



# Divided Loyalties?

## The black queer experience in Portland

by J.B. Rabin

“Right now it’s dangerous to be black and gay,” says Andre Pruitt, a mental health therapist who works with the African American and at-risk communities. He cites his race as the reason for being pulled over in his car multiple times by police officers, once at gunpoint. And he notes that being gay once cost him a teaching job. “The principal wanted to sleep with me,” he says, “but I wasn’t willing to go there, so he fired me.”

Navigating the maze of identity politics is considerably complicated for queer African Americans. According to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force publication *Say It Loud: I’m Black and I’m Proud*, race, gender, class and sexual orientation are “experienced holistically or intersectionally” by black queers.

For Pruitt, though, the intersection of identities is a source of frustration. “When I talk to my [black] friends who are dealing with coming out, I always say to them: ‘Can you stand alone and be a person who’s not allowed in any community? If you can stand alone, come out. If you can’t stand alone, be quiet because you will not be embraced by the gay community.’”

Cover model Kevin Cook thinks homophobia among gay black men contributes to higher HIV infection rates

PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS



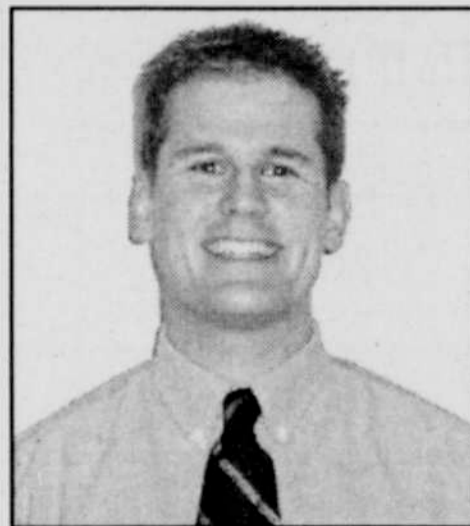
### Support Groups Available For Women who Partner with Women

The Hambleton Project and the Susan G. Komen Foundation have collaborated to provide these free resources to our community:

- ☒ Bi-weekly support group for lesbians/bisexual women with cancer and their partners/caregivers (ongoing)
- ☒ 8-week bereavement group for lesbians/bisexual women who have lost a loved one (next session begins 3/4/04)

These groups are currently held in the Portland area, and will soon be available in the Salem area.

For specific meeting times, locations, or for more information, call the Hambleton Project at 503.335.6591



### Don Valerio, MD Internal Medicine

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| Physical Exams    | General Adult Healthcare |

Appointments are now available. New patients welcome.

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