



PAGE 3 by Marty Davis

A Show of Hands

Considering new partnerships in the wake of recent victories

On April 28, Latino activists met at Portland City Hall to present – again – their case for naming a Portland street in honor of their hero, Cesar Chavez. At this meeting there was no organized showing of support or coalition building for their effort by any local human rights, civil rights or gay rights advocacy organizations. Opposition to their cause, however, was strongly represented.

One day later, on April 29, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act, also known as the Matthew Shepard Act. The vote was 249-175. Now the measure goes to the Senate, where passage is considered likely.

Passage came on the heels of a White House statement from President Obama, urging the House of Representatives to vote in favor of the legislation.

Matthew Shepard's mother, Judy, issued a heartfelt response following passage: "No one should face violence simply because of who they are. This bill is a critical step to erasing the hate that has devastated far too many families."

Passage of the Matthew Shepard Act was immediately celebrated by gay and lesbian rights groups across the nation. Press releases and announcements of a jubilant nature were distributed, heralding the vote as a move forward for gay and lesbian civil rights. The Human Rights Campaign quickly issued a supportive statement, as did other activist organizations.

The following day, yet another email of encouragement and optimism was received. The tone of the message was similar to earlier releases, yet this one came not from HRC, or any other gay rights group – but rather as noted below.

"Today, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), the nation's leading legal civil rights organi-

zation, welcomed news that the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 1913, 'Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009,' by a vote of 249 to 175."

"The bill strengthens existing federal hate crime laws by authorizing the Department of Justice to assist local authorities in investigating and prosecuting certain bias-motivated crimes. The bill would also provide authority for the federal government to prosecute some violent bias-motivated crimes directed against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability."

"This is exactly the legislation necessary to help address the unacceptable violence which threatens our communities," said John Amaya, legislative staff attorney for MALDEF. "The bill comes at a critical juncture – in the midst of an anti-Latino hate crime epidemic where hate crimes committed against Latinos have risen more than 40 percent in the last few years."

There we are. Two groups, the same concerns, the same fears about hate crimes. We send and receive separate emails, from different advocacy groups, celebrating the same accomplishment – passage of legislation affecting the lives of whom each represents. For some, it's a community of gays and lesbians; for others, a community of Latinos.

I find myself wondering if the successful vote on the Matthew Shepard Act could have happened faster if these two organizations had teamed up to form a powerful coalition of groups, seeking similar solutions and goals. Could diverse communities, toiling alone, have accomplished more by joining together?

At the same time the House has been working on hate crimes legislation, major gains in the bid for marriage-equality – especially in the New England states – are being achieved. While progress makes its way down the eastern coastline, those longing for

the right to same-sex marriage in Oregon are all too aware of the key obstacle to this reality.

Marriage in our state is now constitutionally defined as being between one man and one woman. It will take a Herculean push to bring marriage equality to the Oregon State Constitution. It will also take the combined efforts of many coalition partners and supporters.

In Oregon, Latinos are the fastest-growing segment of the population. They're growing in number, they're growing in number of voters. To overturn Ballot Measure 36, we will need their votes and their assistance.

This brings us to the issue of tit-for-tat, so to speak. The Latino community has their civil and human rights battles; we have ours. Some are different; some are the same. How much more effectual could we be if we banded together in support of common causes?

It has been asked, and will be again, if the desire and the struggle to rename a street merits consideration as a civil rights issue. I think only the people involved have the right to make this determination. The Latino community is asking for recognition of their history, their culture, their victories and their place of equality in the greater community. Is this really any different than what we, as the gay, lesbian, bi and trans community, ask for?

When we appear on their doorstep, asking – no doubt, demanding – their help with marriage equality, shouldn't we be able to say, with Pride, "We were there for you"?

A couple of closing reminders: Complete details for the *Just Out* Amateur Photo Contest can be found on pg. 6. Share your work, share your artistry with us. Please note that *Just Out* does have college/education scholarship funds available, with the 2009 application deadline approaching in June. Visit equityfoundation.org for more information. 

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Josh Gross explores the efforts to rename 39th Avenue in honor of human rights activist Cesar Chavez, and the intersection of Portland's Latino and gay, lesbian, bi and trans communities

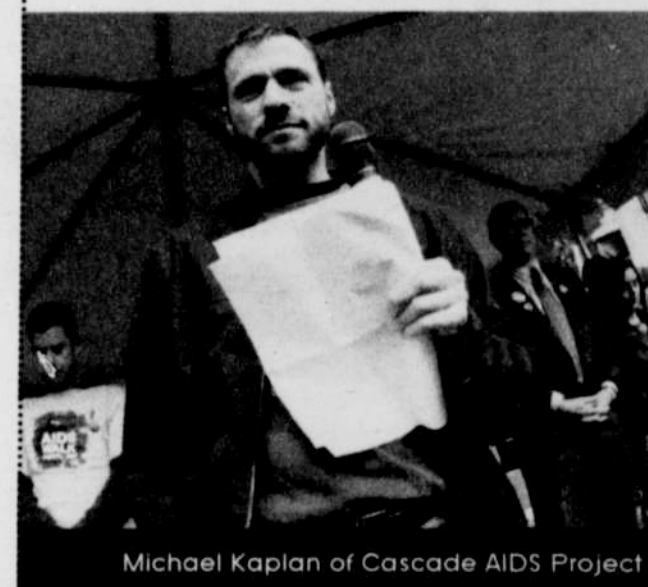
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It's better to give than to receive, really

It's a beautiful thing.



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