

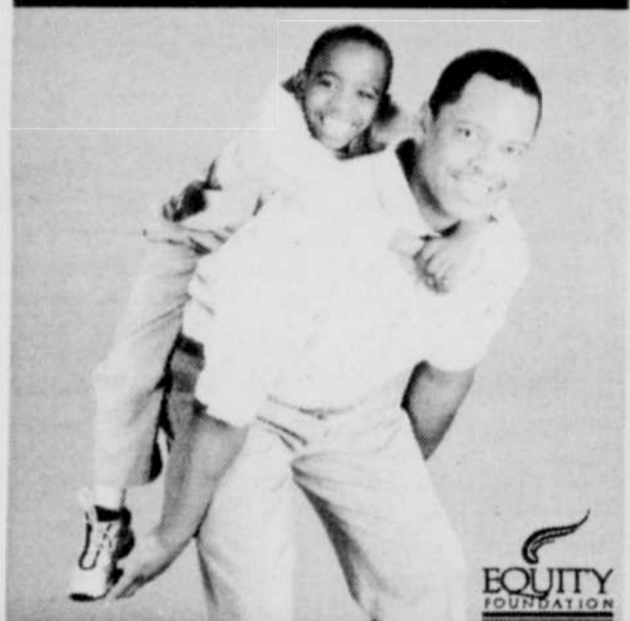


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Speak out

The middle of the bus

TO THE EDITOR:

With Republicans and Democrats almost equally opposed to gay marriages, and with the once liberal media's exclusive coverage of the right wing's religious perspective, we have been left alone in the struggle for total equality. This battle is now entirely up to us.

Gay Democrats have accepted the agenda compromise of civil unions. This compromise would've been comparable to African Americans back in the '50s accepting being allowed to sit in the middle of the bus but not in the front. This middle ground option reflects both the hypocrisy of the majority that offers the deal and the lack of determination of the minority.

We can only win the battle for equal rights with knowledge, strong political will and determination. The outpouring of civic sentiments during the Democratic National Convention was consistent with the party's commitment to equal rights since the '50s. The Democratic Party cast most of its votes against the right wing's efforts to send us back to the closet. Still, the fact is that many Democrats in both houses of Congress crossed party lines to vote against us, with some even co-sponsoring the bills.

We need everybody's involvement in order to attract moderate votes to achieve the higher good of unseating President Bush, and for this goal the more progressive platforms need to be toned down. This is a necessary commitment. However, it has to be made clear to the Democratic Party that this compromise is a temporary agreement and not a capitulation of principles.

We have to firmly declare that the "separate but equal" compromise principle is as unacceptable now as it was 50 years ago. That we are not asking for tolerance but demanding equality. That until we are granted all rights and protected from all forms of discrimination, our Constitution's letter and spirit will continue to be violated by the civil and political societies. That our claims are civil, and that they do not require a religious argument in order to validate them. That in a democracy, a majority does not have the right to

impose its values—regardless of its tradition—on a minority without creating oppression. That in a republic, "we the people" are the source of the legal system, and that "we" are part of the "we the people."

Marriage, the basic cell of the society, belongs to all society's members. Extending it to all citizens does not constitute an attack on it. If the religious roots of the civil union also called marriage stands in the way of full equality, a compromise could be reached by reserving the name "marriage" for religious rituals only and "civil union" for civil rituals only.

Names are ultimately irrelevant and arbitrary. Reality is what matters, and the reality offered to us must be identical to the one enjoyed by straight citizens. Call it marriage, civil union, domestic partnership or "gayriage," I don't care. I just don't want to be forced to sit in the middle of the bus.

FRANK O'NEILL
Portland

Why not amend the Constitution?

TO THE EDITOR:

Marriage shall henceforth be considered a religious institution between one man and one woman, with no legal rights or remedies thereof.

A little radical, admittedly. But why wouldn't it work? It's got the same basic concept built into it as the Federal Marriage Amendment, which requires marriage to be forever defined "between one man and one woman." But it's also got one for those of us of who believe in the separation of church and state: It requires that we remove all legal rights, responsibilities and protections conveyed through "marriage" as it is today administered.

Would it pass? Highly unlikely. But it would do something those of us who've been quietly advocating a new approach feel is essential. It would force the extreme right-wing ideologues pushing this issue to admit their true rationale. It would force them to openly state that what they really intended was to deny more than 1,020 rights and responsibilities to the minority in the name of their religion. They would have

notables



Molalla residents Deborah Ann Whalen (left) and Debbie Spickerman were married March 12 at Holocene.

Whalen, who hails from Long Island, N.Y., works for Safeway in the deli department. Spickerman, who was born and raised in Portland, works as a low-voltage technician and is a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 48.

The couple, who met online, have been together since June 2001. They made a commitment to each other in October of that year.

"We never would have found each other without the Net," the couple told *Just Out*. "No two people were more intended for each other."



It's My Pleasure owner Holly Mulcahey (right) and the Rev. Ann Duffy married in a simple ceremony March 8 at the home of their pastor, the Rev. Lynne Smouse Lopez of Ainsworth United Church of Christ, after 13 years. The couple met the second week Duffy was living in Oregon and serving United Church of Christ in Gresham.

Did you know Just Out publishes free wedding announcements? Submit your story and photo at www.justout.com!