

Speak Out

just asking When rabidly anti-gay figures like Fred Phelps and Roy Moore come to town, should the queer community stage counterprotests, or is their presence not even worth acknowledging? Which is better—confronting them or ignoring them?

During World War II many citizens in Germany ignored Hitler, and as the trains headed to the death camps and passed through the little towns, no one said anything. Silence isn't always a solution, nor is an angry crowd. Staging a counterprotest in a "nonviolent way" is a way to say NOT IN MY TOWN. When the German people were asked later what was happening in their country, most were afraid to admit they knew. Hate must be confronted as well as understood and dealt with in a positive way.

CAROLYN POWER
Portland

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Perhaps it's because I lived through the Vietnam War, Stonewall and ACT UP—or perhaps it's just a hippie mentality that survives—but in cases such as these, I feel counterprotests are the only way. For vicious and dangerous people such as Fred Phelps, Roy Moore and Marion Hite to be honored as "Profiles in Courage" (JFK would be appalled!) and as "the finest expression of American citizenship" is simply and utterly wrong.

Phone calls and e-mails are easily disregarded and dismissed; a show of opposition composed of both gay and straight seems to be the answer in this day of media events. It's difficult for local media to ignore sizable gatherings of people.

The religious and political right wing has had power for so long because it is a well-oiled machine; in this respect, it is an example to follow. We must put by the constant in-fighting and present our views in an organized manner; then, and only then, will others begin to rally to our causes.

DONALD FINCH
Portland

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I believe the old political motto of "Suppose they gave a war—and nobody came?" would be the best answer. If we ignore such hatemongers as Fred and Roy, maybe no one will know they are here! And if there is no opposition to their presence, perhaps the media would not be so likely to give their visit an iota of coverage. Just think of how many times these events go unnoticed because they don't make the 11 o'clock news. Besides, aren't Oregonians too busy with our own unemployment rate, the upcoming presidential race, crime and gang violence, homelessness and gay marriage issues—just to name a few—to worry about a couple of out-of-state tourists with bad haircuts?

MARK SUSTELLO
Portland

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I believe we should definitely stage counterprotests. If you ignore a problem, does it ever go away? No. I think confronting them is a much more productive way to fight homophobia.

DEVON ROSA
Newberg

We have so many better things to do with our time than waste it on these guys. Fred Phelps is a caricature of hate, far too overblown and ridiculous to be worth our protests. Let's spend our time fighting the more subtle discrimination present in unfair laws and simple ignorance; leave the ugly, religious hate off the airwaves and front pages.

JANA MAIURI
Eugene

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Confront them. They have freedom of speech but must accept the consequences of their words. We have nothing to be afraid of as long as we remain civil and to the point and offer people a stark contrast to just who are cruel and hateful and who are the mature adults standing up for their rights.

Ignore these people, and they will not go away. Confront them peacefully and resolutely, and they are merely bullies who at some point must face the fact that they have chosen their battles unwisely.

MICHAEL MCCARTHY
Eugene

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By far, confronting them peacefully and intelligently is the best way to go. By taking the "high road" and saying that the likes of Fred Phelps and Roy Moore aren't worth acknowledging, we are silently condoning their words and actions. With the impending decisions on the definition of marriage in this country, it is more important than ever that our voices are heard—both in praise and protest.

STEPHANIE SEAMAN
Portland

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Confronting outrageous displays of bigotry and anti-gay protests only feeds the fire. By counterprotesting them, we validate them, we give credence to their views. By doing nothing, essentially ignoring their existence, we show them, and the rest of the world, that we don't fear them. Our community should refuse to give them the validation they crave and ignore them.

SUSAN LANE
Clackamas

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I say confront them because it's my nature for me to make the people who don't feel like were are normal uncomfortable.

TJ BARTEL
Beaverton

next issue How do you feel about San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom's sudden decision to grant marriage licenses to same-sex couples? A brave act of civil disobedience, or a poorly timed maneuver that only will complicate matters further? (Please see related item on Page 18.) Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)

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