

Empty nest syndrome

No on 36 campaign closes up shop after a valiant effort

It's starting to look and feel very empty around the *Just Out* offices. For the last many weeks we have shared building space with the No on 36 campaign. Their bustling energy, their crowds of volunteers, the constant stream of visitors and a continual flow of familiar faces became warm and comfortable. The day after the election, the door was closed, the rooms dark. Emptiness seeped from beneath the doorway. Now volunteers are dismantling and cleaning out, throwing away the remnants of hundreds and thousands of hours of hard work.

We all have our own memories, thoughts, worries and recollections of this election. Some are big and painful, too big to wrap thoughts around. Here's a few smaller pieces of mine that I'd like to pass on. I look forward to hearing from you in return with your shared thoughts and memories.

I was touched by sincere words from Basic Rights Oregon executive director Roey Thorpe as she addressed a crowd of enthusiastic supporters the night after the election. She admitted to concern about how she'd be greeted and thanked the crowd for not throwing blame and disdain on herself and the campaign. There is validity to her concerns. There is history here. Talk to some of the Portlanders who worked in leadership roles on the early campaigns against Ballot Measures 8, 9 and 13. Talk to them if you can find them, that is. It is not uncommon for us to turn on our own. But we're not going to do that this time. Right?

This is not to suggest that the campaign is not to be fodder for debate. Clearly this will be happening. Strategies are to be questioned, concerns are to be voiced. This will happen with BRO and the campaign staff internally, and it should also occur externally. There is a need for a forum for our community to come together, ask questions, hear answers and use this info to gather resources and energy for what comes next.

The fact of the matter is, every now and then, ya just gotta sit down and process. It's a requirement of forward movement.

Questioning is not akin to attacking. Questioning, done respectfully, does not imply blame. While there might be questions as to the hows and whys, there can be no doubt of the campaign's integrity, the dedication of the staff and volunteers and their deep desire to have defeated Measure 36. Anyone who might have had doubt needed only to have looked at the faces of the staff Nov. 2.


And already there's brightness in the gloom of defeat. As I'm writing this column, an e-mail comes in from Eugene announcing that students at Spencer Butte Middle School are planing a rally to protest the passage of Measure 36. Middle school? Isn't that 12-, 13- and 14-year-olds? As stated in the e-mail, "The younger generation will be our salvation." Middle school students are rallying to our side. Don't for one minute think that hope is lost.

It wasn't all bad news on election night. In Portland, openly gay Sam Adams won a fiercely contested seat on the City Council. Now I don't want to be pushy or premature, but here's my plan for Adams. I see two terms on the council and then it's Sam Adams, Portland's first openly gay mayor. By then we'll dispense with the label; office seekers will no longer be straight or gay, they'll simply be candidates.

But wait, there's more—after two terms as mayor, the now distinguished, hard-bodied, silver-haired Adams heads for Washington, D.C. To the House? Nah, I think not. It's Sam Adams, two-term U.S. senator from Oregon. And after a long, successful career in public life, he and his partner and their seven cats retire to their beachfront home, where they while away the hours with entertaining and organic gardening. The only uncertainty in this prediction: When exactly will Adams find time to seek out a partner? Hey, Sam, don't forget the *Just Friends Voice Personal Ads*. They work—really, they do.

The night that Tom Potter was elected mayor, he had the city at his beck and call. He could have gone anywhere, he could have met with anyone. What did he do? He came to the No on 36 campaign gathering and took a place among sadness when he could well have been celebrating his own achievement. The next night, where's the mayor-elect? Back with us, at our gathering, again tempering his celebration with our pain. Our mayor, as was his predecessor, is on our side. It's good to be blue.

So, looking ahead, what next? The Legislature, the Oregon Supreme Court, the U.S. Supreme Court—all this and more lies in our future. We elect a new president in 2008, and it's time to get started now. I'm thinking Hillary Rodham Clinton. And here at home, we must plan now to select and groom a viable candidate to replace U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith. It's time to get the red out.

Finally, Oregonians and Americans blinded to the simple truth of civil rights should look to Massachusetts for vision and guidance. Has gay marriage there brought society to an end? Nope, quite the opposite. Gay marriage in Massachusetts should rightfully be credited with breaking the 87-year-old curse of the Bambino and finally allowing the Boston Red Sox to win the World Series. So, Oregonians, if you want to see that lousy basketball team of yours in the playoffs any-time soon, you'd better start digging us all out from under the enormous pile of crap that got dumped on this state Nov. 2. 

REFLECTIONS

10 years ago in *just out*... Vol. 12 No. 1, Nov. 4, 1994

- "While a slim majority of Americans actually support gays in the military, polls consistently show that the vast majority of Americans, even those who normally support gay rights, vehemently oppose gay marriage," gay columnist Gabriel Rotello wrote in *New York Newsday*. "No senator or governor from any state openly favors it. President Clinton openly opposes it.... Groups like the Human Rights Campaign Fund and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force have never taken official positions on marriage or even bothered to poll the community about it."
- Former Portland Police Chief Tom Potter withdrew from being considered to head a federal community policing program after a Justice Department official called his advocacy for gay and lesbian rights a "problem" for the Clinton administration.
- The battle is heating up among long-distance telephone carriers to attract gay and lesbian customers. Working Assets Long Distance company recently handed Oregon's No on 13 Committee a check for \$24,000 to help defeat Ballot Measure 13, a proposed discriminatory initiative to be decided on by voters Nov. 8.
- Cmdr. Mike Garvey of the Portland Police Bureau's central precinct says cops have increased their presence in the Stark Street area during the past four months, in the form of more foot and biking patrols. "We want the gay community to feel comfortable and are doing what we can to ensure that."

- It has been nearly a year since the state Court of Appeals upheld a \$51,000 jury award against the Oregon Citizens Alliance and its spokesman Scott Lively, and the plaintiff in that case, free-lance photographer Catherine Stauffer, has yet to see a penny. According to her lawyer, she probably never will.



- Mexican/Mexican American gathering: lesbians, dykes, queers, butches, femmes, diesel dykes! You are invited to a gathering Nov. 19 to meet each other, to know each other and to support each other as Chicana, Tejana, Chola and Mexican American lesbians.
- A gay-bashing hot line has been set up by the Department of Justice. Call 800-347-HATE if you have witnessed or been the victim of homophobic violence.
- The Multnomah County Health Department is conducting paid, confidential interviews of African American gay and bisexual men. The surveys are informal and address frequency of condom use, level of communication with sexual partners and methods of obtaining information. Participants will receive a \$15 gift certificate to Fred Meyer.

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WHIM OF A MAJORITY: A major blow to marriage equality in Oregon

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NORTHWEST • Queer teen empowerment workshop offered; police roundtable will discuss queer youth suicide; Cascade AIDS Project elects new board officers and members; Human Rights Campaign scorecard downgrades U.S. Reps. Peter DeFazio and Darlene Hooley, D-Ore.; grants aim to further voter participation; restaurateur raises awareness about abuse; Lawrence attorney speaks in Portland; City Club hosts "Now What?" forum

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NATIONAL • New report estimates 65,000 gays and lesbians are serving in the military; Log Cabin Republicans sue U.S. government to overturn "don't ask, don't tell"

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