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**Speak Out**

**Tarnished badge**

TO THE EDITOR:

The reported facts released from the Portland Police Bureau surrounding the Kendra James shooting indicate none of the officers involved knew she had an outstanding warrant until after the incident. Therefore, prior to that information becoming known, she had every legal right to leave the scene.

It is illegal to shoot someone merely trying to escape, regardless of whether they have a warrant. As a retired officer, I was trained not to reach or lean inside any vehicle. Officer Scott McCollister didn't follow his training, putting himself into harm's way.

Finally, the officers knew who James was. Bureau policy forbids officers from engaging in vehicular pursuits when the suspect is known. The officers simply could have stepped back and let James drive away, arresting her later.

This blatant disregard for human life is a disgrace to the badge.

DAMON WOODCOCK  
Portland

**Look at all the animals behind the fence**

TO THE EDITOR:

Once again, Portland Pride is coming upon us. Once again, the ugly specter of the fenced compound is with it.

Some say it is for our own protection, some may argue that it lowers the cost for the event insurance, and some may say it offers us security for the disruptive element of our society. Well, I say it puts the event, and us for that matter, right where the people who do not want us around want us: in a locked compound, unable to influence people and show that we, like them, live "normal" lives!

I implore Pride Northwest to sit back and really think about the signal you are sending to the greater population at large. Just my two cents.

DEANNA BRYANT  
Portland

**Dean's list**

TO THE EDITOR:

I've got a great idea for a new board game. It's called "Not a Clue." Six cartoonish characters wander around the White House trying to figure out who killed the economy.

Who did it? George W. Bush in the Oval Office with his tax cut for the rich.

And who figured it out? Presidential candidate Howard Dean, who knows it's not a game at all.

The gay community also knows this isn't a game. It's time we stand united and support Howard Dean in 2004. He stood with us and signed a landmark state law allowing civil unions, despite intense pressure.

Let's return the favor. Visit [www.deanforamerica.com](http://www.deanforamerica.com) and see what everyone is talking about!

JIM HILLER  
Portland

**Safety net disintegrates for most vulnerable**

TO THE EDITOR:

True stories from your neighborhood: Ms. D was being treated for severe depression. She tried to kill herself with a knife and by driving her car into oncoming traffic. The only thing keeping her in control has been

a combination of medication and counseling. Multnomah County recently had to cut her treatments, and she is out on her own again—a threat to herself and those around her.

Mr. M is a senior and lives in Northeast Portland. He suffers from heart problems, AIDS and mental health issues. His medications total \$1,680 a month, and without them he will die. Because of recent budget cuts, his drugs have now been terminated.

These and thousands of stories like them are brought to you courtesy of our "leaders" in Salem. They don't seem to be able or willing to come up with a solution. Here in our community, fortunately, we have the chance to do what they cannot.

This is a full-blown crisis. Our local safety net is on the verge of collapse for those most in need.

Seniors, the disabled and other medically needy individuals are losing critical prescription drug and housing assistance. We no longer can provide the help needed to prevent mentally ill people from becoming a danger to themselves and others. And our schools and public safety are facing devastating cuts. If we want to keep our community safe and healthy, we must do the right thing and pass Measure 26-48.

The results of state budget cuts and the failure of Measure 28 have been dramatic:

- About 20,000 mentally ill people in Multnomah County have lost coverage for prescription drugs and treatment, leading to a marked increase in violent incidents.
- Among seniors, the disabled and the medically needy, 6,651 people have lost the services they depend on—3,500 will not be able to continue living at home.
- Portland schools stand to lose one out of every five teachers.

And we have not yet seen the full impact of the cuts. Many seniors only now are running out of medication. Large numbers of the mentally ill are ending up in jails and hospitals, costing taxpayers even more money. Hundreds of people are facing the threat of homelessness.

Measure 26-48 will provide our community with three years of stability, restoring the basics for our services and schools. It will:

- Restore prescription drug relief and treatment for the medically needy.
- Ensure emergency care for the mentally ill, keeping them from hurting themselves and others, and maintain counselors in schools to help kids succeed.
- Prevent teacher layoffs and skyrocketing class sizes.

We are better than this. By helping the disabled, the mentally ill, schools and seniors, Measure 26-48 will restore care to those who need it most. I can assure you that they will be lost without it. And in a greater sense, so will we all. I urge you to vote yes May 20.

NOAH SIEGEL  
Portland

**Cutting class**

TO THE EDITOR:

The April 18 response letters by Sam MacKenzie ["Capitalist Punishment"] and Terrie McNutt ["Guilt Trip"] are well written. What might be misconstrued is that people like myself just dismiss those with less money.

While the terms "conservative" and "liberal" are banded around like a couple of lipped pancakes, within each element there are variations. On the extreme right there are the jackboot radio hosts, and on the extreme left there are the dyed-in-the-wool communists. What is needed is long-term thinking, common sense and discipline.

What makes America different from the

Third World is that we have a middle class. For a host of reasons, the so-called "war on poverty" started in 1964 by President Lyndon Johnson has been a bust. The top 5 percent control or own between 65 percent and 85 percent of the wealth.

More important than just more money, be it government or private, is the judicious use of that money by a government agency or by a family or by an individual. What might look like class hatred by the wealthy is really anger at how tax money is misspent.

Oregon is a textbook example of how *not* to spend tax money. Before the current recession, the state had more people going to food banks per capita than any other in the country; that percentage has now tripled.

It is one thing to socially laugh at, sneer at and make fun of the lower classes, but it is quite different to financially slit their collective throats. Personally, I don't "get down," I don't "hang out," and I suspect that bowling alleys are excellent breeding grounds for all sorts of bacteria and viruses, long before SARS.

On the other hand, in far too many cases, greed has replaced compassion, short term has replaced long term, and educational opportunities have become as scarce as a thin lesbian. (Yeah, that is a snide remark, so bite me.)

Like it or not, we are all in the same boat together. It behooves the ruling class to have some compassion, for the reality is that a lot of their wealth was built on the backs of the working class and the middle class. It is in everyone's interest for politicians of both parties (and no, the Green Party does not count, literally) to take the long-term approach for the good of all society.

Finally, both the lower and upper classes have to learn that the silent majority is just that—the majority—and that for about the past 15 years the middle class has been financially squeezed as hard as a breast during a mammogram. Taking care of the middle class is not charity, it is not benevolence, it is prudent.

For the record, I send checks to a highly respected nonstraight organization whenever it asks for a donation. I also donate through my church.

I probably know more about this society, especially from the Industrial Revolution in 1840 to the present, than 98 percent of the readers of *Just Out*.

JOHN BOYNTON  
Vancouver, Wash.

**What is it good for?**

TO THE EDITOR:

First, I'd like to say how much I appreciate the other side of reporting and how truly American, in the historic sense, you are ["War and Peace," April 18]. The pointless cost of wars since World War II makes your contribution even more meaningful.

I was in the military during the pointless Korean War, I marched against the pointless Vietnam War, and I have been against every little war since. We have become a center of self-righteousness, with more and more right-wing stupidity.

Now for my other comment: Leading the crusade to "cure" homosexuality is like curing left-handedness ["Leading a Crusade," April 18]. It's an oxymoron in the true sense of the word.

What needs curing is the brain-deadness of "my country, right or wrong." Most people disregard the rest of the statement: "When right to be kept right. When wrong to be put right." (In this case, right means correct.)

SHERMAN WILLIAMS  
Portland