

Right Cause, Right Message, Wrong Time

And speaking of timing, on to changes ahead...



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BY MARTY DAVIS

Why do we have images from Occupy Portland on the cover of this issue? What's gay about illegal camping in downtown parks?

Not a thing, there's nothing gay about it at all. I know this because I've been down to the site several times. I took pictures of the signs—lots of signs—and I can tell you that I did not see one message advocating for marriage equality, gay rights, an end to bullying or anything “gay specific.” Nope, Occupy Portland is on the cover because it's the backdrop for a story that needs to be told. The story of why Marcy Westerling, staunch ally and advocate for LGBTQ rights, found herself at the march and rally that kicked off the now weeks-old movement in Portland. If you have been looking for a reason to attach credence to the people and emotions of this movement, you might well find it on p. 18.

Several times in the past weeks, I have questioned as to how I feel about Basic Rights Oregon and their possible/probable ballot measure to bring marriage equality to the state in 2012. The most notable aspect of these discussions has been that those involved are reluctant to voice their own opinions for fear that they will be seen as being “anti-BRO” if they question the timing of the ballot measure. One businessman is concerned that he might lose customers; another feared that speaking publicly might shadow his nonprofit with a negative cloud if he voiced a position presumed not to be in the majority.

Really, Portland? We're afraid to engage in dialogue, express opinions, suss out thoughts, question and challenge each other and our community nonprofits, the very ones who work for and are supported by our contributions? That's a bit troubling to me. BRO is, after all, looking for your opinion. They need to know what the community is feeling—they need to know that they either do or don't have sufficient support if/when they go forth with this endeavor. So let me speak for those who are more timid, as this is an opinion that I share and have no objection to attaching my name to.

Simply put, right cause, right message—wrong time.

Granted, there's a lot of in-depth analysis and data that I'm not privy to, but common logic and sense lead me to strongly feel that marriage equality activism via ballot measure in Oregon is better suited for the midterm elections in 2014 than the presidential election of 2012. Next year could be, will be a bloodbath of a presidential race. The nation as a whole is ready to bite the heads off of kittens. Candidates seeking many seats will be knocking on doors asking for money that many, if not most people don't have to give. The Portland mayoral race, currently in its warm fuzzy phase, won't stay this way for long. The economy still, or again, sucks. Protesters are camping in the parks while the truly homeless are being denied the same right and privilege. The collective temper of the electorate is at the fraying point. To me, this is not the environment for putting forth a ballot measure that will be eliciting emotion-based votes. Voter emotions are going to be too raw, on too many levels, for too many reasons.

Again, right cause, right message—wrong time.

November is the anniversary month of *Just Out*. I often use this column at that time to reflect on the past and look forward to the future. This year I'm starting a little early. It was in November of 1998 that I started the process of purchasing this paper, officially taking the reins in January of 1999. Sometimes this seems like yesterday; sometimes it seems so very long ago that I can't begin to remember whatever possessed me to do such a thing. When I bought the paper, it was in malaise. With the help of staff and community, *Just Out* has in the past 13 years seen periods of growth, success and prosperity, followed by the still freshly felt days of recession and not-so-fun times. For the most part, *Just Out* is in good stead. We're definitely no longer in a state of prosperity, from a financial aspect, but the quality of our work is better than it's ever

been—and to me that quality is a greater determinant of our success than the money that I no longer have in the bank. Which brings me to the point of this conversation. I went home last night to write this column, and I awoke, after a largely sleepless night, with the realization that I want/need change. No, I'm not quitting, I'm not retiring, I am not selling *Just Out*. I am, however, going to reinvent the paper. Some of the structure we've had in place for 13 years still works fine—other aspects, not so much. We're too short-staffed and continuously under too much deadline pressure to be able to look much past the next issue, let alone at the process of reinvention. So I'm altering our publication schedule through the balance of the year and into early spring. From November through March, we'll publish only once per month in print. We'll bloom in the spring, in April and return to our twice monthly format. During this period we'll increase our daily presence on justout.com. The calendar will still be maintained and updated. I'll still be everywhere with the camera, using the lens as a barrier to real, actual personal interactions. Aimee will have a little more time to spend with that new baby of hers, the one you'll read about on p. 6. Around the first of the year we'll post an online survey, not a long one, asking for your feedback in how you'd like to see *Just Out* grow and evolve. We know you like pictures, but we need to delve deeper into readership growth and retention. I am always open to your thoughts, questions and comments. You can find me on Facebook or email me at marty@justout.com.

I cannot end this column without words about Richard Ludt, whose death, whose suicide impacted so many people, myself included. Over the past 13 years, I've seen many goodbyes said in our pages. With no disrespect to any of the others, and those who loved them, Richard's death has touched me like no other. To be truthful, while not judging, I cannot wrap my mind around suicide. The thought is too big for me to grasp. Perhaps I simply don't have the emotional complexity needed to have that ability to understand. I did not know Richard well, but I was proud of our relatively new friendship—one born from the seeds of adversity, but which grew, via emails and Facebook, into a teasing, bantering comfortableness. I've never known anyone as well-respected and regarded as Richard. He fit into every corner of our community. I hope he knew that. JO

just out

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