

just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

FOUNDED 1983 • JAY BROWN AND RENÉE LACHANCE
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COMMENTARY

Year in, year out

2003 presents challenges for our divided world

One year ends, another begins. No respite from worry this year. 2003 starts with all the problems and woes that we simply couldn't wish away with the close of 2002. Oh, were it so easy.

On the global scene tensions increase daily. We're bombing Iraq—no, wait, let's bomb North Korea instead (too?). Now South Korea is annoyed with us and, frankly, I'm concerned about Canada. Has anyone checked in with them recently? I read once that something like 80 percent of all Canadians live within 50 miles of the U.S. border. This means millions of Canadians are subjected daily to U.S. television shows. Now these are the people who have serious reason to be pissed at us.

On our national front we're faced with Homeland Security, a moral crisis in economic leadership, an ever-present recession and looming war protests that will cause turmoil and division in our land. Happy new year! I heard that the little baby new year 2003 had to be a cesarean delivery—the kid refused to come out.

In Oregon we're still dealing with high unemployment, untested new leadership, a failing education system, budget crises galore and Wal-Mart and its ilk perpetrating the ruinous cycle of small-business destruction accompanied by a new bottom-of-the-food-chain economic class: the minimum-wage worker. The solutions to our economic problems are so much more complex than simply raising taxes or increasing wages. You don't treat cancer with aspirin, and you don't stem economic hemorrhaging with Band-Aids like increases in the minimum wage. Fix the education system, motivate and train people. Make integrity and honor an integral part of the workforce value system. You know, like in the good old days.

OK, enough gloom and doom. In spite of all the problems there's good stuff going on in this old sad world of ours. And a lot of it is happening right here in our community. While we can't totally stick our heads in the proverbial sand and ignore the cries of a pained and injured world, we still must take our comforts and find, build and share our strengths where and when we can.

2002 was brought to a delightful close for the hundreds of women, and handful of men, who joined together to celebrate at the Lesbian Community Project's "Give Peace a Dance" New Year's Eve party. This was a wondrous gathering of beautiful and powerful women.

I have nary a complaint about the evening—well, other than sore feet—but still did not fail to notice that the evening was divided by age. The younger women of our community were simply someplace else. And while I hope their celebrations and festivities were joyous also, it's too bad that all of us from our 20s to our 70s and maybe even 80s couldn't have danced and laughed and started the new year together.

And to all the "girls" who were elsewhere, I have to tell you, there

are some damn fine-looking grandmas in this town who can do some hot shakin' and dirty dancin'. You really shoulda been there. Mmm-hmm.

My memories of 2002 are vast and run the gamut of all emotions. It was a good year. It was a bad year. Best of the good? I think that I pick the strong leadership emergence of two of our community's newcomers. Roey Thorpe of Basic Rights Oregon and Tony Stroh of the Portland Gay Men's Chorus came to town, and we haven't been the same since.

What a dynamic duo. Tony with his networking, his energy and his new ideas helped bring a sense of unity to our loosely woven coalition of groups and organizations. Roey brought to Oregon more experience, skill and political savvy than I ever can hope to have. Now I suspect she and I still are going to butt heads on methodology now and then, but by and large our goals for the community will be the same. We're a tad short on strong leadership in this community, but the situation got a lot better when Roey arrived.

With the ending of 2002 came the quiet departure of the Portland Fire. Once again, the Rose City is without a professional women's basketball team. I don't feel the loss as greatly as I did with the Portland Power (I know, let it go) because basketball in the summer was simply wrong. The games were always conflicting with something—i.e., good weather—and plainly it wasn't working. Just Out, however, was starting to develop a relationship with Fire staff, and I think we could have done some good things together this year.

But I also never could get past the unpleasant feeling that came with trying to support a team that was part of the Portland Trail Blazers. They're thugs and scofflaws, and cheering for red and black was not a favorite activity of mine. So, good luck to Fire staff and players. You gave it your best, and that is appreciated.

Now we start a new year. 2003. Guess that Y2K thing won't be happening. What did people do with all that canned food, anyway? And really, do we actually need the Internet? Seriously now, is your life better because of it?

