

just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

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COMMENTARY

BY MARTY DAVIS

Freedom of expression

When did we agree to never disagree?

What a dichotomy of emotions the past couple of days have brought about. A wealth of events within our community has kept the mind running in all directions. The definite highlight was a lively and well-organized forum at Mount Hood Community College in which panelists explored the ramifications of the proposed state ballot measure known as the Student Protection Act II. The infamous Lon Mabon was scheduled to attend but instead did another one of his "no-shows."

Lou Beres of the Oregon Christian Coalition was present, which provided an excellent opportunity for attendees to attach a face to the opposition lead. He was joined by two other men who appeared to be all-around good-guy neighbor-next-door types—personable, polite and totally dead-set in their convictions.

These fellas were more than a tad unnerving. I will go to my grave being wary of strangers who profess love for me in the name of Christ. Sorry, but this approach just does not work.

Beres took on the role of the bumbling doofus grandfather figure. His performance was reminiscent of an old *Saturday Night Live* sketch in which President Ronald Reagan also played the stumblebum but was actually a brilliant strategist in disguise.

Is this a conscious persona being adopted by Beres? Are we meant to be taken in by his kindly grandfather act?

An open invitation was extended to visit his house for cookies and milk—and Scripture, no doubt. Any takers?

Disagreement was the order of the evening at this forum. There was no question that opinions presented were going to be argued.

The very value of these exchanges lies in the freedom to openly express views in a moderated climate of faux respect and civility. Tolerance for the intolerant is the operational guideline.

All of us will face opposition, dissension and manners of thoughts that differ from our own. I am becoming concerned about what I see as an increased lack of acceptance for disagreement within the gay, lesbian, bi and trans community.

Where is the tolerance we adamantly demand of others yet abandon when confronted with a dissident within our own ranks? When did the concept of "I disagree with what you say but defend to the death your right to say it" become "Agree with me or shut the fuck up"?

Are we willing to become the Stepford Queers—one voice, one path, one direction? Will we actually attempt to silence others for the sake of increasingly dangerous political correctness?

Words that stem from hatred are to be challenged. But how do we justify denying expressions reflecting confusion and personal belief—especially as we demand these very freedoms from those outside our

community who would take them from us?

We are not all the same. We do not have shared memories and equal backgrounds. Even as we rally to stand together as one, we remain unique individuals molded and created by difference.

Gay men and lesbians are not alone in facing loss of rights as the new age of conservatism creeps across the nation. Pro-choice advocates are enduring enormous setbacks, too.

The National Abortion Rights Action League is taking an aggressive stand in voter education by running a powerful advertisement on television stations across the country. Their message, briefly summarized, is that they are being threatened by the loss of rights. They will win supporters—and, of course, incur wrath from others.

But the important thing is they are being proactive. They're educating voters; they're "spinning" a positive public image. They are not waiting to have their rights taken away.

Now, the important question. How can we, as members of the sexual minorities community, take steps to increase education and awareness among voters and keep the Student Protection Act II from even qualifying for the Oregon ballot?

One project I'm taking on is organizing Gay and Lesbian Volunteer Day at the Oregon Food Bank. There no doubt will be those who think this is a "goody-goody" approach to the public relations aspect of winning friends and influencing people.

I say let's take all steps available to control the fires of animosity that are raging against us. When firefighters are deployed to contain a wildfire, they come at it from all sides, not merely one fixed approach.

We must do the same. We must have multiple strategies to achieve success.

With a scarcity of details at this time, please e-mail me at marty@justout.com and let me know if you'd be interested in participating in this project. More information will be available in an upcoming *Just Out*.

This issue features a cover story about the stunning new facilities at Outside In. This incredible project is the culmination of years of planning and dreaming and working by Kathy Oliver and her staff. Combine this new building with the recently opened shelter at the Oregon Humane Society, and Portland now treats her stray children as well as she does her stray cats and dogs.

Finally, February is Black History Month. On Pages 40 and 41, Poison Waters takes us on a historical journey of the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court and highlights the accomplishments of black citizens throughout the past 33 years. We salute their achievements. **JM**

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REFLECTIONS

5 years ago in just out...

VOL. 14 NO. 7, FEB. 7, 1997



• All visitors to Iran will be tested for HIV at border clinics, health officials said Dec. 26.

• The Netherlands' same-sex partnership legislation is expected to become law by January 1998. It will grant registered couples all the rights and obligations of matrimony except the right to adopt children.

• A \$13.4 million, 25-year lease between United Airlines and the San Francisco Airports Commission must be renegotiated to include domestic partner wording, the city Board of Supervisors said Jan. 14. All city contractors must provide benefits for domestic partners equal to those given to married couples.

• In January, Charles K. Ortleb, publisher of *Theater Week* and the *New York Native*, an award-winning weekly serving the sexual minorities community, announced he would terminate publication of both titles because of lack of funds.

• The Imperial Sovereign Rose Court, under the reign of Rose Emperor XXII Michael and Rose Empress XXXVIII

Misha, donated nearly \$18,200 to several charities during 1996.

• An openly gay Portland man has filed a \$2 million lawsuit against the Salvation Army and one of its employees claiming they violated the Portland city ordinance prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations based on sexual orientation.

• It's been more than 11 years since Kelly Chronister's handsome face graced the cover of *Newsweek*. The internationally distributed newsmagazine's feature story for the week of Jan. 13, 1986, was titled "Growing Up Gay: The Society's Dilemma. One Family's Crisis."

• A Lesbian Valentine's Day party Feb. 14 at the Monte Carlo features a free Italian buffet, dancing and surprises. Lucky winners receive Portland Power tickets and more.

• Portland Bisexual Alliance plays host to a Bi Sleepover on Feb. 22. Enjoy games, movies, junk food and ghost stories. Modest attire required; one person per sleeping bag.

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