

# Learn Your Rights

Domestic partnerships are here to stay

It's official. Domestic partnerships are on their way to Oregon. Starting in January 2008, same-sex couples will be able to register for a packet of legal benefits. With these partnership benefits comes a need for cautionary advice. You will be entering into a legal and binding partnership. With this will come responsibilities and obligations that our community is not used to. These new laws are here to stay, regardless of what David Crowe or Marylin Shannon have to say, and there will be no rushed and orchestrated theatrics like those that accompanied the now historic Multnomah County weddings of a few years back. Take your time. Learn your rights, and understand that there will also be laws involving the dissolution of these partnerships. In an upcoming issue of *Just Out* we will sit down with a panel of lawyers and accountants and spell out exactly what is involved in an Oregon domestic partnership.

Tensions continue to run high in North Portland concerning the proposed plan to rename Interstate Avenue to César Chávez Boulevard. Fortunately, some voices of calm and reason are starting to surface. Molly Franks, an Overlook neighborhood resident who has often appeared in *Just Out* in conjunction with her work with queer youth, shares her opinion on the topic. I'm printing her correspondence here as it arrived too late for the letters page but contains such a timely message that it needs to be shared now.

#### TO THE EDITOR:

I think an underlying desire of people who advocate changing Interstate Avenue to César Chávez Boulevard is for recognition of discrimination and racism that people of color experience on a regular basis here. What has not been acknowledged clearly by those who oppose the name change is that the causes Chávez fought for—an end to racism and other forms of oppression—are still issues today.

Hearing the word "racism" at the community forums was upsetting to many white people. Maybe they're thinking of the Ku Klux Klan, racial epithets or Jim Crow segregation. I think when many people of color talk about racism, they also include more subtle forms of discrimination, underrepresentation and stereotyping, of which many white people are unaware. I believe my white neighbors are sincere in their desire to show respect for César Chávez and their Latino neighbors. And even as many vehemently denied participating in racism, it surfaced at the forums.

To some, these things might seem unimportant, but for others, they are painful reminders of significant historic and current patterns of discrimination. One white woman asked her neighbor, a woman of color, to stand next to her as she spoke, as a representation of "the kind of diversity we value in our neighborhood." I think the white woman wanted to express support and solidarity. To others, it felt like a tokenizing and objectifying display. Another white woman said it was a form of bias that at one forum there was "ethnic food and mariachi music." Doesn't all food represent someone's ethnicity? Would it not be biased to serve "American" food instead? But how does celebrating one culture threaten another anyway?

Almost all those who disrespected the group process by speaking out of turn, shouting, clapping and waving signs were white people speaking against the

change. At my neighborhood association meeting, three Latinos addressed a room of more than 100 almost exclusively white people, many of whom were palpably hostile. People laughed and cheered derisively. I can understand why people have experienced racism in this process.

Changing the name of a major street would be a way to recognize the racism that exists here. As opponents argue, it would be a burden on local businesses. It would also be a way to acknowledge the value and contributions of Latinos in this community. For a time, it might be confusing to visitors to our neighborhood. It would be a new chapter in the history of Interstate Avenue, which, as one forum participant reminded us, was once an Indian trail and later had another name before it became Interstate. How do we want this era of North Portland history to be marked?

White people need to acknowledge our unearned race-based privileges in history and in the present. Our intent might not be discriminatory, but we need to listen to the impact of our words and deeds, regardless of how we feel about the street name.

MOLLY FRANKS

Portland

My past two weeks have been filled with ongoing conversations about this name change. I've now moved to the middle of the debate and thank all the name change advocates who are patiently pulling me along in this process. For years the gay civil rights movement has coat-tailed on the efforts, not yet over, of the black civil rights movement. As the gay, lesbian, bi and trans community matures and become a seasoned and knowledgeable force, I see that it could now be our time to take the emerging Latino community under our wing and share with them lessons learned as they, too, fight for recognition and civil rights. After all, it wasn't that long ago that as "homosexuals" we were the illegals in America. What have we learned? What can we share?

Have you missed the "Reflections" that used to follow this column? This is where I'd pull an archived issue of *Just Out* and highlight the news from five, 10, 15 or 20 years ago. This will return. It's just that since we moved our office, the archived copies remain snugly packed away in cardboard boxes, waiting for me to build the shelves that will hold them. You can see these boxes for yourself, as well as the rest of our new digs, if you join us at our Open House (Warming) and 24th Anniversary Celebration. We invite you to stop by on Sunday afternoon, Nov. 4, from 2 to 6 p.m. and see where we write your paper. This open house will also be the kickoff event for our food drive, so please help us fill bins and boxes with nonperishable food items. Please check [www.justout.com](http://www.justout.com) frequently for details on the food drive and our partnerships with community organizations and events. Last year, working together, we amassed an amazing amount of toys. This year, I know we'll work hard to fill the shelves of Esther's Pantry.

Finally, a note on the billboard pictured here. For months now we've been inundated with radio, television, print and billboards ads from the major health maintenance organizations and insurance companies professing concern for the great obesity epidemic sweeping America. Mostly they've been benign, annoying at best. Yes, we should eat better and exercise more. Oh, by the way, you're not my frigging mother, back off, OK?

But this billboard sends a very wrong message. This one sets forth a standard of body size and image, and this is not an appropriate message to be sending to a young and impressionable child. Why don't they place a wastebasket next to her as training for her bulimic binges? I look forward to these signs coming down soon.

Obesity and hunger in the same column. One of these we can help solve. Stop by our offices anytime with your food donation. You'll be greatly thanked and appreciated. 10



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Grassroots festival celebrates women, art and community

#### NEWS

##### 8-17 NORTHWEST

Gender symposium coming to Marylhurst; marriage ban challenged again; Edlen gives generously to PABA; 10,000 walk for AIDS; BRO un.masks gala results; SMYRC refurbished; partnership agreement signed in Gresham; loan officer becomes specialist; big girls have style; referenda campaign fails; Equity Foundation director had to reprioritize; anti-gay forces fail to submit enough valid signatures; activists will not accept ENDA-lite

##### 18-19 NATIONAL

GLAAD raises gay Asian visibility; Family Pride changes name; Wells Fargo recognized for fair policies; toddler marriage law upheld in Arkansas; California property tax protections upheld; California governor vetoes same-sex marriage bill

##### 20-21 WORLD

Norwegian bishops OK gay pastors; Russian patriarch: Homosexuality like kleptomania; EuroPride heads to Warsaw; Russian blood donation activists fined; Guatemalan bill targets gay families; gay soccer championship held in Buenos Aires; Saudi men sentenced to 7,000 lashes; President Ahmadinejad: Iran has no homosexuals

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