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letters

Spanish, a National Language

TO THE EDITOR:

If someone is proud to be an American and wants to sing it in Spanish, what's the problem?

Did you know one of the world's oldest and most successful democracies, Switzerland, has four official languages and only has a population of 7 million? None of those languages is English, by the way, but most Swiss people speak English quite well, too.

Finland, with a population of 5 million, has two official languages, Finnish and Swedish. Ethnic Swedes constitute just more than 5 percent of the population in Finland. Historically, a minority of Swedes oppressed a majority of Finns for centuries; still, the Finnish government sees fit to accommodate ethnic Swedes within its borders.

Again, in Finland, English is not an official language, but most Finns I have met in Finland speak English, too.

My favorite multilingual success story is South Africa, with 11 official languages for 46 million inhabitants. South Africa is truly "the rainbow nation." Luckily for Americans, one of their official languages is indeed English, although only about 20 percent of South Africans speak English at home.

If you are going to travel to Switzerland, Finland or South Africa, you can easily get around and converse with most people in English.

I don't think it is too much to ask that Americans make Spanish an official language and have English-speaking children learn Spanish in school. Any Spanish-speaking child I have met loves learning English. Why can't English-speaking American children greet the world with equal enthusiasm about learning another language?

I regret not being fluent in a second language, and the good and bad about English being so prevalently spoken in the world is that I do not "need" to learn another language.

I know it would be very expensive to require all American children to be bilingual, but I would much rather spend my tax dollars creating a rainbow nation here than militarizing the world with soldiers who only speak English. Can you imagine if all American soldiers were bilingual? I really think it would transform what we, as Americans, do in the world.

Our national anthem glorifies war in any language. And still, 200 years later, war is what we as Americans do so well. We have mastered war making; perhaps if more of us mastered another language, we would have more compassion for others and cultures different from our own.

In the end, it does not matter what language we speak; it only matters what language we are listening to. I want to be proud to be an American again. Perhaps if I learn to listen to Spanish more often, I will be.

JIM GIROD
Vancouver, Wash.

Don't Believe the Hype

TO THE EDITOR:

More than two years ago, we were married on the first day same-sex marriages were legal in Multnomah County. Our ability to do that was, in no small part, due to Diane Linn. For almost two decades we have been in a committed relationship, and first we want to thank Diane for taking a stand for us.

I'm not even interested in making the stark comparison between Diane Linn's real leadership and real results for the GLBT community with her opponent's. I am just going to focus on the deceptive characterization of Wheeler by some members of our community who wish to split the GLBT vote.

Some claim Wheeler is a friend of the GLBT community and supports our civil rights, including the right to marry. Where's the proof, you ask? It simply does not exist. Where was Wheeler when we had to fight vicious battles during the No on 13 and No on 9 campaigns? Absent! Sometimes, in front of progressive audiences, Wheeler talks about how strongly he supports gay marriage. Where was he when we fought for the basic right for our relationships to be legally recognized during the No on 36 campaign? Absent! Wheeler, a multi-millionaire with supposed ties to the community, has never donated \$10 or 10 minutes of time to support our battles.

The only association Wheeler has with the GLBT community is being a board member on his family's conservative (anti-gay, anti-labor and anti-choice) foundation when they gave money to anti-gay organizations. But he claims those are his daddy's values, not his. I need you to ask yourself this question: "Would I sit on a foundation that actively worked to roll back the progress and rights of the GLBT community, or any community I care about?" Those are his roots, that is his record, and that is how he should be judged.

Wheeler's campaign is the most deceptive I've ever seen. Wheeler, a lifelong Republican, knows he cannot be elected as county chair unless he paints himself as a progressive. Don't do his dirty work for him. Don't present him as something he's not, and don't support him. Wheeler does not deserve your vote! Don't believe the hype.

JAMES GREENE
WADE WALTERS
Portland

It's Not All About Us

TO THE EDITOR:

As a gay man living in Multnomah County, I find it insulting that *Just Out* seems to think the gay community should only be concerned with one issue, loyalty and the gay marriage referendum, when considering who should be the next CEO of Multnomah County.

Hello, there is a county to run, which is much more multifaceted than the one issue of gays and lesbians. We may think the world revolves around us, but it doesn't. For the record, there are gay men and women in Multnomah County who care about and understand the bigger, broader and more important issues that we should be concerned about in this upcoming election.

Let's assume that this is the only issue in the race. And let's assume we are supposed to give our loyalty to Diane Linn, "For Better, For Worse," because she supported the gay marriage referendum in Multnomah County [April 21]. If you extend this argument about owing loyalty to people, you leave some questions to be answered. *Just Out* gives readers the impression that the decision to extend marriage rights to gay couples was a unilateral one, made by Diane Linn alone. This is not the case. Diane Linn is a part of a collective body that made the decision. What about owing loyalty to Lisa

Naito, Maria Rojo de Steffey and Serena Cruz, the other three who so bravely made a stand for gay marriage? Ms. Naito and Ms. Rojo will remain on the county board after the election; Ms. Cruz will not, and all three of them are publicly supporting Ted Wheeler, not Diane Linn. Why should our loyalty be any less for them?

If you do the math, you have three of the four voices whom we owe our loyalty to not supporting Diane Linn in the upcoming election. Why reelect someone to office who is not wanted in the position by her colleagues? The county government is broken, and we have a chance to fix it. Furthermore, the union that represents Multnomah County workers is not supporting their boss, Diane Linn, either. They are supporting Ted Wheeler. This is a cry for help, and we the voters should pay attention to these signs.

If you take a minute to read about Ted Wheeler or make the effort to stop by his office and talk with him, you will find that not only is he one of the most intelligent individuals you may ever come across but that he is in fact an ally of the gay community; he supports gay marriage and equal rights based on sexual orientation. So if you vote for him, you are voting for gay rights. You are also showing your loyalty to three people instead of just one who made a brave decision to extend marriage rights to same-sex couples in Multnomah County.

If you want to keep Diane Linn in public office, encourage her to run for a seat in the Oregon Legislature so she can take on the wicked witch of the east, Karen Minnis. Vote for Ted Wheeler and save Multnomah County.

JEFF DICKEY
Portland

Trung Tu for Judge

TO THE EDITOR:

I support Trung Tu for judge and think we need his influence of fairness for all in the Multnomah County Circuit Court. I have known Trung for many years, and he is hardworking, diligent, fair and very intelligent! I urge people to vote this election and vote for Trung Tu.

DOUG MENDENHALL
Portland

Support Jim Hill

TO THE EDITOR:

I read with amusement and dismay the letter titled "Ted Earned the Vote" [April 7].

Once again, the voices of one-issue politics get the support of our so-called gay leaders. There are those of us in Oregon who are state workers, schoolteachers, firefighters and public servants of all stripes who care about gay rights. We also care about our jobs and our retirements. Ted Kulongoski in four short years had presided over a dismantling of our public retirement system. If he were to serve four more years, we may have our equal rights, which are important to us all, but at the cost of our economic security. I submit to you that Jim Hill also cares for our welfare, both in equality and financial security. Make the wise choice in the primary and support Jim Hill.

DAVID FLETCHER
Salem