



Three's Company

Or four or more...polyamory in Portland is practically Trendy. BUT does it work?

by Lisa Bradshaw

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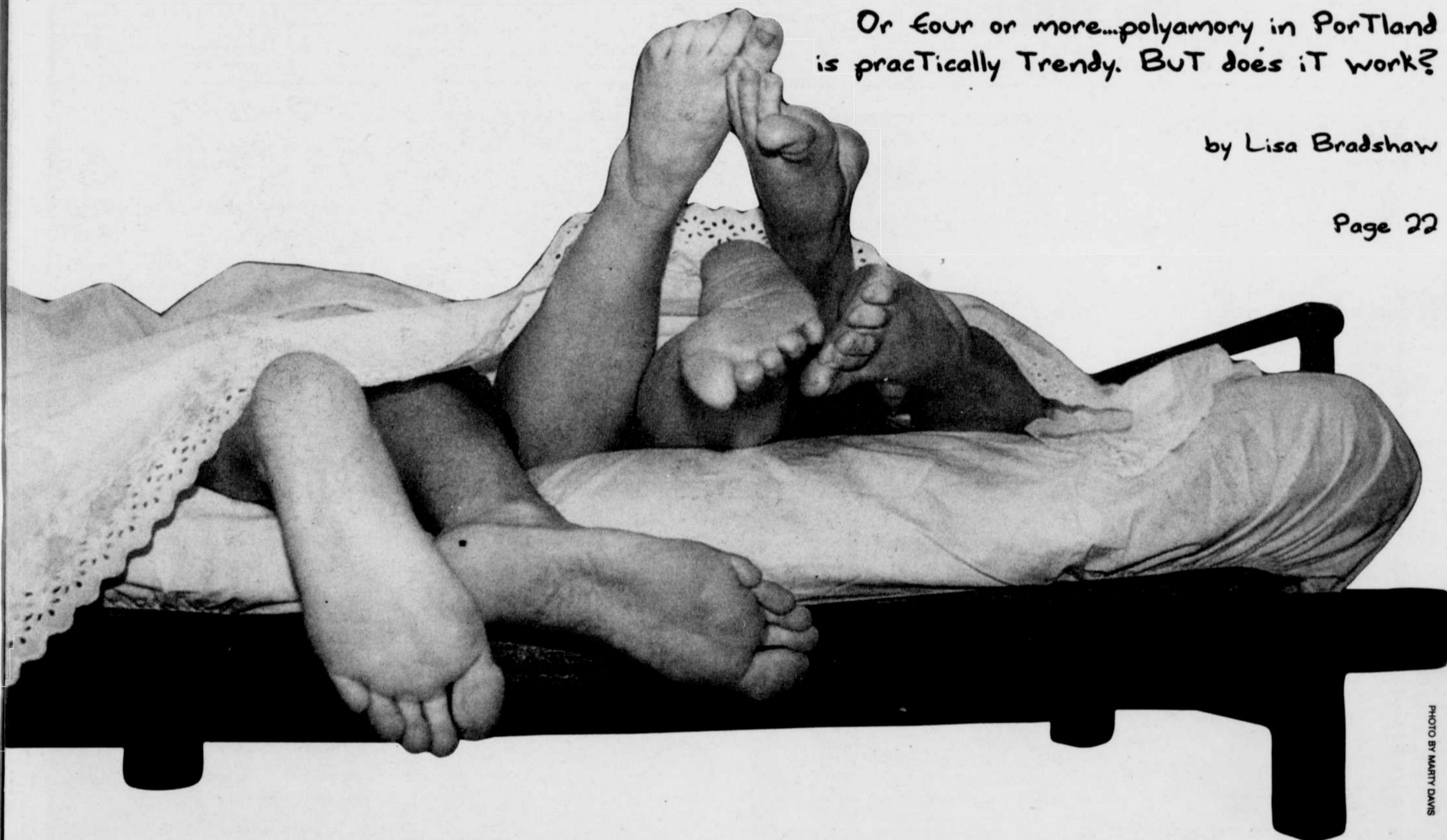


PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

Voices of color

Four views from the invisible community

BY ANTHONY DAVIS

As the nation celebrates Black History Month, *Just Out* has asked four African American queer Portlanders to share feelings, views and ideas about issues that face their often ignored and marginalized community.

Four distinct voices—gay youth therapist John Garlington; artist Bobby Foucher; artist, activist and nanny Nicole Amaris; and activist Stephan Herrera—discussed how they identify themselves in a predominately white culture, their observations of the community at large, some of the issues facing sexual minority people of color and solutions. Here are excerpts from the interviews:

JOHN GARLINGTON

Anthony Davis: How do you identify yourself?

John Garlington: I identify as a gay black male who likes other men, period. A person who loves peo-

ple and sexually enjoys the company of another man.

However, I think being an African American male in Portland and being only 3 percent of the population has always had some problems, one of which is that in a community like this it's hard to form your own identity as a black person, let alone as a gay black male.

One of the issues is that for us to be open and out, we're automatically disenfranchised from our own community. Consequently, when most African Americans come out in Portland they constantly direct a lot of their energies towards white males. I'm not saying that's either right or wrong; I'm saying that gay white males have more of a community to connect to than we do.

AD: Being raised in Portland, how did you solidify your identity?

JG: From my own personal experience of coming out at 16, I needed to see other black men who were

professionals to identify with because at that point I needed options and differences. I work with gay black youth, and I see what can happen when they get a mentor and they are able to see examples besides growing up to be the next drag queen. Not that that's right or wrong, but it tends to be a lot of the representation that is considered their mentors, like the ones that existed in the past.

AD: What are some of the things that need to be done to help strengthen our community?

JG: The old saying "you're only as strong as the weakest link" rings true. If the minority community in the gay community is the most vulnerable, then I think it is the responsibility for all of us to look at it and devise ways to strengthen it. That is where the needs are.

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