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Speak Out

Continued from Page 5

www.transtherapist.com. From a philosophical standpoint, I agree with most of what Sarah/Sam Morrigan said in his letter to the editor ["Driven Up the Wall," Dec. 20].

From a practical standpoint, however, I don't agree with all of what Morrigan said. Yes, choosing a pronoun is a compromise of identity for some people, though not for everyone. However, I gauge the success or failure of a program on its outcome and the response of the people it's supposed to serve, not on my own long-range dream of changing our cultural paradigm of gender.

As with most programs at Outside In, direct feedback from the participants drives the agenda, not the philosophical views of the staff or outside consultants. The overwhelming response from the people the ID Project serves is one of ecstasy. Finally, someone is listening to them, taking them seriously and allowing them to actualize a gender identity that feels more comfortable than the one assigned to them at birth.

While they might choose a more gender-neutral pronoun if the option were available, at least through the ID Project they can choose a pronoun for themselves rather than having one assigned. These clients are not being steered toward the program but are accessing it because it's what they want.

If this were a perfect society, it would be great if we had more than two options for pronouns. Two words can't begin to describe the range of gender identity/expression that are part of the human condition. In that sense, yes, the ID Project is a compromise.

But change happens on many levels, some more quickly than others. Our project, allowing people to make these changes without financial cost to themselves, is one level of change. Not having any gender designation on a driver license or ID card is a distant future level of change.

Through my own transition and life experience, I have come to have much more patience with social change than I used to have. Compassion for others' processes is the key to this patience, as I realize we have millennia of gender binary socialization to overcome.

I don't expect to change society or the world in my lifetime—I would be one burned-out individual in short order if that were my goal. I do what I can with the opportunities presented to me, and I am more pleased with the opportunity to participate in the ID Project than with just about any other that has come my way.

REID VANDERBURGH, MA
Portland

One small step

TO THE EDITOR:
This is in response to the question about the first same-sex couple featured on the "Celebrations" page in *The Oregonian* ["Just Asking," Jan. 3].

So your announcement was printed under "Commitments." Think back a couple of years ago. You would not have had even the opportunity of an option. You are the first to do something that has not been done before.

All great changes start with one step. You have started something great. Be proud of what you did. But please remember, to change the thinking of an entire country or world takes years. It doesn't happen overnight.

If all gay couples place an ad in *The Oregonian*, that alone would start to change the minds of the next generation. And yes, I gladly would post my announcement to let everybody know of my "marriage" and to send a message to the

next generation of young gay people that anything is possible.

DANIEL COX
Portland

Bareback words

TO THE EDITOR:
I wanted to commend *Just Out* for writing, and running, the "Risky Business" article in the Jan. 3 issue. The article is an outstanding example of excellent journalism: eye-catching, "mind-catching," both interesting to read and accurate.

I know writing such a piece can be "risky business," and I appreciate you taking that risk. The article contains important information for our community. Also, I appreciate you highlighting the strong advocacy work that Cascade AIDS Project does.

Again, thanks for writing such a balanced, nonjudgmental piece. It is helpful and supportive of efforts to reduce HIV and STD rates in our community.

MARGARET LENTELL, RN, FNP
Multnomah County Health Department
Sexually Transmitted Disease Program Manager

Desperately seeking...

TO THE EDITOR:
A newly developed homeopathic remedy that apparently has improved the health status of people with HIV and AIDS in Africa will be provided free of charge to 30 Portland participants in a study of this remedy.

People at any stage of infection who do not drink coffee or use street drugs are eligible to participate, whether or not they take standard medications. Anyone interested in more information or wishing to participate should call me at 503-253-6334.

DOUGLAS BROWN, FNP, CCH
Portland

Weight a minute!

TO THE EDITOR:
As a health care provider, I followed with interest, and some dismay, the fervor your publisher created a few months ago with her remarks about her desire to become thinner and, therefore, healthier. It amazed me that any thinking adult could deny the obvious health risks accompanying obesity.

In the interest of educating the GLBT public, I submit a synopsis of a research article in the Jan. 8 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*: "Excess weight has not received the same attention from clinicians and policymakers as have other threats to health such as tobacco use, hypertension or hypercholesterolemia," wrote Drs. JoAnn E. Manson and Shari S. Bassuk of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. "It is not surprising that obesity rates continue to climb."

The findings show that "obesity has a profound effect on life span," said study author Dr. David B. Allison and his colleagues at University of Alabama in Birmingham. According to the report, obesity is particularly dangerous for younger adults. Severely obese white men between 20 and 30 years old live about 13 fewer years than others in the general population. Severely obese white women can expect to live eight fewer years than their nonobese counterparts.

Obesity also has a profound effect on the life span of younger African Americans. Obese black men between 20 and 30 lose about 20 years, and obese black women lose about five years of life.