

ZOOM IN, ZOOM OUT

Getting perspective on recent hate-crime headlines



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BY MARTY DAVIS

I think it will come as a surprise to no one if I tell you that I like to take photos. I relish going to community events and am proud of the archive of images that *Just Out* is compiling. I'm not a professional photographer, far from it, and I work in quantity as much as quality. I love the thrill of the hunt, forever and always seeking out that one photo that will be a real standout. I'm self-taught, do no Photoshopping or app editing and take much pride in receiving Facebook notifications stating that so and so "has made your photo their profile picture."

I use a zoom lens in my work, especially at entertainment venues. I like to look at my subject from many angles, from many directions. I zoom in, I look closely, I zoom out, I take in the wider view. I want to see it all; I want a broad perspective. The goal is that the final selected photograph is the best representation of the actual event—of a specific moment in time.

Sometimes the ability to zoom out, stand back and focus from a distance can bring the greatest sense of clarity to a subject or a situation.

What I am doing with my internal zoom lens right now is using it to view, with perspective, the situation in Portland—where once again not one, not two but three possible bias crimes have been reported recently to Portland police. When viewed up close, especially from the perspective of the victim, each of these incidences is a personally frightening and traumatic circumstance. I am in no way, shape or form minimizing the impact of these attacks. At the same time, though, as I zoom back out, broaden the picture, and take in a larger view encompassing days, weeks and months—a

hundred, a thousand and multiple thousands of people—I arrive at the perspective that there is simply not an epidemic of hate crimes against the LGBTQ community in Portland, Ore. in 2011.

Now is not the time for panic or alarm. Now is the time for increased awareness and safety measures. Now is not the time to blame the victim, but now is the time for a greater sense of personal responsibility and accountability. Now is not the time to again demand that the police department, the police chief, the mayor, the attorney general, the governor and on up rush off to again state their combined dedicated interest in protecting our community. Now is the time for calm leadership and common sense.

Again, looking from the zoomed-out position, during the same time that there were three reported attacks against the LGBTQ community, how many murders, shootings, robberies and other crimes were committed against all members of the greater Portland population? A lot, folks. A lot more than three.

Zoom in—oh my god, they're after the gays. Zoom out—it's tough everywhere, people. It's like the Fourth of July for my dog, when I have to issue repeated comfortings: "No, they're not shooting dogs. It just sounds that way."

I am well aware that I risk the animosity of a large chunk of the community by stating an opinion that will be contrary to the popular. Again, I am not minimizing what has happened nor am I am excusing it. I am simply stating that to my mind the gay community is as safe, if not safer, in Portland, Ore. than any other place that you might find yourself. I don't think our city is

besieged by bigots out to batter and bruise the gays. I think our city is a city—and as such it includes its fair share of punks and bullies and drunks and the sad and the homeless and the mentally ill. Add to this mix warm nights, drugs, alcohol, testosterone and bravado and, yes, something unfortunate, if not worse, is likely to happen to someone. The victims might—will be—black, white, Latino, gay, straight, fat, disabled or, quite often, simply someone in the wrong place at the wrong time.

So what's to be done? If I had that answer, I'd be running for one of those greatly-needs-a-new-person city council seats. But that answer implies that one person, one mayor, one commissioner, one police chief can solve the problems of the city. That's not going to happen. It takes everyone. It takes me. It takes you. It takes calm yet directed leadership. It takes people willing to say, "Wait a minute, let's think this out." It takes focused action, not scattered reaction. It takes more events like "Hands Across Hawthorne" where many segments of the community came to stand together.

And it will take the LGBTQ community standing together with others when the attack has not been directed at one of us. When's the last time that happened? When have we collectively gone to a candlelight vigil for a victim who wasn't one of us? As often is the case, more questions than answers. Let me zoom back out and see what I can find. ☐

There are five Fridays in July, meaning Just Out will be on vacation the week of July 18. We'll be back in print on August 5—but we'll still see you at Gay Skate on July 18.



15 Years
Ago in
Just Out

REFLECTIONS

volume 13
number 18,
July 19, 1996

- Two gay male couples and a lesbian couple got married at the Reykjavik registry office on June 27, the day Iceland's same-sex registered partnership law came into effect. Celebrations continued into the night at Iceland's one gay club.
- Legislation banning same-sex marriage was signed into law in June in both Michigan and Delaware. This brings to 13 the number of states that have enacted laws banning lesbian and gay marriages since 1995.
- A dozen volunteers graduated July 1 from the Portland Police Bureau's Crisis Response Team training. The team, whose members are from the sexual minorities community, is believed to be the first of its kind in the nation. The program is designed to fulfill another major component of the bureau's partnership agreement with the sexual minority community.
- During a visit to the gay-community based Body Positive Centre, bisexual singer Elton John announced that he will donate all United Kingdom royalties from his future hit singles to HIV and AIDS charities.
- A Portland lesbian couple has filed a lawsuit against *The Oregonian*, claiming the newspaper's refusal to print their wedding announcement violates city and state laws prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations.
- Harry Hay, an 84-year-old activist, educator, author and visionary, believes the push by gay and lesbian people towards assimilation—via MTV or any other vehicle—will undermine a community and culture that is blessed with many gifts, including the proclivity for healing and artistic creation. "Hell, that's what same-sex marriage will be," says the deep-voiced Hay, a man not known for mincing words. "Why do we want to change our beautiful domestic relationships? Marriage was created as a property relationship between heterosexuals and has traditionally been about control and restrictions. Why do we want that for us? It doesn't make any sense."
- Oregon state Rep. George Eighmey, the teddy-bearish gay legislator from Southeast Portland, vowed never to pretend again. "I had to spend the first 40 years of my life fighting my sexuality—fighting being who I really am," explains Eighmey, who is now in his mid-50s. During those four decades Eighmey followed through with the cultural expectations which required that he act straight, marry someone of the opposite sex and procreate.
- If it's July it must be time for Christmas in July, the annual auction benefiting Esther's Pantry. Esther's Pantry provides food, nutritional supplements and personal health care products for people with AIDS.
- The Portland City Club examines the constitutional aspects of same-sex marriage at its Friday Forum. Speakers include attorney Jon P. Terry and Portland's Chief Deputy City Attorney Madelyn F. Wessel.

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VOL. 28, NO. 16

JULY 15, 2011

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