

just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

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COMMENTARY

Peace is just a word

A pre-emptive confession: I am about to commit a cardinal sin of journalism

My name is Jim Radosta, and I am a pacifist. I realize this isn't the most profound statement for a liberal Portlander to make, but for a journalism graduate who prides himself on the quest for impartiality and truth, it's tantamount to a surgeon general discussing masturbation. It could get you fired!

Fortunately, I work for a queer newspaper. And, as I'm just now beginning to comprehend—thanks to artists like Todd Haynes and experiences like *Creating Change 2002*—"queer" does not necessarily have to refer to genital contact. It can refer to any alternative perspective on mainstream culture. The late great Harry Hay believed it indicated a higher state of being; after all, we queers have the supernatural ability to love anyone, regardless of gender.

Well, I hope I'm not going out on a limb here, but I'd say this absolves me of the need for silence in certain circumstances. Besides, queer newspapers already take the "biased" position that gay, lesbian, bi and trans people deserve to be treated equally. In Texas, that type of presumption will land you in jail.

Within the confines of these pages, alas, I'm safe. So I have no shame in adding another handicap to my score: Despite my role as News Editor of *Just Out*, I must come forth about my disgust for the dangerous path our president is taking us down.

Honestly, until the bombs started dropping March 19, I was patient with my fellow Americans. I could empathize, however faintly, with the post-traumatic stress disorder from which we were suffering. I could see the anti-Bush learning curve slowly turning in our direction.

But I've lost my patience. I no longer expect a slow learning curve from U.S. citizens. I expect a steep—no, make that perpendicular—axis turn. An axis of upheaval, if you will.

So where is it? If this is the wake-up call the country needed, does anybody have their ringers turned on? Or are we screening our calls, afraid to take a risky stance for fear of alienating our colleagues, friends and loved ones?

When I see brave celebrities like Susan Sarandon, Sean Penn, Martin Sheen and the Dixie Chicks (of all people!) get shouted down for speaking the truth—that we oughta be ashamed of ourselves for letting the White House get this far—I realize it's worth the risk to come out against the war. When I see once-decent Democrats too chicken to be the voice of opposition—a job they were hired to do, if I'm not mistaken—I realize it's worth the risk. When I see the Portland City Council nix an anti-war resolution but unanimously rubber-stamp an admirable but ultimately meaningless "we support our troops" letter, I realize it's worth the risk.

I am grateful for the existence of organizations like Out Against the War and Pride at Work Oregon for giving queers an avenue to channel their dissent. I still believe it's wrong to *presume* that all queers

oppose the war, but I'm finally beginning to understand how easy it is to make that leap of faith.

The interconnectedness of all oppression is so blatantly represented in the Bush administration: The sexism of stripping women of control of their uteri (while luring oblivious soccer moms by the millions). The racism of eliminating ethnic consideration in college admissions (while fooling the masses by publicly scolding the racist Senate majority leader). The homophobia of doling out taxpayer dollars to discriminatory churches for their hypocritically "humanitarian" causes (while lying to the world about an AIDS spending hike that never will come to fruition).

So you met with a dozen fags on the campaign trail, and your weep's daughter is a dyke? Bra-vo! So your wife is pro-choice but keeps her mouth shut? Bra-vo! So you're pals with Colin, Condoleezza and Vincente? Bra-vo! Welcome to the 20th century, mr. president. The rest of us have advanced to the 21st.

Or maybe we haven't. Conformist patriots mock Iraq for its "state-controlled Al-Jazeera media," claiming, "They teach their children to hate us!" Excuse me, but are you aware of the FCC's existence? Do you realize many U.S. teachers would lose their jobs if they dared show compassion for Iraqis in the classroom? Now you tell me which nation is the dictatorship.

And guess what? I'm not even done yet! The injustice of handing environmental regulation over to polluters. The absurdity of fueling a futile war on drugs while turning a blind eye to the failing public school system (too intellectual), the inevitable Social Security crisis (too eventual) and the straight HIV epidemic (too...homosexual).

And, last but not least, the sheer obsolescence of corporate-controlled media—a back-scratching machine that serves purely to misinform, a village that needs to be destroyed in order to be saved. Thankfully, I do not live in this village. I live one town over the rainbow—in La-La-Lavender Land.

Here, journalists can express their passion for peace without having to fall over themselves in the impossible pursuit of "objectivity" on this issue. You want some objectivity? Here goes: No link between 9/11 and Iraq; a war on terrorism launched by a terrorist nation; and a massive military industrial complex, horny for missile strikes at all costs.

The day after cops clashed with peaceful protesters downtown, I walked home from work during a downpour, glaring at the SUVs splashing past me, staring at the overwhelming volume of oil running down the gutters along with the rain. I immediately envisioned the blood running down the streets of Baghdad.

Clearly, there is only one stance I can take in good conscience. ☐

JIM RADOSTA is the News Editor at Just Out.

Here, journalists can express their passion for peace without having to fall over themselves in the impossible pursuit of "objectivity" on this issue

REFLECTIONS

5 years ago in Just Out...



• In Other Words feminist bookstore has rid itself of a major obstacle to accessibility for physically disabled patrons. In early March a group of volunteers embarked upon a full dismantling of a restrictive platform.

• Researchers are taking a closer look at Oregon's S/M community and documenting the politics of identity.

• The city of Vancouver will extend employee benefits to domestic partners starting May 1.

• Longtime local politico and Portland City Commissioner Gretchen Miller Kafoury has been named the recipient of this year's Bill and Ann Shepherd's Award. She will receive the honor during the second annual Shepherd's Award Dinner, slated for May 1.

• The American Foundation for AIDS Research has begun recruitment for the first clinical trial of combination therapy for hepatitis C among those who are also HIV-positive. The 18-month study will involve 200 patients at 20 sites around the nation, including Portland.

• Galloway and Luckett perform one last time in Portland before they set out on their No Frills nationwide tour.

• Join the Lesbian Community Project, Suzanne Pharr, Holly Pruett, Angela Wilson, Darlene Lambos and Jack from KBOO to rag on Lon Mabon.

• Join the Portland Gay Men's Chorus and the Gay Men's Chorus of San Diego for *Swelllegant Elegance*, their tribute to Cole Porter.

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