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supporting it. This picture led me to realize how we can create a more attractive alternative while exposing the truth.

Now is the perfect time to create a new kind of union—not only for same-sex couples but for everyone who supports equality. This union will have all the rights and privileges of “marriage” but will be based on one’s commitment to fairness, not one’s gender. I like the idea of choosing a name for our new union from our Oregon roots—the Chinook Trade Language that was widely used in the 1800s by both natives and non-natives.

Implementing this plan will be fun—joining many diverse groups together in our common language, our common values. Decades from now, the few people who use “marry” will be choosing a hierarchical union. Will one person still be committing to “obey” the other?

CHARLOTTE BEHM
Springfield

From tears to action

TO THE EDITOR:

For a year we have had a taste of equality. Something that is bigger than the certificate on our wall or the vows we said to each other. Something that means we are protected.

After an emotional day together, we realized April 14 that this journey started with a \$60 fee paid to the county for our marriage license. With a little asking around, we were told that the county would be refunding the \$60 fee to the 3,022 couples who were married last spring. That’s \$181,320.

This is where we can take action. If all 3,022 couples were to donate their \$60 refund to Basic Rights Oregon, our money would go to lawyers and lobbyists to continue our fight in the Legislature and the courts. Sure, we could easily use that \$60 to drown our sorrows in an evening with friends. Or we can generate \$181,320 toward lawyers and lobbyists to help us create change. So we encourage all couples married last spring to do the same. We encourage those who believe in the fight for equality to join us.

Together we can turn our tears into action!

SAMANTHA SWAIM
KRISTIN STEELE
Portland

Support, don’t demonize, county commissioners

TO THE EDITOR:

I was also depressed the other day when I saw *The Oregonian’s* front-page headline blaring, “Oregon Supreme Court Nullifies Gay Marriages.”

You could feel their delight at destroying the hopes of 3,000 happily united couples; it was the verdict *The Oregonian*, along with the Defense of Marriage Coalition and its allies, had been praying for. It really hit me hard, although marriage has never been an issue for me personally and possibly never will be.

What really pisses me off is that Diane Linn and the Multnomah County commissioners are being made the scapegoats, when they should be applauded for taking both legal and ethical action when they began to hand out the licenses. The idiotic Rogue Desk of the idiotic

Willamette Week went so far as to make Diane Linn its “Rogue of the Year” for 2004.

The commissioners are taking all the heat from both sides: gays who want someone to blame for the outcome of the passing of Measure 36, and conservatives who have a target for their crusade to keep queers in second-class citizen status. It isn’t right.

Diane Linn has my respect. She has never backed down or given in to critics, and she’s always stood by the decision, explaining their reasons for issuing the licenses. Her comment after hearing of the Supreme Court’s decision the other day was that it saddened her to think of its effect on the couples who she believes “deserve equal treatment.”

Stop making Diane Linn your punching bag! In time, despite current setbacks, the actions of the Multnomah County commissioners may come to be seen as courageous and prescient. Those who stand in the way of progress will eventually, and surely, be crushed.

ANTHONY SCHLOTTMAN
Portland

An open letter from the Community of Welcoming Congregations

TO THE EDITOR:

Last year, as Multnomah County took the brave steps toward ending inequality, you invited us into your lives. Clergy came from Oregon and Washington to stand in solidarity with you, so that you could be wed with dignity

and honor, even in such strange and unusual circumstances.

We were touched by the vulnerability you expressed and by the pride your family and friends took in being present with you. We will never forget those magical moments we shared as you stood before us, grateful to be able to acknowledge the lives you so carefully have been building together.

