

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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What does "United We Stand" mean in the age of the Sam Adams administration?

ED. NOTE: Just Out received the following letter from Katharine English, the former judge and an iconic Oregon activist for gay, lesbian, bi and trans rights profiled in the May 29 issue.

"The interview [with Just Out] had its repercussions," she prefaced. "I have been thinking about the 'movement' for days now. I have been concerned about the divisiveness the Sam Adams events [have] caused, and this year's PRIDE theme. So I jotted my notes in a Letter to the Editor."

We have reprinted her thoughts in their entirety, below.

What does "United We Stand" mean in the face of the Sam Adams debacle?

When we first began our struggle against the Oregon Citizens Alliance over twenty years ago, we were a community of enclaves, closets, bars, embryonic institutions, and skirmishing political warriors. The fight against the OCA's cruel and dangerous measures drew us together, and by the defeat of Measure Nine in 1992, we had blazed forth in victory and all our glory, coming out, speaking out, organizing and triumphing.

Today, our primary political [goal] remains the same: equal rights for all persons regardless of sexual orientation. We are all LGBT individuals, likely living in houses with those whose values we share, houses in a fairly homogenous neighborhood, neighborhoods in a diverse city, in cities from one end of the social and political scale to the other in a state similar and vastly different to other states. This does not change that "united we stand, and must" if we are to accomplish our primary goal.

Then, and now, we are the Log Cabin Republicans and the Obama Devotees, MCCers and the Mormons, gay men and lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals, sadists and masochists, socialists and capitalists, laborers and white-collar government workers. We are those who believe that a man who holds public office should be held to high standards of personal behavior and

avoid any appearance of impropriety. We are those who believe a man's personal life is his own so long as it does not impede the execution of his responsibilities to the people he serves. We are those who support a gay man because his struggles have been great. We are those who believe support must be earned for other reasons as well. We are old, young, passionate, unsure, scared, or confident. We don't want to do wrong. We want to do right.

We may not all believe the same about what should transpire now, but we likely all believe that Sam Adams deserves to be treated equally under the law, that he deserves the right to follow his own considered path in this matter, and that we can form and hold our own opinions, but that we must continue to lock arms in the walk for the equal justice for ourselves that we must grant Sam.

Without our union together over the past two decades, our contemporary independence and our liberty of being would never have progressed so far. Our continuing peace and progress depend upon our continued union in support of our cause: true freedom and equality. How we address this crisis will reflect on the wisdom we have gained from those who fought before us, and will set the path we travel for those who come after us.

"United we stand" means we stand united in the belief that each GLBT member of our communities everywhere has the right to his/her own opinion, that each opinion may be expressed with fervor, but with respect for an opposing view, that each opinion may be reasonable and of value. We must, ultimately, believe in each other, in the righteousness of our motivations, the devotion to our cause, and the deepest goodness of our hearts.

KATHARINE ENGLISH
formerly Portland, now Utah -
where unity is still far, far away

Color Guards at gay pride parades are filled with those who've served many flags

DEAR JUST OUT:

Many moons ago, the Editor of *Just Out* wrote what I paraphrase here: "It could be the Hamburger Relish parade, and I would still get emotional, watching the Color Guard go by."

I know that perspective so well. I have organized and participated in the Color Guard for the Portland Pride Parade each year since 1996. I continue to be joyfully awestruck as so many parade watchers each year gaze at our Color Guard, with that look of wonder crossing their faces, as they seem to be thinking, "That flag belongs to me too!"

Margaret Thatcher said, "No one can exercise a right unless someone else has previously carried out an obligation." This applies equally to those brave souls in the year 1215 who signed the Magna Carta, and to those brave souls in 1969 who stood up to the police raids at the Stonewall Inn, and to us today as our parade shines the light of liberty on the pathway to freedom for those around the world.

As various movements and ideas have reinvented themselves across the cavalcade of human history, we have also seen our parade transform through the years from

a protest, to "We're Here, We're Queer," to a celebration of joy, self-actualization, and achievement. As we now celebrate the 40th anniversary of Stonewall, many may ask: What does the GLBT community offer to the larger society, nationwide and worldwide? My answer: We offer our ability to mix so well, to create social cohesion and civil society, conveying the spirit of joy, across so many races, cultures, and continents.

The Color Guards at various gay pride parades around the world are filled with military veterans who have served many flags and who have stood guard at freedom's farthest flung frontiers. Military, veteran, or civilian, the GLBT community is striving to push back the barriers to freedom.

Incrementally, we shall win new freedoms for ourselves, and guard the freedoms of others. Hand in hand, we shall move the parade of humanity forward into the future. Our cause is just. Our cause is love.

RON RASMUSSEN
Vancouver, WA



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