

Stranger than fiction

As an *ER* character struggles with inequality, real-life gays and lesbians play out the same drama across America

Basic Rights Oregon is on a roll. The string of successes for the organization continued with the 11th annual Oregonians Against Discrimination Luncheon on April 14. This well-attended and place-to-be-seen event had two shining moments. Well, three, if you count the desserts. As expected, Multnomah County Commissioners Serena Cruz, Lisa Naito, Diane Linn and Maria Rojo de Steffey were greeted with a warm and enthusiastic ovation. For me, the second shining moment of the luncheon was the keystone address presented by Matt Hennessee, president and CEO of Quiktrak and chairman of the Portland Development Commission.

What a powerful speaker Hennessee is. He spoke passionately of his own childhood and family struggles and drew eloquent parallels between discrimination that he faced as a black man and discrimination faced by gays and lesbians. One conclusion shared by Hennessee was that education is a major factor in allaying the concerns of those who fear and oppose same-sex marriage.

This sentiment is shared by the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, which recently announced its "I Do" campaign, a new media initiative designed to promote marriage equality. The two-part promotion features a competition to create 30-second television spots and public service announcements that will ultimately feature celebrities followed by GLAAD-led solicitations to local stations to air the spots.

"Our goal is to tell stories that will change the hearts and minds of Americans who are not yet convinced that marriage rights are a simple matter of equality," executive director Joan M. Garry says. "This campaign taps into the deep level of frustration and anxiety in this country around the ongoing erosion of our civil rights. We cannot allow the Federal Marriage Amendment to slip under the radar and go undebated. The media have a responsibility to cover this civil rights story."

How Americans will respond to these spots remains to be seen. GLAAD may be getting a helping hand in this process by a storyline under way on the popular NBC drama *ER*. Regular viewers of the show are familiar with the trials and tribulations of the once-evil Dr. Kerry Weaver, who, since she was once evil, was, of course, the natural choice to morph into the lesbian character. So in the past few seasons we've seen Kerry discover her sexual identity, date, get partnered and start a family with Sandy, the birth mother of their child. With the season finale and May sweeps approaching, Sandy is abruptly killed. In the midst of dealing with the grief over the loss of her partner, Kerry is dealt a double blow by Sandy's family's refusal to allow her access to their child. Kerry is not the mother, they were not married, she has no rights.

While Sandy and Kerry are fictional characters, this same drama, in real life, could be played out daily in gay and lesbian homes across America. Here we have the truth of our lives being broadcast directly into the homes of mainstream Americans. Our truth is that gays and

lesbians do not have equal rights. Fictional or not, millions of viewers tune in weekly to involve themselves in their lives. NBC has created a tremendous opportunity to showcase the inequities of denial of rights. Let's hope that they choose to use this situation wisely. The impact could be tremendous.

Closer to home, I'm curious about what I see, or actually don't see, happening in our Portland community. Specifically, where's the uproar, the outrage, the questions, the marches, the call for solidarity and the coalition building around the recent police shooting of James Jahar Perez?

As we all know, it was less than a year ago that Kendra James lost her life in a similar scenario. Her death and the circumstances around it sent waves of shock and activity throughout the sexual minorities community. And now, a year later, where's the fuss, where's the turmoil?

In recent weeks there has been much alignment in our community between our fight for same-sex marriage and the centuries-old battles for civil rights fought, and not yet won, by African Americans. I'm puzzled. Why was Kendra James, in her death, embraced by our leaders and activists and James Jahar Perez not? One struggled to escape police; one seemingly didn't. One was a mother. One was a father. Both appear to have loving families. Both lost their lives in tragic circumstances. Why is one of less value to us? I sure hope it's not because our plates are full and we're so busy taking care of our own stuff right now that there's no time to stand in support of others.

April brings to us five Fridays, and this means a week's vacation for the *Just Out* staff. We'll be back with you May 7. But before we go I'd like to remind you of a few special upcoming events that I hope you can attend.

First, join us for Gay Night at the *Sing-a-Long Wizard of Oz* April 17. This is going to be great fun, and if you bring along the ad from this issue you'll get a sizable discount off the cost of admission. Wear a costume, bring your singing voice, and let's hit the yellow brick road.

April 19 is opening day for Rose City Softball Association games. This is a great way to relax and people watch while enjoying being outdoors and letting someone else do all the running around. Sweat is so much more appealing when it's on someone else.

Finally, the election is getting closer and Multnomah County Commissioner Maria Rojo de Steffey needs our help to secure her re-election. Please join her from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. April 21 at Aura Restaurant and Lounge, 1022 W. Burnside St. Her special guest that evening will be Thomas Lauderdale. A \$50 suggested donation will get you good company, hors d'oeuvres and that special feeling that comes from knowing you've done a really good thing. **j**

just out
The IN publication for the OUT population

FOUNDED 1983 • JAY BROWN AND RENÉE LACHANCE

Vol. 21 No. 12 April 16, 2004

FEATURE

ART AND PEERITY: Queer-friendly homeless youth program sparks creativity and hope

p 26

NEWS

NORTHWEST • Fired Cirque du Soleil gymnast speaks at CAP auction; lesbian vies for a seat in the Oregon Legislature; two gay men oppose Commissioner Randy Leonard

pp 10-19

NATIONAL • Help nears for AIDS facial wasting

pp 20-23

WORLD • Vatican, Muslim nations scuttle U.N. gay rights resolution

pp 24-25

ARTS AND CULTURE

THEATER • The personal is political. And theatrical, too.

