

GUEST COMMENTARY BY ROEY THORPE

The wedding gift

Despite temporary setbacks, we're on our way to permanent equality

Welcome to the family." That's what my partner's sister and brother said to me on the day we married. And although I already felt that I was accepted as part of the family, I understood that on our wedding day, things changed. We participated in a ritual that is part of joining this big, loving family, a ritual that meant I was clearly and irrevocably a relative for the first time: a sister-in-law, a daughter-in-law and, for some reason the hardest word for me, a wife.

There wasn't a dry eye in the room when we got married. I cried so hard I could barely say my vows! When I asked Missy's 80-something grandmother (my grandmother-in-law?) what she thought about her first same-sex wedding, she said, "I didn't know what to expect, but it's not a bit different from anyone else." I had to agree. We had chosen vows that we didn't realize were the same as Missy's sister, and our wedding just seemed like any couple who decide to marry on the fly and invite family and friends to their home for the ceremony: spontaneous, heartfelt, lovely. Everything our wedding lacked in terms of planning was more than compensated by the knowledge that we were making history.

It's been two months now, and my happiness has become more complicated. I know I'm not alone in this because here at Basic Rights Oregon, we get a lot of calls from people who, like me, are anxious. We worry over the threats that are being made by those who want to take our marriages away. We have conversations with people who mean well but who think we should just call our marriages something else so we don't offend anyone. We hold our breath when we hear about a new court decision and then try to understand what it all means for us personally.

Marriage is never easy, but we have a lot more to face than most newlyweds. Missy's grandma was only partly right—our relationships aren't so different, but our marriages are, at least for now. Those 3,000 couples who chose to marry here in Oregon were also choosing to make history, and our "I do's" meant that we were laying our hearts on the line because we have the radical notion that our love and commitment to our partners and families is equal to our neighbors'.

In doing so, we were taking an enormous risk, as was everyone we love who supported our marriages. We risked something incredibly personal and huge: our happiness. Because part of the joy that was pouring out of Multnomah County was about what it feels like to experience equality, real equality. Not domestic partnership equality, not civil union equality, but marriage equality. It's something most of us never thought we'd see, so we didn't spend a lot of time complaining about it. Many of

us convinced ourselves marriage wasn't important, because part of living a happy life in an unequal world is learning to gently lower our expectations. Like many people, I believe that if you spend all your time focused on what you don't have, you don't appreciate the beauty around you.

But in this moment, this shining moment, we just as gently stepped over our lowered expectations and took a step into new territory. It was tremendous, it was joyous, it was exhilarating. What I don't know that we realized as we took that step, however, was that history is not static. Stepping into it is like standing in the ocean tide—the force of the pull, back and forth, can knock you off your feet. You don't know where you'll be pulled or where you'll end up. That's what's happening now.

These are some very uncertain times. We have had court decisions, recall campaigns of our heroic commissioners, threats from the Legislature, and many of us have had uncomfortable conversations with people we love and thought we could count on. Personally, I've never been a part of such a historic moment, and I had no idea how emotional it would be. It has made me think differently about the other civil rights movements I've read about and has given me new respect for everyone involved.

Those 3,000 couples who chose to marry here in Oregon were also choosing to make history, and our "I do's" meant that we were laying our hearts on the line because we have the radical notion that our love and commitment to our partners and families is equal to our neighbors'

We knew our marriages would take love and commitment, and we knew we would have to show courage. But I don't think we had time to prepare for what would follow, and I don't think we knew how vulnerable we would feel. It is almost unbearable to think that anyone would try to take our rights away or even that we might experience temporary setbacks on our way to permanent equality.

This is what I know for sure: We have a long road ahead, and we have got to stay strong. No matter what happens, we will end up ahead of where we started, if only because we see ourselves as equal in a way that we never did before. This is how change happens—herky-jerky, with no clear end point and wins and losses along the way. Change is emotional, life-changing, nail-biting and completely irrational. Change is annoying, unpredictable and terrifying. But change is also what makes a life worth living, what creates the memories

we'll treasure forever, what embodies our hopes and dreams, including the hopes and dreams that sprang from some of our own darkest times.

We're not going back. We made a promise that included "for better or for worse," and it's true that our "for worse" includes all these threats that most couples will never face. But you know what? Most couples never get to know that their wedding day was important not only to them, but to generations of people who might never have to settle for less than full equality. That's the most precious wedding gift of all. **jt**

ROEY THORPE is the executive director of Basic Rights Oregon.

PRIMARY ELECTION ENDORSEMENTS

Ballots must be returned by 8 p.m. May 18. *Just Out* does not make endorsements in every electoral contest.

- **Portland Mayor:** Tom Potter
- **Portland City Council, Position 1:** Sam Adams
- **Portland City Council, Position 4:** Randy Leonard
- **Multnomah County Commissioner, District 1:** Maria Rojo de Steffey
- **Multnomah County Commissioner, District 3:** Lisa Naito
- **Judge of the Supreme Court, Position 4:** Rives Kistler

PUBLISHER AND MANAGING EDITOR • Marty Davis
NEWS EDITOR • Jim Radosta
ARTS AND CULTURE EDITOR • Lisa Bradshaw
FEATURES EDITOR • Meg Daly
CONTRIBUTORS • Marc Acito, Michael E Barrett, Stephen Blair, Meryl Cohn, Kobe Kemple,

Timothy Krause, Adina Lepp, Andy Mangels, Christopher McQuain, Eric Plemons, Bob Roehr, Floyd Sklaver, Roey Thorpe, 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

just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

FOUNDED 1983 • JAY BROWN AND RENÉE LACHANCE

Vol. 21 No. 13 May 7, 2004

FEATURE

TRANSITIONAL TERMS: What the T has to do with GLB

p 26

NEWS

NORTHWEST • U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio encourages queer voters to send the Democratic Party a clear message; judge issues mixed ruling on same-sex marriage; *Just Out* talks to Kelly Clark, attorney for the Defense of Marriage Coalition; students take action to combat harassment in schools

pp 9-19

NATIONAL • North Carolina school officials censor gay student's campaign posters; attorneys attempt "trans panic" defense

pp 20-21

WORLD • Gay member of Parliament steals jewelry, announces leave

pp 23-25

ARTS AND CULTURE

THEATER • *Confessions* reveal the true story of a spiritual survivor; Mark Setlock's two dozen characters make hundreds of happy Portlanders

pp 37-39

FILM • Bianchi does Brecht in a gritty little fable from Brazil

p 41

WHAT'S POPPIN'? • Foreign flicks top picks

p 43

CULTURE • Event benefits law students who vow to fight discrimination

p 45

DIVERSIONS • Go gay camping this summer; new queer nights; Eugene rolls out the dykes for Lesbopalooza; uncovering hidden queer film near you

p 47

COLUMNS

MS. BEHAVIOR • The difference between gay boys and girls

p 35

EPIQUEERAN • Portland's food triangle

p 40

OUT WITH IT! • Fatty Fatty 2x4

p 47

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARC • Straight talk

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.