

just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

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Letters to the editor should be limited to 500 words. Announcements regarding life transitions (births, deaths, unions, etc.) should be limited to 200 words; photos are welcome. **Deadline for submissions** to the editorial department and for the **Calendar** is the Thursday 15 days before the next publication date. Views expressed in letters to the editor, columns and features are not necessarily those of the publisher.

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COMMENTARY

Give a little bit

Oregon's weak economy necessitates a strong response

Oregonians woke up Jan. 29 to discover that compassion for others was not to be served with the morning cup of coffee. The defeat of Ballot Measure 28 does not bode well for our state as a whole, and the painful impact will be felt within pockets and segments of the sexual minorities community as well.

Already KGW-TV and The Portland Tribune have profiled gay AIDS patients who have lost funding for their costly yet life-saving medications. The potential for loss of life is real.

Service providers such as Cascade AIDS Project, Our House of Portland and many others will see decreased funding combined with increased demand for services. Government and private funding for youth programs were stretched and threatened even prior to the defeat of the tax increase.

What happens to those dependent upon services now? Where will the money come from, and how will we as individuals and a community rise to help our own?

The truth is that many of us can, with too little ease, turn our backs on those most likely in peril. After all, it's not our fault that "they" have AIDS; "they" should have been more careful. We wouldn't have a problem with all those street kids if they'd all just shape up and behave. I have a job, I pay my bills—why should I have to worry about them? They aren't like me. I work for my money—I deserve a vacation, a hot tub, another new car. I haven't fucked up my life—it's not my problem to take care of. Why can't they get their act together?

Now you—yes, you—tell me you've never thought these things. Tell me the truth. I can honestly tell you I've thought them.

You don't have to be homeless or living with HIV/AIDS to feel the weakness in our economy. For example, turn to Page 51 of this issue. Never have we seen such an amount of people looking to lower their housing costs by sharing living spaces with others. Coincidence? I don't think so.

People are being laid off. Jobs are being lost. Dollars for discretionary spending are vanishing. Small-business owners are struggling to stay afloat. Teachers are losing pay and benefits. Health care costs are soaring. The needs outpace the abilities to give. People are becoming nervous and tightening purse strings at the same time that the needs of others becomes the greatest. Fear is among us.

So how do we take care of others while still taking care of ourselves?

How do we cope with life's personal challenges without having to choose or set aside the characteristics of selflessness, compassion and charity that make us human?

I don't have all the answers but can make some suggestions. First, yes, take care of yourself first or else you'll be of no value to anyone else. Determine your strengths and what you have to offer. If you absolutely have no extra money to donate, then offer your time. The need for volunteers within our community's service organizations is great.

If you say you have neither time nor money, then I suggest what you're really saying is you simply don't care. If that's the case, at least be honest about it. Saying you have no money for others as you head out for your golf game lacks a certain quality of, hmm, honest introspection?

For many of us we have it good—perhaps too good. We are professional couples, unencumbered with the financial responsibilities of children and families.

In our comfort we fail to honor or respect those who came earlier and did the work that affords the lifestyles of today, and at the same time we turn our backs on the less fortunate among us. As spring comes to the Northwest I suggest we take on the communal project of weeding out the hedonism that now grows like a toxin among us.

Participate, attend, join in the myriad benefits that well-intentioned people and organizations within our community sponsor. Get value for your money at the same time that you're giving it. Build community. Attend a dance or a silent auction; go to a concert that's donating the evening's take to a charitable cause.

Be specific about where you donate used items and clothing. Give back. You are where you are today because, at some other time, some other person gave of their time, money or efforts. Patronize local and community business owners that you know give back via their sponsorships and donations. We can recycle our

money among ourselves and vastly increase the value it brings.

If you only have \$5 to spare this month, make it the best \$5 donation ever—and bring good feelings to yourself at the same time. It's OK to feel good about helping others—it's not self-righteousness, it's perpetuating the circle of humanity and goodness. If it feels good, you'll do it again.

If we all join in together—and many give a little rather than count on a few to give a lot—well, it's a cliché, but really, we will all be better for it. ☐

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REFLECTIONS

10 years ago in just out...

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• Singer Melissa Etheridge came out of the closet and singer Janis Ian acknowledged she's a lesbian during gay inaugural festivities last month in Washington, D.C.

• President Clinton has named an out lesbian as secretary of fair housing and equal opportunity. If confirmed, San Francisco Supervisor Roberta Achtenberg will be the administration's highest-ranking openly gay or lesbian appointee.

• San Francisco reached a grim milestone on the afternoon of Jan. 7, 1993, when it recorded its 10,000th AIDS-related death.

• The Right to Privacy PAC and Right to Privacy Inc. voted in new officers in late January. Leila Wrathall and Fred R. Neal will serve one-year terms as co-chairs of both groups. This is the first time Right to Privacy has elected two co-chairs. Their goal is to have one man and one woman as chairs each year, according to Neal.

• The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has hired local activist Scot Nakagawa as director of its new Fight the Right project.

• Kathleen Saadat, Katherine English and Dorina Red Wing have been chosen to speak for Oregon in Washington, D.C. The Oregon March on Washington Organizing Committee met Feb. 2 to choose the people who will represent the state April 22 to 26 at the national March on Washington.

• The Lesbian Community Project presents the Red Wing Roast benefit. Join Kathleen Saadat, Linda Shirley, the Rev. Gary Wilson and others for a dinner and roast in honor of The Advocate magazine's Woman of the Year.

• A Lesbians with Depression support group now is forming for women unable to work because of depressive disorders.

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