

# just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

FOUNDED 1983 • JAY BROWN AND RENÉE LACHANCE  
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## NEWS

**NORTHWEST** • A new grassroots effort explores the feasibility of a queer community center in Portland; Portland teen wins award for volunteerism; journey toward personal acceptance helps gay pastor and his family; All Women's Health Services invites patients to participate in their own wellness

pp 8-21

**NATIONAL** • NGLTF's new executive director feels the heat from both sides of the political spectrum; AIDS Watch 2003 aims to send a message to a reluctant Congress; House introduces Federal Marriage Amendment

pp 23-29

**WORLD** • Scottish MP comes out; gay blogger in Iraq returns to cyberspace

pp 30-31

## ARTS AND CULTURE

**CULTURE** • Dyke Art Retreat Encampment mixes art and lesbians in the deep, dark woods

p 39

**ART** • Maryhill Museum celebrates the work of turn-of-the-last-century artist Loie Fuller; Kirk P. Linder: "Lick my art"

pp 42-43

**MUSIC** • New diva icon releases; Tracy Chapman, Buzzcocks, Le Tigre all in Portland all in June

pp 44-47

**BOOKS** • David Oates goes wild; new reviews

pp 52-53

**DIVERSIONS** • David Schmader and *Showgirls* at Clinton; Gus Van Sant pulls at Cannes; negroes and faggots for rent online

p 41

**WHAT'S POPPIN'?** • *Finding Nemo* and *Together* top picks

p 48

## COLUMNS

**MS. BEHAVIOR** • Do I have to go out ever, ever again? Also, to tweeze or not to tweeze.

p 37

**OUT WITH IT!** • Portland Pride! Brought to you by [insert corporate sponsor].

p 41

**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARC** • The Dishonorable Rick Santorum

p 51

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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

BY MARTY DAVIS

# Community, not conformity

As we come together to celebrate Gay Pride, diversity of thought and speech must also be honored

Welcome to June, nationally acknowledged month of Gay Pride. In Portland, Pride Northwest has scheduled festivities for the weekend of June 14 and 15. In this issue of *Just Out* you'll find the official program for Pride Northwest. Working in partnership with the event organizers, *Just Out* has, for the first time, handled the complete production and distribution of the program. This joint effort lowers costs for everyone, eliminates duplication of effort and energy and makes the program available to increased numbers of readers via the *Just Out* distribution network. Additional copies of the program will be available and widely distributed at the festival site.

Let it please be noted that my staff performed a Herculean task in preparing essentially two papers in a time frame already shortened by a holiday weekend. They did an awesome job for all of you and are to be commended. We are confident you will find the articles and scheduling information a helpful tool in your planning and enjoyment of "Lions and Tigers and Queers, Oh My!"

The *Just Out* staff will be at our booth at Waterfront Park all weekend—the exception to this being that during the parade you'll find us marching proudly along with the many other groups and organizations that come together to create this lively and energetic event. But before and after the parade we invite you to drop by and meet us and share your thoughts on, well, just about any topic you'd like. Please note that readers with the most intense agendas are encouraged to come visit early in the day—when we're most likely to be warmly amenable to your suggestions. Just kidding, of course.

Gay Pride will likely have different meanings to everyone you might ask. Frequently heard words and phrases include the likes of "honoring diversity" and "being free to be myself." Less likely to be heard is the notion of "proud to be part of a co-joined group that speaks, thinks and acts alike."

While the aforementioned celebration of diversity is most commonly associated with diversity of culture, sexual preference, religion, gender identity and ethnicity, I think it's crucial to reinforce the notion that diversity of thought and speech must also be honored. We are not now, never have been and never should be a community of one thought. We are united neither in uniformity nor conformity. Nor should we ever be united in denying anyone right of expression. We are not of one voice. We have the right to expression, the right to speak, the right to disagree. No one should speak for another, nor should anyone allow another to speak for them.

In this space I speak only for myself. Not for my staff, not for family, neither for friends. I speak for myself. This is my right. In turn, I offer all others the chance to speak their voices within these pages.

With few exceptions, all viewpoints and expressions are welcome. Anonymity is one of those exceptions. To put power to your voice, you must put a name to your words.

I recently received a card that said: "You are not me, I am not you. Stop talking for me." Well, listen, please, think about this. In choosing to be anonymous, you empower me to speak for you. This is a truth. Those who do not speak for themselves will always have others speak for them. My words carry my name, my face. For yours to have meaning, so must they.

And at the same time all of us must be, should be, watchful and wary of those who do claim to speak in our names. We are not united in all causes and should be diligent in protest toward those who would proclaim unity in the name of promoting their own agenda. We should be concerned about those who would exploit and manipulate the tragedies and crises of others—especially if it's in our name.

Words can be powerful. They can frighten, they can intimidate. Words can cause fear and provoke defensive reactions. The words "gay marriage" can have this impact on aspects of heterosexual society. The dislike for the words, the imagined reality, overwhelms the truth and the structure of the concept.

Another example is the word "racist." My experience is that the mere sound and usage creates such a negative reaction that context and intended meaning become lost in the reactionary fear and denial.

Who among us actually wants to step up and admit they are racist? The word in and of itself is so powerful, so fearsome, so loathsome that the instinctive reaction is to recoil and deny. This dynamic does not create a good place from which

to foster dialogue and understanding. How can we work to understand the concept when we can't even face the word and its implications?

Is nonacceptance of the label, the word, another act of racism in and of itself? Would creation and/or usage of a "softer," "kinder," "gentler" word allow those needing the dialogue and the work the flexibility to drop their defenses and step forward with greater trust and less fear?

Words can be powerful. They can frighten. They can intimidate.

How do we work through these words, their wounds and their accompanying fears? Is there an answer in the concept of Gay Pride? In Gay Pride can we find the personal power to acknowledge other areas and aspects of our lives where we need to change, grow and be the best we can be? To me that is Gay Pride: being the best we can be. Even when it's very, very hard. ■

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## REFLECTIONS

10 years ago in



• Airman apprentice Terry M. Helvey admitted in a May 3 hearing that he beat gay shipmate Allen Schindler to death at a Japanese base last year. Helvey, 21, of Wetland, Mich., was charged last year with the premeditated murder of Schindler, 22, of Chicago.

• A group of conservative Christians has invited members of Congress to view a videotape of events they say the public never saw during the April 25 gay and lesbian march on Washington, D.C. The video, *The Homosexual Assault on Washington*, features shots of bare-breasted women, lingering kisses between men and leather enthusiasts in dog collars and nose and nipple rings.

• Gov. Barbara Roberts started the year by prioritizing human rights for all Oregonians. She proposed a bill to create an 11-member Human Rights Commission, which would concentrate on education and mediation.

• The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners renamed the Gill Building at 426 S.W. Stark St. the Gladys McCoy Building

at a memorial service held in early May. The Portland Gay Men's Chorus and state Rep. Margaret Carter sang at the dedication.

• Members of the Lesbian and Gay Democratic Club elected Bob Ralph as president and Donna Red Wing as vice president of the group. Dick Levy won a seat as secretary, and Frank Dixon will serve as treasurer.

• The First Tuesday Coffeehouse features Women of Color Night on June 1. Performers include Maria Webster and Jeanette Spencer.

• For the first time in the history of Portland Pride, the mayor will be marching. Vera Katz has canceled her plans to be out of town in order to march with us in this year's parade.

• Of the 545 reported bias crimes throughout Oregon in 1992, 240 were based on race or color, 57 were based on national origin, 36 were based on religion, 97 were based on sexual orientation, 92 were based on political beliefs, 22 were based on economic or social status, and one was based on handicap.

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