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# Multnomah

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## Speak Out

### To be queer

TO THE EDITOR:  
It's hard to decide—should I comment about Byron Beck and some other nontrans queer people who claim trans issues are irrelevant (or incomprehensible) to them? After all, as he said, what did you expect?

In fact, should we expect more? Should we hope for a higher level of awareness about the bias and exclusion that await those of us who think (and identify, act, live and love) outside the cultural box?

Should we expect all queer people to use their hearts, minds and consciences to envision and create a society in which every person has dignity and worth? Shouldn't we just expect "mainstream" culture to expand its own values to accept us? Do we actually have to show them what that would look like in our own community for them to get it?

It's hard work being out and queer in this culture, and it's hard work being a person of conscience in an unjust world. When do we get a break?

Don't we get to draw our line of inclusion out just so far? Don't we get to look down our noses at somebody? Don't we get to admit we can be bigots, too, and just leave it at that?

Sure. Go ahead. Pretend the courage you found to be who you need to be, to love who you need to love, is mostly for folks who fit your definition. Pretend it doesn't really apply to trans folks if you want. But remember, the very act of closing the door on each other robs us of the most precious gift our struggles might have provided: the capacity to show compassion and support for the safety and dignity of others who really need it.

Next time we demand this society and its institutions honor our human rights, we just can't hide behind our own rationalizations about why we couldn't do the same. Next time we feel threatened on the street or by a ballot measure, we can "go stealth" and pretend we're just like everybody else, only just a little gay. Maybe they won't notice us...or they can go after someone more visible or more queer instead....

Personally, I don't think it's going to work, but I guess everybody's free to try. OK, doing so will be a capitulation to the bonds of selfishness, fear and ignorance that are our real shame...but hey, what did you expect?

LORI BUCKWALTER  
It's Time, Oregon! Executive Director

### Prevention priority

TO THE EDITOR:  
I read with great interest your story about Krystal Ashling ["Survival Story," March 1]. Although I applaud her resiliency from the loss of her children and her strong motivation to help other women, I also need to inform your readers about the Avon Breast Cancer Walk.

The fund-raiser is produced by Palotta Team-Works, a private, for-profit company. Participants must contribute at least \$1,900, and they must have health insurance.

The walks raise between \$8 million and \$12 million in each city. All of the expenses are taken from the funds contributed by the participants.

As a result, only between \$4 million and \$8 million from each walk actually is distributed for breast cancer treatment. The programs benefited include those encouraging women to obtain mammography screening as well as research efforts at selected hospitals. The money may not be used for screening itself nor for innovative research being done outside government-backed facilities that already have access to ample funds.

The Avon Foundation and the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation focus their efforts primarily on detection instead of on pre-

vention. Mammography is only a detective device; it does not prevent cancer. Also, an increasing body of research indicates mammography might not make a difference in mortality rates.

More than 8.9 million people are living with cancer in the United States. One in two men and one in three women will develop some form of the disease in their lifetime.

Despite years of research, there is still a lot we don't know about what is causing cancer. Hereditary factors only explain a small fraction of cases.

Growing evidence, however, indicates various environmental toxins are contributing to our high rates of cancer and other diseases. Although more research is needed, there is also enough evidence now encouraging us to decrease the use and production of pollutants to stop the increasing rates of cancer.

We need to ask why these mainstream organizations are not doing research on preventable risk factors for cancer. One reason might be because of their funding. For example, Armand Hammer—the same company that brought us Love Canal—pays for the Komen Foundation's headquarters in Texas.

The founder of the Komen Foundation is married to Norman Brinker, who has been CEO for various fast food corporations. Many companies that make breast cancer drugs (and who help fund these corporations) also make pesticides and animal hormones. They also receive funding from mammography equipment manufacturers.

I would like to suggest Ashling and your readers check out Breast Cancer Action of San Francisco, an advocacy organization that raises issues about environmental risk factors and alternative forms of research. It has instituted a policy of not taking corporate contributions that might compromise its message.

Its Internet site is www.bcaction.org. Supporting BCA truly would be a positive step toward eradicating the dreadful disease of breast cancer.

GRACE M. HAGUE, MPH  
Portland

### Airing grievances

TO THE EDITOR:  
It appears prejudicial to gay men and lesbians for KGW-TV to have scheduled a Portland Trail Blazers telecast March 16 that cuts off the first half-hour of NBC's *The Matthew Shepard Story*. KMTR-TV in Eugene has scheduled the entire two-hour movie at 9 p.m.

Is NBC trying to hide *The Matthew Shepard Story* by first scheduling it for the same time as HBO's *The Laramie Project*, then by airing it Saturday night, which usually draws the fewest viewers? Why has KGW cut this movie when it carefully shifts other NBC shows that are pre-empted by Blazers games?

Why did NBC give KGW permission to

## transitions

### Fern Ridge, 1957-2002

Portland resident Fern Ridge died March 8. She was 44.

She was born Aug. 6, 1957. She graduated from Portland State University with a bachelor's degree in fine arts.

Ridge worked as a professional bartender for about 25 years at several establishments, most notably Virginia Cafe. She was known for throwing Palm Sunday parties every year for more than 100 people.

A service will be held 1 p.m. March 24 at Wilf's Restaurant and Piano Bar, 800 N.W. Sixth Ave. For more information call Steven Nief at 503-281-5759.