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Speak Out

You and what Army?

TO THE EDITOR:

In your Dec. 7 piece you attack the sexual minorities community and Basic Rights Oregon for organizing the "Clog the Kettles" campaign ["Three Days That Never End..."].

I appreciate the concern for "the cold, the hungry and the downtrodden." Giving to the Salvation Army is not the answer. The Salvation Army denies my humanity and basic human rights because I am a lesbian.

Your idea that putting faux dollars in a kettle is "combat" is ridiculous. "Combat" is when Lon Mabon puts anti-gay measures on the ballot or when the Salvation Army negotiates behind closed doors at the White House to continue its discriminatory practices while receiving millions of taxpayer dollars for the "faith-based initiative."

I agree, we need to be generous this year. I am donating three food baskets to low-income families who have children in my neighborhood school. If your readers want to give generously this year, they may contribute to the Oregon Food Bank or other groups.

And for the record, BRO is encouraging people to give locally as well. We need to pull together as a community and country, but that does not mean we must condone those who seek to deny our humanity, and it does not make it right to give blindly to homophobic groups.

KATHLEEN SULLIVAN
Portland

Lead us not into Salvation

TO THE EDITOR:

Criticism is coming from within and from outside the sexual minorities community for those voicing opposition to the Salvation Army's rescinding of the decision by its Western Corporation to offer medical benefits to domestic partners. The main objection to the protest seems to be that it is unfair and mean-spirited to "attack" an organization that does so much good.

The protesters are not saying the Salvation Army does not do good deeds or is an evil organization. How many other good religious, civic, government and business organizations—large and small—throughout the nation and world would have changed their policies regarding gay, lesbian, bi and trans people had it not been for pressure from activists and civil rights groups objecting to discrimination against this community of folks?

Because of their current tolerance—or, better yet, acceptance—of sexual minorities, we consider these organizations to be even better than they were before. Organizations such as the Salvation Army, the U.S. armed forces and the Boy Scouts are all good groups, but their discriminatory policies regarding gay, lesbian, bi and trans people are still unfortunate and should be changed.

LYLE M. TUCKER
Lake Oswego

Let them be queer!

TO THE EDITOR:

In all of the responses you printed on the use of the word "queer," I didn't see one that reflected my opinion ["Just Asking," Nov. 16].

As a 24-year-old out, proud, queer woman, I have learned a thing or two. Of all the types of gay people I have met in my life, I have learned one basic principle: Being gay does not mean you have anything else in common with someone else who is.

Being called "gay," "queer," "dyke," "fag" and all the other labels we choose is 100 percent personal in nature. It's similar to how some people call their significant others "partners," "girlfriends," "boyfriends," "wives," "husbands," etc.

It's an individual choice. I'm not saying derogatory labels imposed on queers by offending people are acceptable; I'm referring to, if you will, inner queer labeling.

I politely try to let people call themselves what they prefer, then if I feel the necessity to label them, I use that term in reference. Many are offended by the use of the pink triangle as a gay symbol because of its Nazi Germany affiliation, but queers still use it. If you don't like the word, don't use it.

To many young people, "queer" is encompassing. Many of us don't feel we fit into one category.

But young people like myself don't insist on using the term for people who don't appreciate it and find it offensive. GLBTQ blah, blah, blah people are from all age groups, colors, ethnicities, genders and socioeconomic backgrounds; don't box people into one label.

Likewise, folks of opposition, please don't criticize us queers for using the word. We are not all alike just because we have a similarity.

DENISE RENFROW
Portland

World AIDS Day: A personal thought

TO THE EDITOR:

"We remember..." marked the top of each hour. Volunteers, using measured tones, spoke the names, reminding us of so many lost to AIDS.

The NAMES Project brought 36 quilts to All Saints School from Dec. 1 to 3 for World AIDS Day. The panels—some laying in pinwheel fashion, some suspended—reminded and told of grand folk, their interests and their hopes and reflected on the great love of their families and friends—creators of the memorials.

Looking from the balcony, rainbow colors drew the eye; they blended into a nearly white scene. Math skills soon spoke of how long they were here: some in their 40s and 30s, a few in their 20s—and younger yet.

Now they are packed—just for a time—promising to bloom in another time. Ryan White on a sky blue cloth, blooms radiating promise and color.

transitions

Ryan Leighton, 1967-2001

Ryan "Leanora" Leighton died of AIDS complications Nov. 28. He was 34.

He was born July 24, 1967, in Spokane, Wash. He moved to Portland 12 years ago.

Leighton, who was a princess in the entertainment industry, cherished ordinary miracles and greeted each day with courage and compassion. He loved the ocean and garden-

ing and had an endless supply of back scratches for all of the neighborhood cats.

He is survived by his partner of 4 1/2 years, David Cluster; brothers, Leo Schuman of Portland and Eric of Billings, Mont.; and mother, Carol Kelley of Billings.

Services were private. Final disposition was by cremation. Omega Funeral and Cremation Service handled the arrangements.

Remembrances may be made to the Feral Cat Coalition, P.O. Box 82734, Portland, OR 97282.