

Speak Out

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Today a barrier to true justice has been removed. A barrier removed for one person is a barrier removed for us all."

LINDA J. BLOMBERG
La Grande

Pursue happiness

TO THE EDITOR:

Thinking I had escaped the *caudillismo* and the dictatorships of Latin America, I woke up to the news that un-President Bush has begun a campaign to amend the Constitution in defense of the mythic and foundational heterosexual union. In the past, amendments to the Constitution have served to broaden human rights and help the disenfranchised. This call to arms against queer Americans will instead infringe upon the human rights of our friends, our loved ones and our families. With the auspices of this administration, the terror of civil injustice will be institutionalized yet again.

I urge your readers to contact our local and national candidates and Congress to halt this process. Instead of highlighting queer unions, the coming elections should be about the state of the union, including the war, the economy, health coverage, Social Security and education. I hope we are discerning enough to know that the call to arms against queers is a ploy to distract voters from the issues of the day and to empower the already homophobic perverse right and its minion of voters.

At this juncture in our history, resurrecting the Declaration of Independence seems

critical as we begin to think about changing our governing principles: "That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends [life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness], it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."

OSCAR FERNANDEZ
Portland

No limits on love

TO THE EDITOR:

No-talent pop princess Britney Spears recently celebrated her "out-of-control joke" wedding for about 48 hours before having it simply annulled. And yet I, as a gay man, cannot share in the basic rights of celebrating my love with my partner.

Marriage is about two people in love. I should have the equal right to celebrate my commitment to my partner.

If President Bush want to steal this right away from me with a constitutional amendment, then they should add that anyone who is gay or lesbian never has to pay taxes again. With his efforts to treat me differently just because of who I am meant to be with, he is proving again he is not a president for all Americans.

I am a proud, respectful, taxpaying gay man. I am going to work with all my energy to have the same basic rights as anyone else.

For those who claim marriage should be legally defined as being between a man and a

woman, I would like them to first define what love is. If anyone can convince me that what I feel for my soul mate is not love, then I will gladly give up my efforts to share the same basic rights that many straight married couples take for granted. But since that is impossible, with as much passion as I hold in my devotion to the one who holds my heart, I will work with all my energy to ensure I am allowed the same rights and benefits as a "straight" married couple.

Because I am so vocal about what I believe, I have been told I am shoving my beliefs onto people. I apologize to those who cannot understand that all I am seeking is to be treated with the same human respect as anyone else who has the courage and faith to love. How can wanting to commit your life to someone be a sin?

Being gay is not a lifestyle. A lifestyle is something you can change or alter, like your religious beliefs or being narrow-minded. Just like my black or Asian friends, I was born gay. I do not love my partner because of our sex life; that is no one's business. I am faithful to my partner because his heart blends with mine. Our experiences have created a bond that is unbreakable.

We should move away from the term "same-sex marriage," because it is not about sex. A same-gender marriage is about finding that person with whom you see the future and you share the truth with.

If I am to be judged, be it not for who I love but for my lack of effort in not protecting my own basic human rights and the rights for all that God created. I have great pity for those who use their energy in exploring ways to place limits on the meaning of love, instead of

using their own passions to celebrate and acknowledge that love is alive.

RIC BERRONG
Portland

An ounce of prevention

TO THE EDITOR:

Regarding a piece in the Feb. 20 issue of *Just Out*, "L.A. Officials Ordered to Regulate Bathhouses," I wanted to make a clarification. Once again, I feel as though I have been misrepresented.

I stand behind my quote, and as I leave my position here at Cascade AIDS Project, I can feel free to say that prevention in Portland has hit a low point. Not entirely due to CAP's efforts, but also due to a general apathy and lack of interest on the part of the community.

I resigned my position because I will soon get my real estate license, and not in any way due to the "brouhaha" around the *Just Out* articles. I wanted to make that clear, as I feel that the way it was mentioned in the *Just Out* article indirectly linked my leaving to the bathhouse issue.

I believe that, in my almost three years at CAP, they (and Thomas Bruner) have been scapegoats for a lot of issues around HIV in Portland. The outreach and prevention department can only do as good a job as the community allows it to—and right now, the community is so far removed from healthy sexual norms that I find it very difficult to continue to work in HIV prevention.

I wish CAP the best in the future, but this time as your average gay Portland joe. Thanks.

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Beaverton

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