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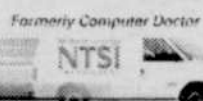
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Speak Out

Words as weapons

TO THE EDITOR:

Ever since I was a child, I have loved words—their sounds, their meaning, their power. So your Aug. 2 commentary struck a chord with me, although probably not in the way you intended ["Communication Breakdown"].

I applaud your desire for more "we-ness" but was saddened by your call to lump everyone into "LGBT." That's kind of like saying, "OK, you can tag along with our basic human rights movement, just don't make a fuss, and for God's sake would you stop calling so much attention to yourselves."

And yeah, lots of us still do have issues, and intolerance from the nonhetero "community" is not going to heal them. Have gays and lesbians become so assimilated that we do not remember being pressured to shut up and fit in?

For example: "Ugh, you mean I have to add another box to the questionnaire for 'partnered'? Why can't you just check 'married'? It's the same thing."

Your suggestion to quit "me-meing" reminds me of the rift in the women's movement of the '70s, when some white women didn't see lesbian rights or civil rights as integral to women's rights. We need to acknowledge that our own oppression does not automatically prevent us from oppressing others.

Right now we are at a very important point in time. We can decide we've "arrived" and let everyone else fend for themselves, or we can transform our experience with discrimination, oppression and intolerance to sensitize ourselves to others' suffering.

I've chosen to use my experience of sexism and homophobia to tap into a well of compassion and commitment to increasing my tolerance for not just queers but all people. It's opened my eyes to all the different ways humans try to impose their superiority and oppress each other.

I don't claim to speak for or fully understand

the oppression of trans and intersex folks or even all queer people for that matter, but I do know I can extend them basic human dignity, inclusion and visibility. Sure, it's a bit of a mouthful to say "gay, lesbian, bi, trans, queer, intersex, questioning, genderqueer, gendervariant and pansexual community," but if we can't be bothered to acknowledge each other's identities and creatively address the issue, what hope is there for "US"?

You wrote: "Words create feelings. Words touch people." Doesn't it follow that we take more care and time with them?

Consider using the word and concept of "dialogue" as opposed to your choice, "battle." They are not just words, they represent a shift in consciousness.

I encourage you to use your leadership role as publisher of this paper, to use your words carefully, even lovingly. If you do, they can become powerfully unifying.

JESSICA SCHURTMAN
Portland

Ignore ignorance

TO THE EDITOR:

Marty, I can see how this is going to go. You're going to keep writing stuff like "obesity kills," and I'm going to keep writing letters.

I doubt if I ever will change your mind. However, for every fat person whose day got a little crappier when they read that line, this is for you.

As we all know, obesity is a medical term. It means your doctor wants you to go on a diet. Probably an expensive diet. A diet that almost certainly will fail within two years—and we all know yo-yo dieting is unhealthy. For every study that says fat is bad, I can quote you one that says dieting is worse.

Why not just eat nutritious food, exercise regularly and ignore ignorant comments like "obesity kills"? That kind of prejudice and misinformation just isn't worth your valuable time. Especially when you could be reading *Fat! So?* by Marilyn Wann instead, or snowboarding, or having great sex. Or perhaps listening to Myra Grey's *Fat Woman on Fire* on KBOO.

But I bet you're doing that already, and I'm glad. 'Cause I'm tired of reading stuff like this.

FRANCIE NEVILL
Portland

notables



Anne L. Seelye (left) and Melissa G. Arnold celebrated their civil union May 21 in Vermont. Their honeymoon was in New Hampshire and Provincetown, Mass. The Portland couple, who have been together since Thanksgiving 2000, registered their domestic partnership Jan. 22 with Multnomah County. Seelye works as an electrician, and Arnold is a zookeeper.

Get serious

TO THE EDITOR:

With great disappointment I read the "About Town" section from the July 29 *Oregonian*. The small article basically states that I am not serious about my campaign for Portland City Council. Without ever being interviewed by the *Oregonian*, how did they come to this conclusion?

Because of my full-time job schedule, I was unable to attend the first forum July 11. But I did pick up the information packet given out to the other candidates and have answered the questions requested by the Portland Business Alliance. And with regret, there will be other forums I will have to miss because of my job.

By my own choice, I did not file a statement for the voters' pamphlet. Because I am running a grassroots campaign, I had to look closely at where the \$300 filing fee could be best spent—an extremely difficult decision but one that does not make me less serious about my chances to fill the City Council seat being vacated by Charlie Hales.

Except for my dog, Saddi, who wears the sign "Ric Berrong for City Council" while we take our walks through the city, I am running this campaign completely on my own. I do not have

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