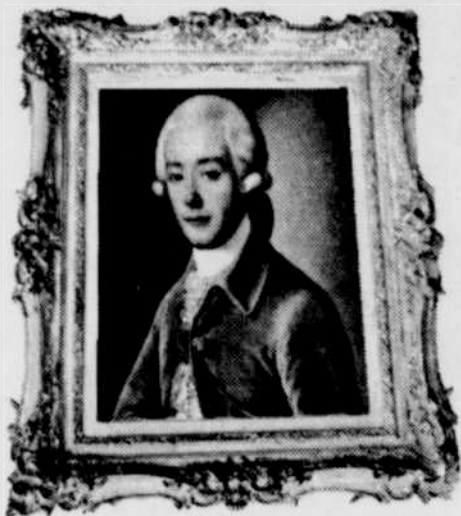


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## Speak Out

### Supreme indignity

TO THE EDITOR:

**F**irst Monday is a new television show about a cadre of imaginary U.S. Supreme Court justices whose major talent seems to be ideological infighting and overt bigotry. The pilot episode dealt, ostensibly, with sanctuary for trans people from regimes even more culturally draconian than our own.

The segment was a poorly padded beating by a blunt intellectual instrument. One was left to wonder in which universe an individual would be placed for interrogation before an opening public session of the high court, but that was the fate of the trans person who was appealing an apparent Immigration and Naturalization Service ruling against granting sanctuary.

She was humiliated repeatedly by the phony justices, who suggested she easily could go "back home" if she just would "put your pants back on." Not that they actually gave this person the benefit of pronoun choice.

Other lines that drew purported laughter from those in chambers were: "So do you intend to be castrated like a bull?" and the always-funny "So what bathroom do you use?" We never did find out the disposition of her appeal but were left to infer from the echoing guffaws and carnivalesque background music what it might be.

But wait, were you thinking this was all? The gorgeous babe who was Angel's attorney was—what else?—a transsexual woman herself. Not until the "busy litigator" tore herself away to romp in a salsa club with a conservative clerk of the court, and not until the camera dwelt longingly on her well-rounded bottom in rampant frothage on the unsuspecting man's groin did she turn and announce her real incentive in representing this client had come from her being "a transsexual, too!"

I understand the debate on whether gender identity is a compelling internal characteristic or a social construct; that's not the point. CBS and the producers of *First Monday* created the trans segment of this episode solely to amplify existing pejorative stereotypes and to use the titillation for ratings.

When my partner and I walk down the street, borderline bigots encouraged by this show and others might feel it's OK to abuse, threaten or attack us. They might do the same to our friends and fellows, knowing there is to be no sanctuary, no rights for us here, even if we take it to the Supreme Court.

We are, after all, objects of ridicule or perverted temptresses. And this for the service of bad television, bad values and the abysmal general ignorance of our aspirations and problems.

Where are the voices of trans people who should be outraged by the ease with which we are shamed and dismissed? Our silence is the sound of the death of our dignity.

LORI BUCKWALTER  
It's Time, Oregon! Executive Director

### How has MLK Jr. affected my life?

TO THE EDITOR:

This essay was written for a contest at Pacific University in Forest Grove.

**I**f you know me, you might be asking yourself, "How could this lily-white privileged girl possible be affected by the life and work of Martin Luther King Jr.?"

As he gave his speech in front of the marble forefather of freedom that hot August day, he stood before 200,000 supporters and told

them about a dream that would mark the beginning to the end of an era of blasphemous discrimination, handing minorities the opportunity for liberty. He wasn't just speaking about the oppression of African Americans, he was talking about all people who ever had felt the sting of segregation. He was talking about me.

This was the genesis of a fundamental shift in the way society treated people who were unlike themselves—a collective movement toward equality. We undoubtedly still have a long way to go, but we are moving closer. I gradually have felt the difference between tolerance and acceptance.

I also had a dream. I had a dream when I was 7 that I would feel like everybody else one day and that people would stop chastising me for being a tomboy. I had a dream when I was 20 that I would stop falling in love with my best friend. I had a dream when I was 25 while lying in my parents' arms that they still would love me after I told them I was gay.

I have a dream today—that one day we will reclaim those lives that would be lost to suicide for fear of living a gay lifestyle. I have a dream of hope for the next generation.

King gave me the courage to stand in the truth of who I am. He afforded me the luxury of living in safety with my partner—apathetic to the dwindling occasions of discrimination.

He has affected my happiness; he has helped rejuvenate many relationships that had been choked by the weeds of shame before I came out of the closet. If he hadn't been born, I would have stayed in the "chains of discrimination" that kept me in my usual, stale place.

I am not a poster child, and most people wouldn't guess I am gay, but I am familiar with the feeling of isolation associated with being perceived as a pariah. I am fortunate, though; I was born in a time that is on the cusp of change.

I wish I had been able to stand up with my brothers and sisters in the repulsive face of ignorance that day in 1963, fighting for civil rights—something that was ours to begin with. I wish I could have stood with Dr. King, because I am quite certain if he had not been

assassinated, he would have stood by us.

GINA DAGGETT  
Portland

### Jesse's boy

TO THE EDITOR:

**A**n award for the Most Blatant Act of Denial should be awarded to the Human Rights Campaign for endorsing U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith.

