



"It was an amazing time... Oregon talked about and thought about and voted around whether or not it would create a second-class citizenship for some of its people"
—Donna Red Wing

gave negative publicity to the state. It also left the sexual minorities community exhausted and many of its political activists burned out. Some of them still find it difficult to discuss Measure 9 even 10 years later.

But it also brought people together as never before. Folks came out of the closet in record numbers, and groups such as the Rural Organizing Project were born because of Measure 9.

"I think in so many ways, the battle has been won," Hinkle comments. "There just isn't the same fear factor. Yes, there are still some people who need to be pulled screaming and yelling into the 21st century, but we're going to get there. So, the glass isn't just half full; the glass is 95 percent full as far as I am concerned. And I think '92 was a watershed year from that point of view. It made people confront a reality that they had tried to ignore. That's the real contribution of Measure 9, that Oregonians woke up to the fact that that nice girl or boy next door was gay and so what?"

For Baldwin, the impact of Measure 9 was that it forced people out of their comfort zone. And it forced gay men and lesbians to come out and claim their identity. "I think that as a community, when we have seen serious threats, we have come together and done what's necessary."

Norman adds: "Looking back, I think we had to ask so much of people because so much was at stake, and I think we did break the back of the OCA. And I will say absolutely, I'm certain that we forever changed the ways in which lesbian and gay men, bisexuals and transgender folk relate to heterosexual folks who live a 'normal' lifestyle. The differences were forever made smaller or shrunk. And I hope that we never lose the bonding that took place. I hope we keep revisiting and building on that so that we don't forget how much we have at stake if we split apart."

Pruett notes that religious right wing groups

don't mount anti-gay campaigns to create law, because they almost always know the initiatives can't be legally enforced. Instead, they do it to build their movement.

"While we weren't choosing this as a battleground, we could actually capitalize on it and use it to build our movement," Pruetts says. "And so coming out of '92, I saw the '94 [the next OCA initiative, Measure 13] as a chance to test that theory."

From this came Save Our Communities, which grew into the No on 13 Campaign, which later developed into Basic Rights Oregon.

"The gay and lesbian community fought with everything it had, and it began to turn on

itself," Red Wing says. "The tension between campaign and community grew, and instead of balancing the two components, we turned on each other. We did win the campaign. And we almost destroyed ourselves in the process. Many lessons were learned, I believe."

While the social and political climates have changed, Oregon still does not have legal protection for sexual minorities. "As long as it's under the law that it's still OK to tell me no and tell somebody else yes based on sexual orientation," Norman states, "I won't feel free." □

PAT YOUNG is a Portland free-lance writer and gay and lesbian historian.



A welcome moment of levity for community activist Kathleen Saadat (right)

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