I did a little photographic research on the old World Wide Web for our feature in this issue, and I don't care now if I ever go back. I can't believe that Bareback.com is a stellar moment in man's progression and evolution.

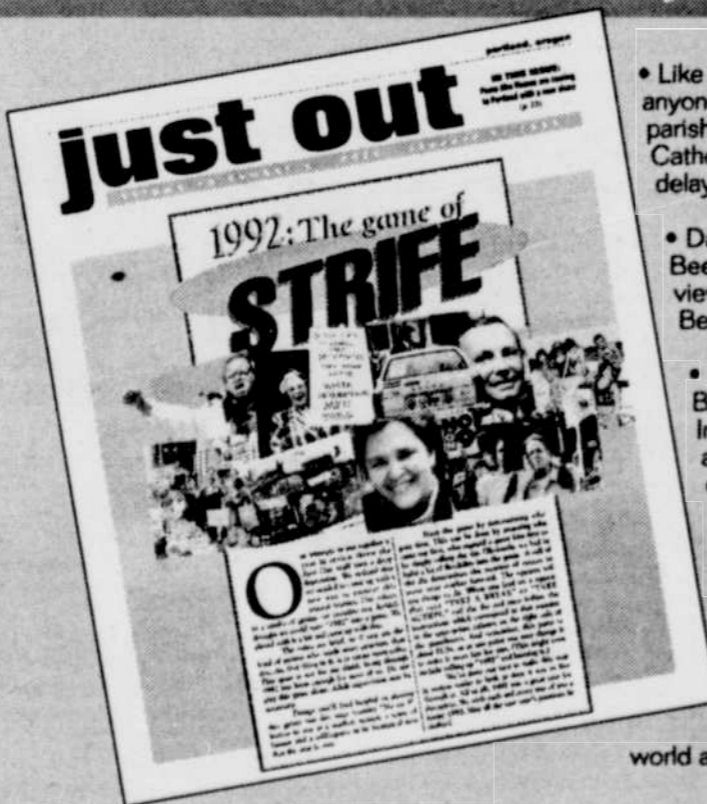
That said, our feature in this issue might not sit well with all of you. I briefly considered a cover flag stating, "This issue contains materials not suitable for children and lesbians over 50." The message, however, needs to be delivered and needs to be heard. And sometimes to be heard you have to speak in a voice that will cause the audience to listen. This is one of those times.

Happy new year to each and all. ☐

REFLECTIONS

10 years ago in just out...

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• Like victims and parents who cannot believe that anyone as trusted, respected and even loved as their parish priest could abuse a young person, the Roman Catholic Church itself is struggling with denial and delay in facing the problem of sexual abuse.

• Dallas Coors, the 75-year-old heir to the Coors Beer fortune, came out as a gay man in an interview on the Boston cable television show *Between Takes*.

• Gay men and lesbians will be out in force for Bill Clinton's inauguration. The 52nd Presidential Inaugural Committee announced that the Gay and Lesbian Bands of America would be part of the parade festivities. Bill and Hillary Clinton also are expected at an inaugural eve reception honoring David Mixner, a gay activist and adviser to the president-elect.

• The gay and lesbian community is responding swiftly to the passage in Colorado of anti-gay Amendment 2. Boycott Colorado Inc. has been founded as "a grassroots organization of volunteers working to educate the world about the atrocity called Amendment 2."

• Susan Soen can expect to spend a lot of time in court in the next few months. She faces three counts of filing a false police report in a series of hate crimes staged by her then-roommate Azalea Cooley. Soen has retaliated by filing charges of defamation, intentional infliction of emotional distress and obstruction of justice against the Bias Crimes Unit of the Portland Police Bureau.

• The Oregon Minority AIDS Coalition is about to get a new location and to start a peer education program under the direction of its new leader, Emmally Williams-Mitchell. The daughter of state Rep. Margaret Carter, she is determined to get the word out to African American families about AIDS.

• The Oregon National Organization for Women invites you to Picket Packwood! at the senator's Portland office Jan. 4. Show that you don't want Bob Packwood, who is scheduled to be sworn in Jan. 5, to represent you.

• The Portland Community Bowling Association's 15th season opens Jan. 10 with Mayor Vera Katz to roll out the first ball.

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