

# CHARLIE HALES

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**JO:** Portland Public Schools is about to ask homeowners for more money. Many LGBT people have children in public schools, but many more do not. In fact, LGBT people have often been discouraged from even coming near children. In light of historical anti-LGBT bigotry, what would you say to LGBT Portlanders being asked to spend more money on other people's kids?

**CH:** This is one of the primary reasons why I am running for this office in the first place. Everything we say we are as a city is tied up in public education. The idea of the commonweal, and of the social contract where you can live in a great neighborhood and have your kids going to a great public school, which is the anchor of your neighborhood, still holds here. But, it's not guaranteed and it's under a lot of strain, because we've been holding that promise together with duct tape and bake sales for 20 years since the passage of Measure 5.

I am passionate about this issue and I want to round the corner from the permanent crisis to stable funding for public education. I want to fix up the buildings, which is why I support the bond measure that's on the ballot this fall.

Everybody's got a stake in [public education], it doesn't matter whether you've got kids or not. It's our economy, it's our quality of life, it's our crime rate, it's the value of our real estate. It runs through everything we are as a community. Everybody's in this boat together. And, I hope and expect that our public school districts in Portland will embrace our diversity and that the LGBT community will be welcome as parents, volunteers, teachers, mentors, as activists in the schools, with open arms, and without a blink of concern.

**JO:** What training do the Portland Police get around LGBT culture and concerns? Do you see any need for change in this area?

**CH:** The shorter answer to the first part of your question is that I don't know what training they receive. It's a good question, and we ought to know the answer to that. But, overall I am concerned about the training the Portland Police Bureau is receiving, and I want to steer the culture of the police bureau very clearly towards the model of community policing. Right now we're schizophrenic about that. Sometimes we're a community-policing bureau, and sometimes

we're not. I did a ride-along with a young officer who came up through Self-Enhancement, Inc [a Northeast Portland youth program]. We're driving past Unthank Park and he's got the window down and is calling the kids by name. Another time, I was at Holladay Park and a police officer drove across the park on the sidewalk, scattering pedestrians. Fortunately there were no blind people or kids on the sidewalk. That's not community policing.

So, those two incidents crystallize the fact that we're not fully there with the ideal of community policing. And there's more to it than whether you're driving nicely or not. It's whether you understand the community you serve. Do you understand that you are there to protect and serve, not that you're a part of an occupying army? Do you look for every opportunity to de-escalate? Do you understand the public that you're dealing with in all of its diversity, including people with mental illness?

And the answer, of course, is that we're not there, either because of the tragic uses of force in cases where it wasn't necessary over the past several years. Which is another motivation for why I am running for this office. The police will receive clear leadership towards cultural competence, community policing, and towards problem solving. Those are expectations I will set for the police bureau, which I plan to keep as one of my own assignments.

**JO:** Many Portland minorities have neighborhoods historically associated with them. In Portland, historically African American or LGBT neighborhoods, such as NE Albina and SE Stark, have been largely eliminated by gentrification. Do you see the city as having a role in addressing the impact of gentrification on minority cultures?

**CH:** Yes. One, we just have to learn from what's happened, and try to be more sensitive in what we do in the future. When we think about redevelopment and urban renewal, we need to think about supporting the character of the neighborhood, rather than supplanting that character. And so loans to existing businesses, access to housing for existing residents, those are priorities that we ought to raise as we try to make positive change in neighborhoods, rather than the old formula in which we're there to "fix the blight," and residents respond with, "Wait a minute, I'm not blight!"

So, again I want to praise things that Mayor Adams is doing. I think this neighborhood prosperity initiative that's focusing on economic uplift for small neighborhood districts rather than replacement of districts by the latest urban

renewal fad is a good approach. And I want to continue and expand that approach.

**JO:** Portland has policies to proactively encourage hiring women and minorities both as employees and contractors. While LGBT people are protected in hiring decisions, they are not clearly included in the proactive, or affirmative action measures. Should they be?

**CH:** I hadn't thought of it. Why not? I'd certainly like to explore that. That's a new thought. A new question that you just articulated. The point of affirmative action is to correct underrepresentation, not just stop discriminating. And, if there ... and I bet there is ... underrepresentation, then let's check it out and do the right thing.

**JO:** Moving in a different direction here, have you personally known anyone who died of AIDS?

**CH:** Yes. Keeston Lowery [former assistant to former County Commissioner Mike Lindberg]. I worked with him. He was irreverent, even about his condition. He was amazing, and his sense of humor was there until the end.

**JO:** What role does the city play in addressing HIV related health concerns?

**CH:** Again, we have to do so much in concert with other governments, in order to do our job well. Although I don't see a major role addressing HIV in the city's core functions, I do see a lot of partnerships. You look at needle exchange at Outside In, and how both the Police Bureau and the county health programs have to support that kind of service. That's one of those places where from the citizens' standpoint, they don't care if this is a county service, city service, or a non-profit, but whether we're being thoughtful and effective.

**JO:** When did you meet your first drag queen?

**CH:** (Laughs) I think probably on a road trip to the dubious corner of Richmond, Virginia, while I was in college. There were some drag queens out on the street in front of a club and we had a, you know, a jovial conversation. And, of course, once arriving in Portland I made the obligatory first visit to Darcelle's.

**JO:** Have you ever worn drag?

**CH:** (Grins) Let me think about that. I'd better answer that carefully.

**JO:** Any pictures?

**CH:** (Laugh) I don't think so. I don't think I