

Speak out

Pride Northwest needs you

TO THE EDITOR:

As of Jan. 31, 2005, I have resigned my position as vice president, entertainment chairwoman and safety coordinator of Pride Northwest, because I am moving to the East Coast to join my life partner.

I have been involved with Pride Northwest for 10 years, and it's time to move on.

Pride Northwest is facing the challenge of recruiting new board members and volunteers. Six members are left with the task of putting on the annual event without much help from our community. This needs to change.

All year round, there is lots of hard work involved in putting this event on; it takes commitment and dedication. So many in our community just expect the event to be happening and, yeah, they should volunteer, but....

No more excuses, no more buts—get involved now! Pride Northwest and our community need YOU.

I am thankful to have had this experience. I met many great people and gained lots of insights, and it was fun getting the event off the ground and seeing it grow. Well, this is my farewell from Portland after living here for 14 years and doing Pride for 10 years.

Thanks, and good luck. One last thing to the community at large: Stop complaining and get involved instead.

PATRICIA MUHLBAUER
Portland

One person at a time

TO THE EDITOR:

I found my voice yesterday after 28 years of looking. I came out to my mother. This has been one of the most frightening, enlightening and relieving experiences of my life.

With all that has gone on the past few months, I wanted to say to everyone that we may not have a voice in society as of yet, but if we struggle, fight, work together and keep open minds, we will someday find it. I plan to do my best to seek out people who are uncomfortable with homosexuality and talk to them—really talk and find out why and show that we are human, just like them.

Just maybe we can change the world one person at a time. I am going to try!

ANGIE McMASTER
Troutdale

Ignorance lost the election

TO THE EDITOR:

I have heard some disturbing "rumblings" on the streets and in the media regarding the recent election—rumblings that the gay men and lesbians of this country somehow "lost the election for us."

Gay people didn't lose the election. Ignorance and prejudice lost the election. Let's not blame the victims here; no one worked harder on this election than gay people, and no one had more at stake. Ultimately, the entire country will be the victim of four more years of this administration.

The numbers here in Oregon certainly tell the story; enough so-called liberals and/or Democrats voted for John Kerry...but just couldn't get over their distaste of gay people or their feelings of superiority to grant them the rights they deserve simply by being Americans.

Let's be clear: Measure 36 was NOT about giving gay people rights. We already have rights

guaranteed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. We do not have to go begging to straight America, hat in hand, asking for this, that or the other.

No, Measure 36 was about legitimizing and legislating discrimination and prejudice; one only had to read the hateful and hate-filled literature to see that. To deny a group of people something that the rest of the people are allowed is the VERY DEFINITION of word "discrimination"!

Requiring that candidates address the issue of gay people in America is hardly meant to ruin their campaign, but let's be real: In this day and age, should that even BE an issue? Especially with so many other issues facing our nation, should allowing a segment of Americans the right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" be a discussion?

No, what SHOULD be a discussion for the next four years is how straight America can educate themselves. How gay-friendly congresspeople can convince their constituents and their fellows that gay people are not evil nor a threat to anything. How to persuade women Republicans, minority Republicans and gay Republicans that they are supporting an organization that hates them as individuals, and that will continue to work against them and their best interests at every turn. What SHOULD be a discussion is how to stop the perception that there is a problem with gay people at all.

More than 160 years ago, Charles Dickens had the Ghost of Christmas Present give this warning: "This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both...but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom." Certainly at the present Christmas, this warning still sounds.

DONALD FINCH
Portland

The bubble bursts

TO THE EDITOR:

I feel like I was kicked in the stomach. When Bonnie Tinker expressed concern for GLBTQ youth who've never seen a setback and don't have the years of experience to see this as just one step backward in a long process of change, I realized why I was so shocked. Like many younger folks living in the big gay bubble of Portland, I have never tasted hatred quite like this.

Now that I am done crying, I spend a lot of time convincing myself that it doesn't help to harbor resentment for the gleeful celebrators of the Yes on 36 campaign or my pro-Bush neighbor down the street. I am concentrating on keeping my spirits up, my outlook positive and my stress level low; I don't want to help them oppress me by ruining my health and happiness.

I am planning on reactivating as a pro-choice activist. I have vowed to support our supporters in national and local politics. I tell my neighbors, my conservative "in-laws" and anyone else I can find how much this hurts, lest anyone think politics really doesn't affect our lives.

And every once in a while, because I can't be good all the time, I refuse to let a "Bush/Cheney" bumper sticker merge in traffic.

ERIN SEXTON-SAYLER
Portland

Access for all

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing to tell you of a recent controversy and to ask you to support our ongoing work.

As you may be aware through the local news

coverage, a conservative religious group based in Pennsylvania recently targeted Hollywood Theatre because it vehemently opposed a film that was shown here by an organization that rented our facility. The film was shown twice Dec. 1 as a fund-raiser for a Portland nonprofit that supports gay and lesbian teens as they struggle to cope with their sexual identity.

In just a matter of days, artistic director Richard Beer and I each received more than 2,000 e-mails from around the world, the vast majority of which were form letters. Many of the e-mails also included personal (i.e., damning and venomous) comments. We even received a few threatening phone calls. A small group protested on the night of the event. Despite the protests and threats, we upheld our agreement with our rental client. We added some security measures, and the event went on as planned.

At the risk of developing carpal tunnel syndrome, Richard took the time to respond to each e-mail protest. He explained that the nonprofit Oregon Film & Video Foundation owns Hollywood Theatre and that we provide our space to a broad range of organizations, including environmental groups, parochial schools, public schools, church groups, animal rights groups, political action groups, health organizations and many others.

While we respect the right of everyone to voice an opinion about our programming or the events held here, being the recipient of such a barrage of negative messages has been a new (and exhausting!) experience for our staff. At the same time, it has affirmed the importance of our role. We are here to serve all members of the community as best we can.

This is where we you can help.

Since the foundation took possession of the historic building in 1997, one of our biggest concerns has been the accessibility of the building to our physically impaired patrons. While we are still seeking an architectural solution to add an elevator in the theater, we have plans to install a sturdy handrail that will make it easier for many folks to climb the stairs and steep ramp to our upstairs auditoriums. A decorative safety guardrail will also be installed on the landing. Because of the complex nature of the building's curving architecture and the sheer distance the rail must extend, this project will cost almost \$5,000.

In this season of giving, we hope that you will consider making a secure charitable contribution to the theater by going to www.hollywoodtheatre.org/donate or mailing it to 4122 N.E. Sandy Blvd., Portland, OR 97212. All gifts are greatly appreciated and are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

ELLEN BERGSTONE BEER
Oregon Film & Video Foundation

Send your opinions
on all topics in
"Letters to the Editor"
at www.justout.com



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"I have to date lost
22 lbs and am off Zoloft.
All thanks to you.
You are a goddess."

-Don Clarkson, Mayor (Mosier, OR)
and Personal Coach

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