about President Bush and the directions he was taking. I certainly would feel safer if our elected leaders were debating publicly, especially before my relatives and friends are sent off to war and our country is pulled into a conflict started out of fear and religious fanaticism from which we never might be able to disengage.

Can all of these new decisions be wise? Let public discourse begin again. We cannot change our way of life simply because of terrorism, or the terrorists have won.

ERIC BROWN
Portland

Employer loyalty?

TO THE EDITOR:

Is it any wonder employees are not more loyal to their employers? How can a company or corporation expect loyalty from their employees when they summarily fire them without severance, sick leave compensation or an extension of other benefits? I reference the recent boot given to the American Airlines employees who remained loyal for at least 15 years.

And I find it especially gratuitous of Don Carty announcing he will forego his salary for the remainder of the year. My, my, how that must hurt him at \$9.6 million annually!! How many of his fellow "employees" will find it heartrending that he will have to give up a few million when they are reduced to nothing?

It would appear human decency toward loyal employees can (and apparently will) be suspended in the name of a financial "state of emergency." I congratulate the American public for their steadfastness in this time of trial, for it appears we certainly cannot rely on those who provide jobs to remain steadfast in the continued battle to remain a free and prosperous country.

It will be all the "little" people (and I mean no disrespect here) who eventually will surmount this tragic state of affairs. Perhaps it is time for the mom and pop businesses to regain their rightful place in the economy of the United States—if not for prosperity's sake only but for decency's sake as well.

G. THORNTON "SKIP" HUNTER
Portland

Fool me once...

TO THE EDITOR:

The recent decision to "suspend" the "don't ask, don't tell" policy because of the impending military action is further evidence of the Defense Department's long history of "acceptance" of gay men and lesbians among its ranks in times of war only to promptly discharge those same people after the national crisis has passed. I would hope the gay and lesbian community, both military and civilian, will not be duped yet again by this tradition.

In the late 1940s, the Navy reported an average of 1,100 undesirable discharges a year of gay personnel; however, in 1950 at the height of the Korean conflict, that number dropped to only 483. Then, in 1953, with the signing of the

peace agreement, the number of gay discharges jumped dramatically to 1,353.

The statistics from the Vietnam War are even more startling. Again, naval records show that in the years 1963-66 just prior to the escalation of the military presence in the Far East, between 1,600 and 1,700 male and female sailors received gay discharges.

From 1967 to 1968 the number dropped from 1,708 to 1,094 people separated. In 1969 at the peak of the U.S. troop buildup in Vietnam, the discharges dropped to a mere 643, and in 1970 just 461 were ousted. At the end of the war the number of gay discharges jumped to an all-time high of nearly 1,800 separations in the first year alone.

These statistics indicate the military repeatedly has looked the other way as to the sexual orientation of its recruits and active duty personnel when shortages dictate the need for every able-bodied man (and woman). In addition to this "on again, off again" policy, a number of studies, some at the request of the Pentagon, draw into direct question the validity of this anti-gay stance.

Integration for the military always has been difficult and awkward. Women in the 1940s and African Americans in the 1950s both faced similar resistance to their inclusion in the armed services.

In both cases the military had to promote ongoing campaigns of tolerance and acceptance. Perhaps a similar action now is required as an enhancement to the "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

RORY GERARD
Portland

History lesson

TO THE EDITOR:

Even as we grieve for the appalling loss of life at the World Trade Center and feel dismay at the targeting of innocent people by terrorists, we must recognize the underlying cause of such attacks. It is the hatred U.S. government policies engender in the Mideast and around the world. At the same time we denounce terrorism, we need to acknowledge it would have no soil to grow in were it not for the oppressive foreign policies of our own government:

- Uncritical support of Israel, to the tune of \$2 billion in annual aid, even while it is exterminating and dispossessing the Palestinians.

- Ongoing bombing of Iraq and embargoes against the entire populations of Iraq and Cuba because of opposition to their leaders. The actions against Iraq have caused the deaths of more than 1.5 million people—which I only can call terrorism.

- Financial and military support of right-wing dictatorial regimes that torture and impoverish their own people throughout the Mideast, South and Central America, Asia and Africa.

- Ruthless promotion of corporate globalization, which is impoverishing the Third World at an astonishing rate, through institutions like the World Bank and World Trade Organization.

- Contempt for the imperative of ending racism by U.S. officials who walked out of the recent World Conference Against Racism.

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Riot is the language of the unheard." So, too, terrorism arises when people see no means or hope of gaining basic human rights or necessities of life by democratic, peaceful means. If we are unable to learn this simple and oft-repeated lesson of history, we are doomed to witness tragedies like that of Sept. 11 again.

JORDANA SARDO
Portland