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**speak out**

**Wrong rights**

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing to respond to your Oct. 1 article "Phoenix Rising: Crime Survivors Turn Tragedies into a Platform for Change." I was glad for *Just Out's* interest in covering this issue and pleased with the overall reporting of our efforts to bring about a more just response to violence through criminal justice reform.

There was one factual error that I want to address and clarify its significance for crime survivors. The article incorrectly reported that I have testified before Congress in support of the federal "victims rights" constitutional amendment. As advocates for a system that works to meet the needs of crime survivors and communities affected by violence, Crime Survivors for Community Safety (formerly Survivors Advocating for an Effective System) has taken a strong position in opposition to the amendment.

There are a number of reasons for our position on this issue. The primary reason is that this constitutional amendment represents misplaced energy. At the same time that legislators push for this amendment, funding for victims assistance programs has been cut drastically. We support comprehensive legislation that will help meet the needs of survivors through counseling, shelter care and employment assistance. These real needs of survivors are not addressed by the proposed amendment.

The amendment could put domestic violence survivors at greater risk. In situations where batterers make false claims of criminal conduct or when victims defend themselves against their batterers and the result is the arrest of the true victim, the batterer would then be able to exercise the rights in this amendment. In this situation, batterers would be able to obtain information about the whereabouts and release of their victims, object to their release and have influence on the true victims' prosecution and sentencing.

For more information on why we take this position, people can visit the American Civil Liberties Union's site at [www.aclu.org](http://www.aclu.org).

I believe that criminal justice reform work is a microcosm for the larger struggle to bring about human and civil rights for all of us. Thanks for the opportunity to share our vision and hope with the community.

ARWEN BIRD  
Crime Survivors for Community Safety

Editor's note: *Just Out* regrets the error.

**Bush's anal sex lies**

TO THE EDITOR:

An Oct. 1 *Just Out* story failed to acknowledge that many HIV-positive men feel demonized by the "HIV Stops with Me" crusade ["HIV Stops with Them"]. Furthermore, the Bush administration is funding this crusade by trashing existing HIV prevention efforts.

Bush appointees are shamefully perpetuating lies about anal sex that were started during President Ronald Reagan's administration. For example, an official government site, [www.fda.gov/oashi/aids/condom.html](http://www.fda.gov/oashi/aids/condom.html), quotes an unnamed "surgeon general" as having said "anal intercourse is simply too dangerous to practice" because "condoms may be more likely to break during anal intercourse" and "it can cause tissue in the rectum to tear and bleed."

The above quote is not an oversight. To appease Christian-Republicans who teach that condoms do not work, Bush officials revised every condom Web page under the guise of science.

Many anti-gay Web sites erroneously cite the "scientific source" of this quote as being a

Sept. 18, 1987, *USA Today* interview with Surgeon General C. Everett Koop. Actually, this warning came much later from a task force convened by Koop that was meant to pacify those who opposed mailing to every household in America a brochure recommending condoms for the prevention of HIV.

In the final days of the Reagan administration, a Feb. 18, 1989, *Los Angeles Times* news story said Koop's "task force issued a new warning Friday that the risk of condom failure in anal intercourse is so high that the practice should be avoided entirely—with condoms or without." But this warning is not based on science. British studies have shown that condoms break very rarely during anal sex with adequate lubrication.

HIV prevention programs are suffering under Bush. I recently visited a federally funded HIV testing clinic that was negligently distributing a 1987 revision brochure recommending nonoxynol-9 spermicidal lube to prevent AIDS. This is inexcusable, because four years ago the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a warning that "N-9 should not be recommended as an effective means of HIV prevention."

In fact, the lube KY-Plus (containing N-9) was "most likely to damage the rectal epithelium," according to a study, "Relative Safety of Sexual Lubricants for Rectal Intercourse," published in the June issue of *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*. Other common lubes, such as Astroglide, caused "some degree of rectal damage" in large doses. Only the methylcellulose and carrageenan-based lube formulations were not toxic, as was the phosphate-buffered saline control substance. The seaweed extract carrageenan and the chemical compound methylcellulose are inexpensive, tasteless food thickening agents, but they are not yet being marketed as sex lubes.

