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— Richard, Manager, Jazzercise, Inc.

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Speak Out

The right thing to do

TO THE EDITOR:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

These words were written by men who were not saints or above moral reproach. They were written by men every bit as fallible and angstridden as we are now.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal." Our forefathers knew oppression—an oppression that locked a man into his place in society as though his social class was tattooed on his forehead.

"They are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights." The men who drafted the document that established our nation, this place we call the United States of America, knew how valuable and precious true freedom and equality is. They wrote the Declaration of Independence to preserve that freedom. They intended everyone to be first-class citizens.

"Among these is life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." In keeping with our heritage, we fought to free a race of people enslaved, even though it drew serious opposition at the time. Now we look back and say, "It was right to free the slaves," and we are proud.

Next, we fought for women's right to vote—again, a notion that faced great opposition in its time. However, women did vote, changing the lives of millions. Now we look back and say, "It was the right thing to do," and we are proud.

Disabled people (a group any of us could join at any time) are another example. We provided needed "rights of access" for the disabled because it was the right thing to do. Again, we look back and say we are proud.

Now gay people want the freedom to marry; they want to be first-class citizens. There is much opposition. As an American, I have no doubt that years from now, we will look back and say: "Giving gay people the freedom to marry was the right thing to do. We are proud."

D.E. THOMPSON
Warren

We are the public

TO THE EDITOR:

After reading David Reinhard's column in the May 20 *Oregonian*, I had a comment I would like to share.

The fifth paragraph down in his article claims, "The public opposes gay marriage." He eliminates from the "public" all of the gay couples who were married in Multnomah County, San Francisco and Massachusetts and any who wish to marry in the future but will be prevented from doing so because they are not considered to be part of the public.

You see, Mr. Reinhard, that is why there are gay activists, and unless you are gay you cannot understand. It is not about morality. It is about identity. And if all of these anti-gay activists would allow everyone a place at the proverbial table and we put all of our money, time, energy and effort together, we could have solved much bigger social problems. We are tired of being overlooked and not considered to be part of the public.

MIKE HOLDEN
Portland

Do the math

TO THE EDITOR:

OK. Another death, another killing.
Portland Police Chief Derrick Foxworth

points out yes, but hey—we separated them before they could go to Applebee's and compare notes. We really are trying. We had detectives interview the officers in a shorter time frame (less than 24 hours).

We're getting some of those—89, is it?—rules activated that came down on us last year from the Police Assessment Resource Center. Hey, be patient, let the process work, we're trying. We even had an inquest this time.

The logic seems to be: With every unprovoked killing of a person of color, we, the police bureau, will "right" a few "wrongs." Not to mention that most of these "wrongs" should never have taken place at all.

In the past few weeks, the cover of "just a routine traffic stop" has been revealed to be an excuse. It now even has a name: It's a "pretext stop."

Listen up, white folks, you who actually believe that if you just "follow the rules" the cops won't kill you. See, they admitted it. They didn't really care that you didn't come to a complete stop (Kendra James' life) or failed to signal properly (James Perez's life). What they cared about was: You might be, "might" be, somehow connected to drugs. So let's go give a look-see, and hey if we kill you in the process, well, too bad. It's the LIVABILITY of the neighborhood that's at stake, remember.

So, to summarize: In 2003, the PARC recommended 89 changes the bureau needed to make. Kendra James killing = two wrongs righted. James Jahar Perez = two wrongs righted. Do the math: 85 to go.

And you wonder why the underhum in the city now is one of "burn baby burn"?

LINDA KANZINGER
Portland

Affair or abuse?

TO THE EDITOR:

The following is in response to recent news coverage and reactions regarding Neil Goldschmidt.

When I was 12 I had an "affair," to use Goldschmidt's term, with a man who was in his 20s at the time. Far from the shame and humiliation that seems to have befallen Goldschmidt's baby sitter, however, my boyhood dalliance with my older friend is something I remember with fondness. One seldom hears such perspectives, though.

My own experiences as well as those of others I have researched as part of my graduate work have revealed that such relationships are not "necessarily or even usually harmful," to quote researcher T.D. Oellerich.

Vastly differing age-of-consent laws may (or may not) deem these relationships illegal under the assumption that they are abusive, but that does not mean they will be viewed as such by those involved. Indeed, studies by those like Rind, Tromovitch & Bauserman, Constantine & Martinson, Fritz Bernard and Theo Sandfort, just to name a very few, have shown that often the only "abuse" attested to by the youths in these relationships is at the hands of hysterical parents, police authorities and therapists.

The highly conditional and contextual nature of these relationships—of all relationships, actually—is something that neither our courts nor clinicians have yet fully grasped. In the midst of the latest moral panic over child sex sparked by the Michael Jackson case in Los Angeles and Goldschmidt's revelations locally, it behooves us to step back and consider whether our negative attitudes and expectations about sex might not be abusive as well.

JAY MARS
Eugene