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Speak Out

Keeping it real

TO THE EDITOR:

My credentials are limited (I am an actor and the owner of Bidly McGraw's Irish Pub in Portland), but I have an idea that may have some merit in the battle to prevent the passage of the Oregon Defense of Marriage Act.

It is a grassroots idea that requires little consolidated financing but a much larger voice and greater organization than I could possibly muster on my own. I am not so deluded as to believe that this shall be an easy battle, but if this issue cannot be personalized, if those of us with a concrete stake in its outcome cannot or will not express our concerns, our hopes, our desires in the most human and intimate—thus universal—language, then we are doomed to near-term failure.

Earlier this year, as you are all acutely aware, more than 6,000 people who had previously been forbidden this option entered one of life's most profound commitments. That's 6,000 individuals, 3,000 couples—I don't doubt that you have, but let's think about those numbers. If these people, at least, cannot be persuaded to take some action, aside from the obvious action of voting, then the bravery of our Multnomah County commissioners is for naught, and the long road from Stonewall is not prologue, but simply past.

All right, enough rhetoric, what is this meager proposal? The first part of the idea is so absurdly simple that it almost shouldn't have to be stated. The 3,000 couples should write letters to the editor to every daily, weekly and semi-weekly newspaper in this state, from the boulevards of Portland to the lanes of Lakeview and Burns. Everyone in every square inch of this state, not merely the urban centers, must realize that this issue is ultimately about people, not some ancient sacrosanct institution, and only real stories from real people can accomplish that.

The 3,000 couples, most of whom have yet to spend \$10,000 on some elaborate ceremony, also could surely spare the nominal fee to place an argument in the voters' pamphlet. Yes, the proponents of DOMA gathered 100,000 more signatures than they needed, but imagine for one moment a voters' pamphlet where only half or one-third of the newlywed gay and lesbian couples in this state placed arguments against DOMA. Imagine a voters' pamphlet the size of the Portland white pages, filled with the personal stories of fellow Oregonians, neighbors, co-workers, siblings

and parents who have longed for years for an opportunity they never thought they'd see. Imagine that tome in every mailbox across the state. Imagine you are not in favor of same-sex marriage but faced with the humanity of the situation as you sit down to vote. Could you possibly, in good conscience, check the yes box?

I know this is a modest idea, but I truly feel that this has the potential to touch people and show them the true impact of their votes this November.

IAN PAUL SIEREN
Portland

Revolutionizing sex and power this summer

TO THE EDITOR:

Imagine that you and I, as gay men, could actually do some simple things in the next two months that could bring about regime change in our state and nation, and defeat HIV and STDs in our community.

If a few thousand gay men who haven't voted in the past decided to vote and get their friends to vote, that could make a difference in our swing state (and in defeating Ballot Measure 36). If a few hundred high-risk men decided to get tested for STDs, we might be able to stop the new epidemics of syphilis, gonorrhea and even HIV among gay/bi men in Portland. (New cases of syphilis and gonorrhea have increased alarmingly for the past four years in Portland's gay male population.)

So here are three ways you could, in less than two hours, help make a profound difference in defeating HIV and STDs and promoting gay voter participation:

1. Get tested and register with your friends. Ask your friends to come with you to one of the following parties and get a free HIV, syphilis and/or hepatitis C test (if you are sexually active and haven't been tested in the past three months) and register to vote or update your registration (if you've moved since you last voted or haven't voted in several years):

- **Manhunt Party:** Scavenger hunt for interesting guys with prizes Aug. 27 at Scandals.
- **All-Ages Dance Party:** Aug. 28 at Club Escape.
- **Dancing/Find-a-Guy Party:** Sept. 3 and Oct. 1 at C.C. Slaughters.
- **1984 Dance Party:** '80s music and Big Brother volunteers videotaping guys to put on

television screens and encouraging people to send messages to each other Sept. 17 and Oct. 8 at Boxxes/Brig.

2. Help with bar outreach. Donate two hours to help the Queer Love Action Network for Discovery and the No on Constitutional Amendment 36 campaign hand out safer-sex kits and voter registration reminders in gay bars any Thursday, Friday or Saturday evening in August or September. The deadline for all voter registrations and updates is Oct. 10, so we're really trying to consistently remind everyone how important voter registration and HIV/STD testing are. To find out more about volunteering contact Q-LAND outreach coordinator Michael Linder at 503-223-8822, ext. 3, or linder@hei.net.

3. Talk about testing and voting. Talk to three friends about why you think testing and voting are so important this summer, and ask them how they feel. Voter apathy and safer-sex apathy are caused by our not talking about sex and power and what we want and don't want. Talking about sex and power as gay/bi men is important; believing we can make a huge difference in both realms is crucial to our survival as a community.

Thanks for imagining how we can make a difference together—and acting to make our dreams reality.

BART CHURCH
Portland

Role reversal

TO THE EDITOR:

I was taken aback by D. Timothy Bealer's letter to the editor concerning my article "The Joy of Switch Hitting" ["Blowing My Top," Aug. 6].

Even a cursory reading reveals a desire to explode the stereotypes of what a bottom or a top are. At no time did I or the article "indicate that bottoms are equated somehow with the feminine role." In fact, the exact opposite was the point: that we no longer have to cling to hetero stereotypes. Remember when I put Henry Rollins in a moment's fantasy as a bottom?

But two points of Mr. Bealer's letter actually disturbed me. I found it odd that he equates a "feminine role" with something unequal—that what is feminine is somehow inferior to something masculine. A progressive community respects all roles played as equal and healthy. What is feminine is never "less than"—no matter if it's a feminine top or a feminine bottom.

transitions

Sara Gogol, 1948-2004

Author and Portland Community College instructor Sara Gogol died Aug. 5 after a two-month struggle with ovarian cancer. She was 56.

She was born June 4, 1948, in Chicago. She received a bachelor's degree from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She moved to Portland in the early 1970s, received master's degrees from Portland State University and taught English and women's studies at PCC's Sylvania Campus for more than 20 years.

A longtime member of the Portland women's community, Gogol authored several books, including *Hard-Fought Victories: Women Coaches Making a Difference* and *Playing in New League: The Women of the American Basketball League's First Season*. She often said that writing about women athletes gave her the opportunity to experience athletics vicariously; when she was young, in the pre-



Title IX days, there were no organized team sports for girls.

She previously taught English as a second

language, writing several books for young adults about the experiences of immigrants. She also lived for a while at WHO Farm (now We'Moon Land), where she built a small house for herself.

An avid hiker, Gogol founded The FOREST group in the early 1980s, coining the acronym: Feminists of Oregon Really Excited about Seeing Trees, an example of her puckish humor. More recently, she had taken up kayaking and found hours of happiness gliding down local rivers.

Her family included her beloved dogs. She was devoted to Rosie, her Labrador retriever. Katie, a golden retriever, and Yarrow, a border terrier, shared her life before Rosie.

Gogol is survived by her partner of 17 1/2 years, Elaine Carter, to whom she was married March 8; brother, Edward; sister-in-law, Marilyn Adams; and parents, Rose and Sam.

Remembrances may be made to the Ovarian Cancer National Alliance. For more information visit www.ovariancancer.org.

A memorial service is scheduled for 2 p.m. Aug. 22 at First Unitarian Church, 1011 S.W. 12th Ave. Holman's Funeral Service is handling the arrangements.