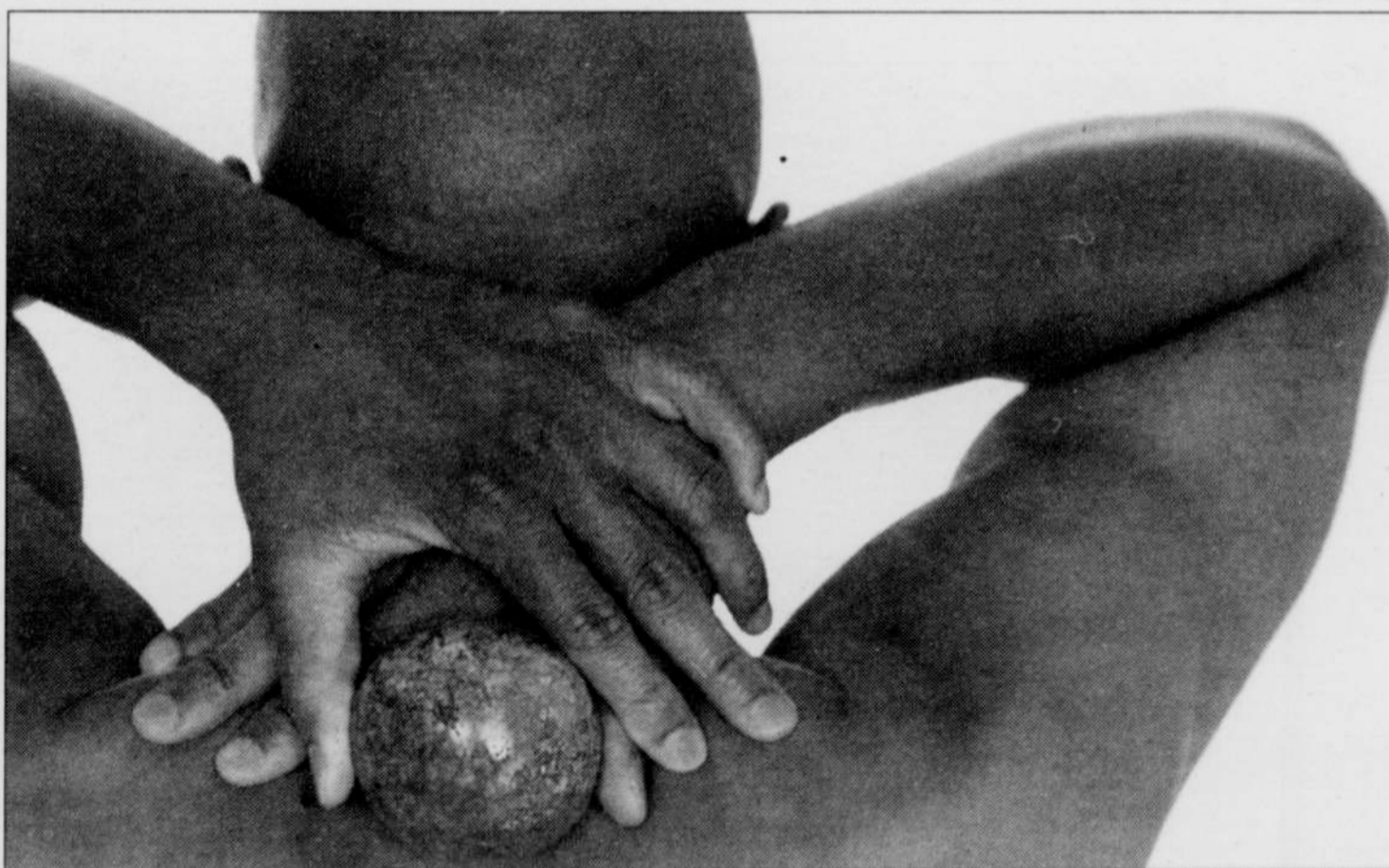
We affirm your love and your lives. No one’s union can be declared “null and void.” At the time, we believed your marriages were born in sanctity; for us, nothing has changed. Your weddings were sacred acts, and the love you share and the lives you are building matter. No authority can diminish what you have vowed together. The Community of Welcoming Congregations stands with you today as we continue down the road toward justice.

Someone dear to us once said of those times at Keller Auditorium that we were buoyed by a sea of love, powered by winds of justice. We encourage you to hold the magic of those moments in your hearts as fuel to sustain you in the struggle, to feed your love in the present and to carry you forward to a just future with the assurance that you are just as you were created to be. God bless each of you.

THE REV. TARA WILKINS
Community of Welcoming Congregations

correction

Because of an editing error, the April 16 article “If You Build It...” misspelled the name of Portland GLBT Community Center committee member Susan Remmers. *Just Out* regrets the error.



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