Gay adolescent men deserve accurate health information based on current science and not homophobic Christian-Republican ideology. Teaching children that condoms do not work and blaming HIV-positive men for spreading AIDS will lead to more HIV infections. Why bother using a condom if they don't work anyway and you can blame the other guy?

THOMAS KRAEMER  
Corvallis

**Bush: The truth is an option**

TO THE EDITOR:

The presidential/vice presidential debates show us that the Bush administration still wants us to connect Iraq and 9/11, just as it wants us to believe in weapons of mass destruction and that lesbians and gay men are second-class citizens.

Even though George W. Bush may appear to be a liar, an analysis of hierarchies gives us a broader view, a fresh perspective of what we are observing in our president.

In his book *Drylongso*, anthropologist John Gwaltney presents interviews with many African Americans, several of whom discuss the patterns of lying that develop in the hierarchy between whites and blacks. One woman remarks that the difference in whites and blacks is that blacks know when they are lying. A man states that white folks don't want to hear the truth and that is why they are always lying to blacks; whites can't tell the difference between a lie and the truth.

In hierarchies, people obtain information from peers and people in levels above them, but are less likely to listen to people in groups lower on the hierarchy. For example, heterosexuals are not required to learn about lesbians and gay men before they cast their ballots concerning same-sex marriage.

An excerpt from *Clueless at the Top* describes this typical hierarchical pattern:

Higher people in hierarchies often appear to be lying. What appears as lies to lower groups seem honest to higher people who are operating with a small amount of true information and a large amount of blame, judgments, self-interest, lack of exposure to lower groups and fear. Higher people sometimes go through elaborate contortions to support their false beliefs, while building their case on false information. Therefore, they appear comical, crazy, ridiculous or devious to lower people.

In the United States, a standard of free choice exists. If people on top want to build hierarchies, they must find ways to convince everyone else to remain engaged in their hierarchy. One way to recruit and retain lower people while denying the hierarchy that benefits them is to use rationalizations, rhetoric and "noble causes."

Bush has isolated himself at the top of powerful hierarchies in the United States and has placed himself on top of his own world hierarchy. Even if his advisers and staff are not from groups that are high on our hierarchies—white, male, wealthy, heterosexual, able-bodied, tall, Christian, educated in elite private schools, speaking standard English—they identify with higher groups and their top-of-the-hierarchy perspectives.

Is Mr. Bush intentionally lying, or is he just clueless at the top? Whichever it is, the result is the same. As with anyone who operates solely with top-of-the-hierarchy perspectives, the truth is an optional part of the discussion.

CHARLOTTE AND HARRIET CHILDRESS  
Eugene

**What were they thinking?**

TO THE EDITOR:

I can understand conservative Christians voting for Measure 36, but gay men? A television ad launched by Yes on 36 shows a gay couple proclaiming they've taken legal steps to guarantee certain health benefits, they think marriage should only be between a man and a woman, and they're going to vote for Measure 36.

What these traitors, uh, men don't say is there are many more legal rights to marriage than health benefits, such as payment of wages to a relative of a deceased employee; payment of workers' compensation benefits after death; control, division, acquisition and disposition of community property after dissolution of marriage; and more than 50 others.

But more importantly, banning same-sex marriage is in violation of the 14th Amendment's guarantee of equal protection of the laws. Denying one class of citizens rights granted to another is discrimination. No matter how one feels about same-sex marriage, this should be considered before voting for any prohibitions against it. I feel most, if not all, prohibitions against gay marriage will be struck down by the courts on the basis of denying equal rights.

What were these men thinking? Do they really want the rest of us to be denied rights enjoyed by others?

TARA TAYLOR  
Portland

**Just say no**

TO THE EDITOR:

After reading and comparing the "yes" and "no" arguments in the voters' pamphlet on Measure 36, I noticed something I wanted to share. The "no" arguments are from personal experiences. These families will be adversely