Just a few months ago he voted\* for the Helms Amendment to the Bush education reform act, which stated that no school that denies public access to the Boy Scouts of America for recruiting or other events because of anti-discrimination policies shall receive federal money. Smith has shown repeatedly he is part of the religious right wing and has more in common with Jesse Helms than he would like the gay community to perceive.

RICK CRITTENDEN  
Portland

### In defense of HRC

TO THE EDITOR:

**D**espite my position as a fierce liberal, I wanted to take a moment to write a few words in support of the Human Rights Campaign's much-contested endorsement of U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith.

It is important to remember HRC is not aligned with any particular party. Its mission is to operate above and beyond party lines in order to defeat anti-gay legislation and to help protect our rights in general. For all of his objectionable views, Smith repeatedly has voted in favor of gay rights and has done everything HRC has asked of him.

For better or worse, the way the political machine works is that if someone does what you ask, in return you give your support. Failing to endorse Smith seriously would have undermined HRC's credibility both at a state and national level.

Let's stop bad-mouthing a difficult political

## notables

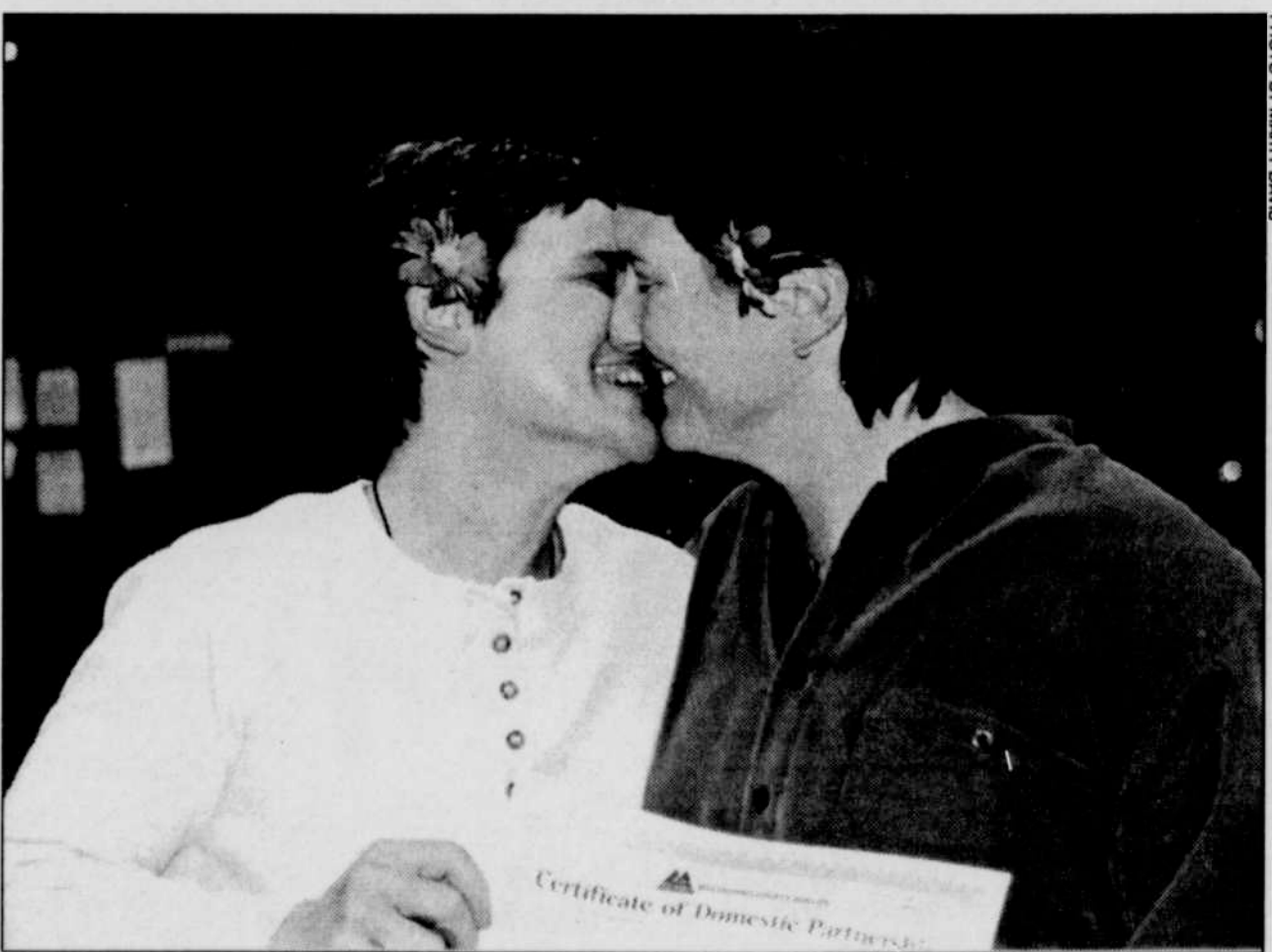


PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

**M**elissa Arnold (left) and Anne Seelye became the 10th couple to register as domestic partners in Multnomah County this year. The Jan. 26 certification was witnessed by close friends Mary Schutten, Catherine Cush-

ing and Marty Davis. Fun and frivolity followed. For a \$60 registration fee couples may document their partnership with Multnomah County at 501 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd. For more information call 503-988-3027.