

# JUST OUT at 25

## GETTING ORGANIZED

The priorities of Portland's sexual minorities community can be tracked by the strength of its organizations.

Queer Portland turns to its groups—Q Center, Basic Rights Oregon, In Other Words bookstore, Love Makes a Family, Unity Project of Oregon, Cascade AIDS Project, the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center and many others—to fight its battles, support its vulnerable and provide community.

Many groups have collapsed because of tapped-out volunteers and wallets and changing needs in a more accepting city. Others have evolved into their own entities such as Basic Rights Oregon from the Portland Town Council and Right to Privacy Political Action Committee and SMYRC from Phoenix Rising. SMYRC celebrated its 10th anniversary this year.

In 2007, two lesbian organizations collapsed.

Carol Brownlow explained the 2007 closure of Hambleton Project: "The organization provided wonderful services, but it seemed as if the community's needs are changing, so those services may not be needed as they were 10 years ago."

Hambleton Project was founded in 1997 to support lesbians with cancer and their partners by providing referrals, resources, advocacy and support groups. In October 2005, its board witnessed declining numbers of members and clients. The board, with guidance from founding members, unanimously decided to close Hambleton Project.

Portland also lost the Lesbian Community Project, although its softball tournament continues.

LCP began in 1986 as a place where lesbians could meet and socialize outside the bars. It offered services including seminars on homophobia

and self-defense, sign language classes, Spanish classes and New Year's Eve dances. According to Kristan Aspen, a longtime member of the organization and interim executive director, one of its main purposes was to lend visibility to lesbians.

In 1989, the group sponsored a float in Portland's Starlight Parade. It was the first time a group of gay men and lesbians rode in a rainbow-flag-decorated float during the Rose Festival. The float won the Queen's Trophy.

Phoenix Rising, a vital organization from 1979 to 2000, provided gay-specific counseling, workshops for substance abuse and incest survival, and a variety of other services.

In 1987, Amani Jabari spoke for People of Color United Against AIDS, a group that looked at a slate of issues affecting gay communities of color. He knew the value of looking after his own community and building up social services for people of color. He advocated for racial and sexual minorities to be visible and take positions of power.

Thirty years after its creation, the Portland Gay & Lesbian Bowling Association is still rolling.

Founder Tom Geil said: "At the time, all I was after was a way for the men and women of our community to come together for some fun and communication. There were no other sports programs, no softball, and gay men and lesbian women just kept their distance from one another. That needed to change to put the unity in our community."

Initially, the group met at Grand Central Bowl on Southeast Morrison Street. The group now meets at Hollywood Bowl. For more information visit [www.pdxbowl.com](http://www.pdxbowl.com).

—Jaymee R. Cuti

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courtesy of the Portland Police Bureau. They installed it in her living room, summer of 1992. If the neo-Nazi skinheads returned and threatened her life again, she was to press the button, which sent a direct signal to Portland police that she was in trouble and needed their help.

This was at the height of the violent Measure 9 anti-gay backlash—a shocking series of bias-motivated crimes that shook the very moral fabric of Oregon. A gay man and lesbian in their 20s were burned to death at their rental home in Salem. Queer-allied churches were defaced with anti-Semitic graffiti. Just Out's offices were broken into and vandalized. Redwing, a soft-spoken pacifist and director of the Lesbian Community Project, kept a loaded gun under her bed.

Things are much more quiet for Redwing these days. Splitting her time between Washington, D.C., and her mountaintop home in lush Evergreen, Colo. (she left Portland permanently in 1999 but visits every few months), she is a senior adviser to the president of the Interfaith Alliance, which works to protect religious and democratic freedoms. She was assistant sergeant at arms for the 2008 Democratic National Convention and a part of President-elect Barack Obama's informal "gay kitchen cabinet," acting as a sounding board

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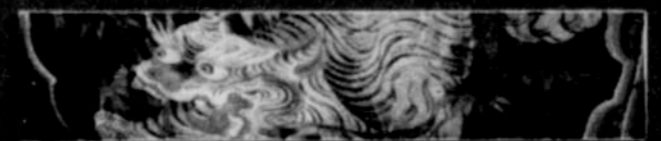
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