

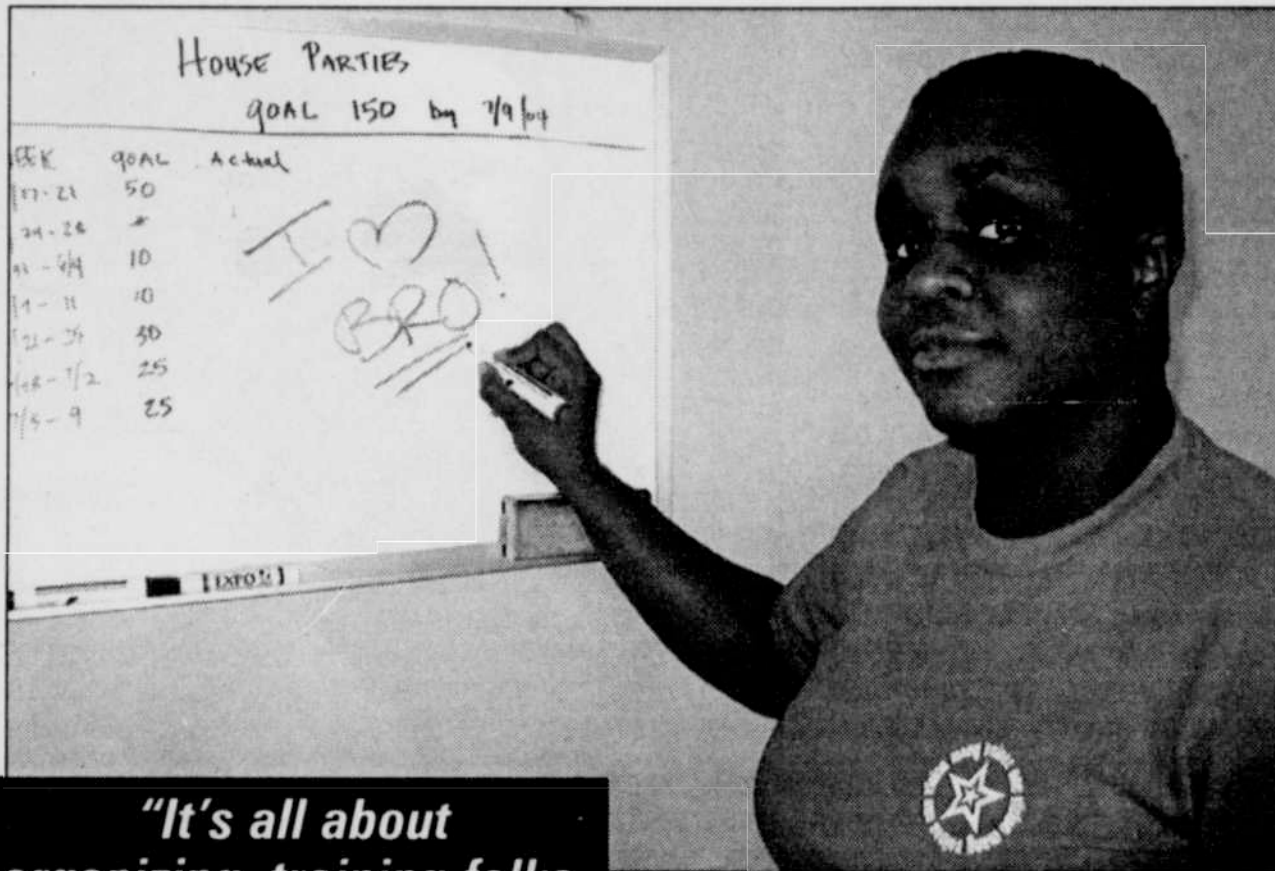


PHOTO BY MARY DAVIS

"It's all about organizing, training folks, going door to door and getting voters out"

—Alisa Simmons

low-income folks and ex-felons to vote. "There's nothing better than knocking on doors," she says.

At 27, she is also the youngest member of Basic Rights Oregon's board of directors. "I fell in love with BRO immediately," she says. "For me, as a young person, it's really exciting to be around that wealth of knowledge. And I can provide a youthful perspective and have that be respected."

Always up for a challenge, Simmons got involved with the Trans Advocacy Group at BRO because she wanted to become a better ally to the trans community.

As she and her fellow board members gear up to battle the Oregon Citizens Alliance's latest ballot initiative, Simmons knows where she can be most effective. "It's all about organizing, training folks, going door to door and getting voters out," she says.

Look for Alisa Simmons soon, at a door near you.

—KB

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Nothing Feels Like the First Time

by Ashley Austin

I have never been to a Portland Pride festival. As a matter of fact, I have never been to any Pride festival. I do not have stories, memories or reflections of what Pride means to me. What I have is emotion for the idea of Pride and excitement for experiencing my first. My "big picture" view recognizes Pride as extending and accepting the notion to celebrate our right to be who we are and live how we choose, without feelings of fear or inadequacy.

I can only assume the energy of Pride allows us to learn about ourselves as well as others. This celebration brings together groups of diverse backgrounds, identities and preferences. The walls that exist between us are weakened by the spirit of Pride and we begin to know the person behind the label as our own authenticity shines through.

"I plan to use the strength Pride affords by exercising my right to feel fabulous"

—Ashley Austin

My "How does this affect me?"

view recognizes Pride as a chance to further discard personal issues of shame and insecurity and bask in the validation of acceptance. I plan to use the strength Pride affords by exercising my right to feel fabulous. I have visions—daydreams, actually—of greeting June 19 with open arms, shedding my hang-ups and letting the girl inside out to play. If I am lucky, she will refuse to ever go back inside.

I am grateful for the opportunity of Pride because I know it comes with a price that others before me have paid. I appreciate and hold in high regard all those who have struggled, and continue to do so, to earn what is rightfully ours. I am proud to be a part of this community. 

ASHLEY AUSTIN is a recently transplanted trans woman from North Carolina.

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