p 37

MUSIC • Queer girl rockers take root at Nocturnal

p 39

CULTURE • Queer yoga classes promote a well body and mind

p 41

FILM • Men on a mission

pp 42-43

WHAT'S POPPIN'? • Filmmaker documents execution of *Monster* subject

p 44

DIVERSIONS • Art groups co-mingle for razzle-dazzle show; Do Jump! peddles hope; goodbye to *Playing It Straight*

p 45

BOOKS • Senior drag queen is star of Harlem Renaissance history

pp 46-47

COLUMNS

MS. BEHAVIOR • Without the one

p 35

EPIQUEERAN • Portland's own SoHo

p 36

OUT WITH IT! • Old lesbians organizing for dates

p 45

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARC • What, me worry?

p 49

just out is published on the first and third Friday of each month. Copyright © 2004 by Just Out. No part of *Just Out* may be reproduced without written permission from the publisher.

The submission of written and graphic materials is welcomed. Written material should be typed and double-spaced. *Just Out* reserves the right to edit for grammar, punctuation, style, liability concerns and length. We will reject or edit articles or advertisements that are offensive, demeaning or may result in legal action.

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.

The **display advertising deadline** is the Monday 12 days before the next publication date.

Classified ads must be received at the *Just Out* office by 4 p.m. on the Thursday eight days before the next publication date, along with payment. Ads may be placed via the Internet with Visa or MasterCard payment, by mail with a check, or in person at our office.

Ad policy: *Just Out* reserves the right to reject or edit any advertisement. Compensation for errors in, or cancellation of, advertising will be made with credit toward future advertising. Advertising rates are available upon request.

Distribution policy: *Just Out* is available free of charge, one copy per person. *Just Out* is delivered only to authorized distributors. No person may, without prior written permission from *Just Out*, take more than one copy. Any person who takes more than one copy may be held liable for theft, including but not limited to civil damages and/or criminal prosecution.

Subscriptions are \$22.50 for 12 issues. First Class (in an envelope) is \$40 for 12 issues.

Contact *Just Out* at P.O. Box 14400, Portland, OR 97293-0400; 503-236-1252, advertising 503-236-1253, fax 503-236-1257; e-mail justout@justout.com. Visit our Internet site at www.justout.com.

REFLECTIONS

15 years ago in **just out**... VOL. 6 NO. 6, APRIL 1989



- The Oregon Health Division's new HIV public education campaign contains "nothing of value," according to Jim Clay, Willamette AIDS Council's director of youth programs. He said the materials prepared for the division by Turtledove Clemens Inc. of Portland, at a cost of about \$70,000, is another example of wasted public funds.

- In February, Portland attorney Janice R. Wilson filed a complaint with Secretary of State Barbara Roberts' office claiming the Oregon Citizens Alliance flouted election laws by publishing false statements in its literature urging repeal of Gov. Neil Goldschmidt's executive order banning discrimination against gay men and lesbians in state jobs.

- According to Alyson Publications Inc. of Boston, the Oregon congressional delegation ranks 21st of all 50 state delegations on votes supporting gay interests. First ranked was Massachusetts, second was Washington state. Worst were New Hampshire, Idaho and Wyoming.

- Cathy Siemens, a founder of the Lesbian Community Project and former deputy campaign manager for the No on 8 Ballot Measure Campaign, joined Bridgetown Realty as a sales associate in March.

- To the distress of some gay leaders and to the delight of many others, members of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) in Portland are circulating a flier alleging that U.S. Sen. Mark Hatfield, R-Ore., is a closeted homosexual who has repeatedly voted against the gay community on AIDS and civil rights matters.

- The Portland Lesbian Choir presents its first major concert April 1. Proceeds will allow the choir to attend the 1989 National Festival of Gay and Lesbian Choirs this July in Seattle.

- The Men's Sexual Ritual for Personal Communication is a three-day intensive for trance, alchemy and magic through Tarot Keys.

- In Her Image: A Gallery of Women's Art presents a group exhibit of women's artwork and crafts titled *A Healing War*.

PUBLISHER AND MANAGING EDITOR • Marty Davis
NEWS EDITOR • Jim Radosta
ARTS AND CULTURE EDITOR • Lisa Bradshaw
FEATURES EDITOR • Meg Daly
CONTRIBUTORS • Marc Acito, Kathy Belge, Michael Burdick, Meryl Cohn, Andy Mangels, Christopher

McQuain, Gary Morris, J.B. Rabin, Bob Roehr, Helen Silvis, Floyd Sklaver, Cori Taratoot, Rex Wockner
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR • Larry Lewis
ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES • Kari Tate, Ashley Austin

GRAPHIC DIRECTOR • Kevin Moore
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT • Zanne deJanvier
DISTRIBUTION • Kristine Ashton, Allison Benn, Ed Carder, Ashley Conley, Darren Linder, S & E Distributors