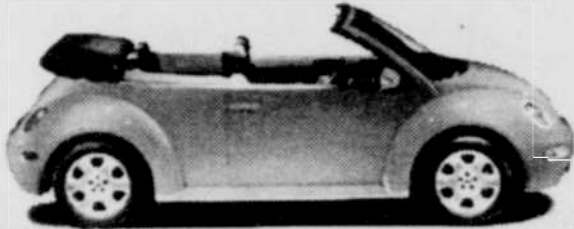



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Speak Out

Country isn't free

TO THE EDITOR:

The United States, I think, has turned sour. The Constitution has become meaningless. There's a song that says, "We are living in wartime," and this is too true. We have the war on Iraq, and we have the war on freeing gay rights. I am no longer proud to be an American because the country is no longer free.

Being gay, as I am, it is very difficult to walk down the street and wonder who's going to make an offending comment about gays. Do I not have the freedom to love who I care to love? There's a question that I am going to ask the community: What are the differences between straight people and gay people? There is only one difference that separates homosexuals and heterosexuals: who we partner with. That is the only difference.

Gays take showers and pay bills and shop just like the rest of the community. Shouldn't the gay community have the same rights as everyone else in this "free" country? No one in this country is free anymore. It is not just the president who has taken my freedom away. It's the conservative Christians, the police, it's your neighbor next door who has that Yes on 36 sign in his or her yard.

When it comes to the gay issue, what is the first thing that comes to mind? AIDS? Here's something that might surprise you: AIDS exploded in Africa. And guess what? It started with heterosexuals, not gays. So that would be an invalid excuse. It's simply because of the sex issue.

I don't criticize my straight friends when they go to the bedroom. So don't criticize me when I go to bed with whomever I care about. All I am saying to the community and the country is this: America is no longer safe for the people to live peacefully. If we the people don't stop the hate, our country is going to slowly destroy itself one issue at a time.

Don't hate us because we give and receive love from those of the same sex. Get to know us, and then make your judgments.

RYAN LAINE BURCH
McMinnville

HRC should take a stand

TO THE EDITOR:

The Sept. 5 issue and the Sept. 19 ["Stand Up for America"] issue had items about Margaret Cho being "uninvited" to the Democratic National Convention by the Human Rights Campaign, in order to avoid a "potential media firestorm." I think it is high time there was a media firestorm.

I, for one, am sick to death of "turning the other cheek" to not upset the opposition. They don't think twice about upsetting any of us with their constant anti-gay attacks. It is time we stop cowering in the corner and let ourselves be heard loudly and clearly. The terminally politically correct Human Rights Campaign will never receive another dime from me until it starts to take bold stands about the issues that are paramount to this community.

JIM GIANAKIS
Portland

Queers contribute to economy

TO THE EDITOR:

In the recent months (or maybe not so recent) our "president," George "Dubya" Bush, has acted like everyone from the queer community is of no importance to him, or to America. He has repeatedly smashed our attempts to try and gain equal rights and be citizens on the same

level as everyone else, as have many states.

I propose it's high time that something is done, besides protest, to show America how important we truly are to the economy. I frequent the America Online same-sex marriage debate boards, and what some people on there have suggested could really prove something to the president and America. If all gay people, before using their money, put a pink slash in the corner of every bill they own, it would prove how much we truly matter, not just as people, but to the economy (which seems to matter most around here, anyway). This may sound idealistic to some, but if we put the message out that this is happening, it would be realized that we are not just a meaningless 10 percent of the population like so many claim us to be. I hope you print this as soon as possible, so this could start being done on a national level.

LORELEI MACKENZIE
Manalapan, N.J.

just asking Now that President

Bush has lost the support of Log Cabin Republicans, do you feel he will learn a valuable lesson about remaining loyal to his queer supporters, or will this give the GOP license to become even more anti-gay?

There's a lesson to be learned, but it's not Bush's to learn. Gay Republicans need to wise up and rethink their loyalty to a party that is actively hostile to our civil equality. The wealthy upper-crust queens need to trade their tax-cutting stinginess for a more evolved social consciousness.

DAVID DEYO
Beaverton

...

George Bush couldn't care less about the loss of support of Log Cabin Republicans. He may, in fact, be relieved not to have any queer supporters. (How could he become more anti-gay???) I think their decision is commendable, although I always thought that a gay Republican was an oxymoron.

I hope that Log Cabin will throw its support behind Kerry/Edwards and bring an end to this disgraceful, illegitimate Bush regime.

CAROL MEYER
Minneapolis

next issue Televangelist Jimmy

Swaggart said during a worship service that he'd kill any gay man who looked at him "and tell God he died." He apologized after getting complaints from several queer groups, saying the remark wasn't meant to harm anyone. Did the mainstream media do a thorough job covering these events, or were they downplayed? (Please see related item on Page 20.) Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)