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Speak Out

Enough is enough

TO THE EDITOR:

I read with disappointment Marty Davis' commentary in the March 1 issue ["Judgment Day"]. In it you stated "the fact that Woodcock has not talked once to us 'on the record' up to and including the day the settlement was approved, and you have the true reason for the limited yet adequate coverage his story received."

The above statement, simply put, is untrue. In fact, *Just Out* was the first media outlet I did speak to "on the record," against the advice of my attorney (see April 21, 2000, edition regarding the Portland Police Bureau's refusal to acknowledge the locker vandalism as a crime, let alone a hate crime!).

Additionally, *Just Out* was aware I could not go on the record until the settlement was completed (i.e., funds disbursed) and why (my rightful fear of retaliation from the city by coming up with some inane excuse for holding up funds). For me, the settlement was a matter of survival.

It should be noted my assignment to the men's locker room triggered a slew of epithets ("faggots," "dykes," "queers" not wanted there, etc.), culminating in the vandalism. About the same time, more anti-gay epithets were made in an incident that occurred during a Central Precinct day shift roll call while managers sat idly by.

The bureau had no intention of conducting proper investigations of the incident and didn't. The very day news of my hate crime was discussed at the Sexual Minorities Roundtable, the chief's office actively began its retaliation against me. These facts are public record.

I had to maintain near-total silence for almost three years because of the litigation with the city and the Portland Fire and Police Disability and Retirement Fund for my rightful benefits. But I will be silenced no longer.

The most recent assault on our community by the police is a direct result of the bureau's ongoing refusal to take these internal issues seriously. It is most interesting to note that the FBI was not "invited" to join the investigation until it became public knowledge.

Sadly, our community is divisive and seemingly always at the ready to lash out at rather than support each other. A recent column by Byron Beck of *Willamette Week*, and the overwhelming responses he received, is a perfect example.

It is this very divisiveness both within our community and within the ranks of the police bureau that sends a loud and clear message to managers and officers that it's OK to treat sexual minorities the way they do!

Beware. Chief Mark Kroeker is not the man he has led you to believe.

It's time to unite, stand up and say enough is enough, because our fight for equal rights is far from over. The community needs to see real action from the police bureau, not be spoon-fed empty words.

DAMON WOODCOCK
dwrider2001@hotmail.com

Truth in the details

TO THE EDITOR:

This month we memorialize a longtime friend of mine, Jim Magin, one of the most recent victims of AIDS.

I will be attending a service set up by his family, some of whom never even came to see him dying in the hospital from a very fast-moving case of pneumocystis. His parents, who live in the Portland area, finally showed up

when the doctors announced that he was brain dead and that life support would not help.

I recently read an obit in the *Oregonian* for this partner in a 21-year relationship. Missing in the obit and entirely in the consciousness of most of the family at their sibling's untimely death was that this man loved another man and lived with him, relied upon him, shared his bed and experienced many joys and a few sad moments together.

This man was one-half of Jerry and Jim: long-time companions, out in the bars, dining at Hobo's or Starky's, sitting at home watching sports or entertaining and traveling together to many places, most often to their favorite, the Oregon coast. The family never knew that a party at Jerry Young and Jim Magin's home was a reason to celebrate: We were not ashamed of anything they did; we were honored to be invited.

We celebrated them and their good life together. Jim was only 45 and in many respects was still a big, gangly, sweet kid.

My sadness at the death of my friend of more than 25 years is made more difficult by the fact that people read nothing of his death from AIDS or that remembrances should be made to Cascade AIDS Project, Our House of Portland or Esther's Pantry, which his partner had suggested. Instead, the family suggests sending money to a nice, safe (no one will know he died of AIDS!) charity.

So again people in our community are left to think AIDS is "cured" or just a chronic disease: "Again, no one died this week in Portland from AIDS or related illnesses." Jerry and his many friends are here to tell you, sadly, this is not true.

How do gay men and lesbians get the respect from the families we grew up with and our "in-laws"? When will we get the rights to visit our partners in hospitals without lengthy explanations or having to obtain a relative's OK to see our lovers and partners first? (In Portland most hospitals are better than many in less progressive parts of the country.)

When will we all learn to be tested if we have behaviors that might put us at risk for AIDS? When will the laws of our state and nation accept us as true domestic partners?

I don't have the answers but beg the younger generation to work toward changing the obsolete laws and outmoded ideas of our families and communities. Don't hide! Be true to yourselves! Keep up the fight started more than 30 years ago by the folks at Stonewall!

DICK LEVY
Portland

Conference misrepresented

TO THE EDITOR:

While I applaud the inclusion of Portland Fellowship's upcoming conference, "Homosexuality: A Compassionate Response," in the April 5 edition of *Just Out*, I am concerned about the lack of objectivity in the reporting of this event by Jim Radosta ["'Ex-Gay' Ministry Holds Conference"].

As someone who is familiar with this ministry, I can attest to the fact that nowhere in the promotion materials for this conference is the word "convert" used, nor does the fellowship advocate the usage of an offensive and derogatory term such as "queer" for those who experience same-sex attractions. In fact, I personally have heard executive director Phil Hobzial clearly state on numerous occasions that the fellowship's mission is not about "converting" homosexuals into heterosexuals. Rather, the focus is to help individual Christians who desire freedom from same-sex attractions or other sexual issues draw into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ.