

Victory in California

Our neighbors must beware of enemies plotting to thwart progress

In the May 2 installment of this column, I spoke of my belief that the nation's ongoing struggles and legal battles for attaining same-sex marriage rights would be played out over a longer period of time than that which many restless gays and lesbians might like to see ["Hillary Speaks"]. Slow and steady wins the race, I opined.

A mere two weeks later, the tortoise has jumped ahead of the hare in California. The state's Supreme Court issued a ruling May 15 in favor of full marriage equality for same-sex couples. The 4-3 decision was the result of lawsuits filed by 15 couples who challenged the constitutionality of the state's marriage ban. In its majority decision, the court said the California Constitution "guarantees same-sex couples the same substantive constitutional rights as opposite-sex couples to choose one's life partner and enter with that person into a committed, officially recognized and protected family relationship."

E-mails and press releases are flooding the electronic portals of the press. Everyone has something to say. The Human Rights Campaign is out of the blocks with an early and immediate call for money. From president Joe Solmonese came the plea: "We've set up a special fund to direct 100 percent of your gift today to this fight in California. Don't let them use our victory to get the upper hand. Donate today and send your dollars straight to California to protect this victory for equality!"

While HRC asks for money to fight the good fight, an enterprising entrepreneur is looking at the situation from a different perspective. What's the good of being able to get legally married if you don't have anyone to marry? Californians, don't let the burden of lacking a partner cause you to be less celebratory. Within hours of the ruling comes this solution for the single California gay man:

"We at MyPartner.com are so excited about today's California Supreme Court ruling," said Patrick Perrine, the site's founder, CEO and relationship expert. "For over five years we've been seeing more and more gay men looking to establish long-term relationships and to seek to have these relationships recognized. Our company is devoted to helping gay men find those lasting relationships."

Now that same-sex couples will be allowed to marry in California, MyPartner expects many more gay men to take advantage of matchmaking services like its Partner Perfect compatibility system, which was designed by a gay man specifically for gay men. "As residents of California, we at MyPartner hope that our state continues to stay on the forefront of equal rights and helps pave the way for the rest of the nation to recognize gay marriage," said Perrine.

You've got to admire the make-a-buck spirit of the fellas at MyPartner. No partner? No worries.

Lesbians in California will be left to follow more traditional patterns. The emergency lesbian potluck network has been alerted across the state. Single and

searching lesbians will depart their homes carrying tofu casseroles and organic whole-grain desserts as they head off in search of suitable marriage material.

The Rev. Troy Perry, one of the winning plaintiffs in the case and the founder of the Metropolitan Community Church, issued this statement:

"Today the California Supreme Court ruled to legally recognize our marriage, which took place under Canadian law in Toronto, Canada, on July 16, 2003. The court's ruling says that our marriage is not *less than* or *different from* other marriages in this country; the court ruled that our marriage is *equal in the eyes of the law* to all other marriages. We thank God that our prayers have been answered! This is a battle that our church, the Metropolitan Community Churches, has fought since I performed the first public same-sex wedding ceremony in the United States—in Huntington Park, Calif., in 1969. Today we both give honor to God for this victory. On this momentous day, we want to acknowledge that we stand on the shoulders of others before us who fought for justice and blazed trails for equality and who made this day possible."

It is always honorable and good when, in the celebration of accomplishment, we, as a community and as individuals, stop to recognize the groundbreaking work of leaders and activists from the earlier years of our gay civil rights movement.

And now I'll end this brief update of California marriage equality on a local note. From the offices of Multnomah County Commissioners Lisa Naito and Maria Rojo de Steffey comes this joint press release:

"I'm elated to hear the news," declared Rojo. "I agree domestic partnerships are not a good enough substitute for marriage, and I hope Oregon's state Supreme Court will follow suit."

Naito added, "For me, the core of the California ruling is the acknowledgment that we must grant the families, especially the children, of same-sex couples 'equal dignity and respect.'"

Rojo and Naito closed by reminding Multnomah County residents that they were two of the four Multnomah County commissioners in 2004 who believed it was discriminatory under Article 1, Section 20 of the Oregon Constitution to deny same-sex couples the right to marry, and supported the decision to issue marriage licenses to all qualified people regardless of their gender or sexual orientation.

The jury of historical perspective will be out on the Multnomah County same-sex marriage brouhaha for quite some time yet.

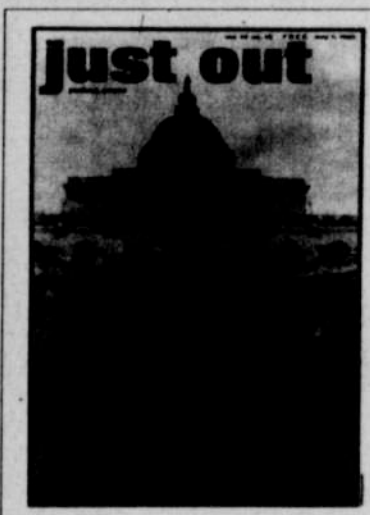
Our neighbors to the south, while in celebratory mode today, as always, must keep wary eyes open for those who will now organize, fester, plan and plot ways to overturn the California Supreme Court decision. *Just Out* will keep you posted hourly and daily at www.justout.com.

We will see you back here in print in two weeks May 30 as we present a special 25th anniversary issue celebrating local and regional Gay Pride Month events. ☉

reflections

15 Years Ago In *Just Out*... volume 10 number 12, may 1, 1993

- In October, San Francisco industrial chemist Meryn Starley obtained a patent for "suspenders" to hold a condom in place so it won't slip off during use. It is made of two plastic clips and a special adhesive attached to the wearer's legs.
- While admitting no wrongdoing, Denny's restaurants settled federal discrimination charges by agreeing to stop requiring African-American customers in California to pay cover charges and to pay for their meals in advance, as well as other practices that reflect racial bias.
- Mobilization Against AIDS has announced that the 10th annual International AIDS Candlelight Memorial and Mobilization will take place May 23. The event is the world's largest annual community-based AIDS event, observed in 370 cities in 55 nations.
- A survey of soldiers at 30 Army bases in the United States and Europe indicates that more than half the soldiers questioned continue to indulge in frequent, unsafe and indiscriminate sexual behavior. Last year, 556 Army soldiers were found to have contracted HIV while on active duty, and other branches of the military report similar figures. The majority of these infections occurred through heterosexual contact.
- The gay, lesbian and bisexual community, and indeed all of Multnomah County, lost a powerful friend on Easter Sunday, April 11. Multnomah County Chairwoman Gladys McCoy died after a determined battle with a rare and aggressive form of thyroid cancer. She was 65 years old.



and 13. Teams are expected from as far away as Taiwan, Canada and Great Britain.

• Cinema 21 is running a gay and lesbian film series for 13 days, from May 7 to 27. It leads off with an Academy Award nominee, *Changing Our Minds: The Story of Dr. Evelyn Hooker*. She is the psychologist whose trailblazing research proved that being gay or lesbian is not a mental disorder.



FEATURE

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Queer documentary film festival celebrates cinema, community

NEWS

8-19 NORTHWEST

Former aspiring politician turns anti-gay activist; opportunity in crisis for SMYRC; Pride unites partners at mixer; Growing Gardens holds Veggieball; Portland program to provide Pride rides; *Just Out* accepts scholarship applications; Pixie Project serves pet lovers; Frontrunners makes splash at Pride; the clock is ticking on repeal effort; Human Relations Office funding unstable; Dozono queer supporters come out; gay developer Randy Rapaport is looking for love...and some good tenants

20-21 NATIONAL

Same-sex marriage legalized in California; married Canadian lesbians see victory in New York; Tennessee principal outs gay couple

22-23 WORLD

Uruguay sees first civil union; Colombian court grants pension rights to gay couples; Latvian officials want to fence in Pride

ARTS & CULTURE

38-41 FILM

Two Indian women in 1950s South Africa fall in love against background of pervasive police brutality and racism in *The World Unseen*; gay producer takes locally filmed indie to New York City

42-43 PEOPLE

Tony Award winner returns to Oregon to help mount original play

44-45 CULTURE

Husky homos come from far and wide for fellowship, fun and festivities

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C.C. Slaughters has something for everyone

COLUMNS

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ON THE COVER

She's a Boy I Knew screens 5:30 p.m. June 1 at Clinton Street Theater as part of the second annual QDoc: Portland Queer Documentary Film Festival.