

WHAT DO THESE HAVE IN COMMON?

S. S.
K. K. K.
O. C. A.

They all talk about betterment through prejudice and hate.

When a few dictate what is right for the majority and take rights away from others like the Jews, blacks, and gays — think about who's next.

The more that get excluded, the more the majority will stand accused.

— DAN ROBBINS

Dan Robbins lives in Astoria. He is a volunteer broadcaster at KMUN-FM.

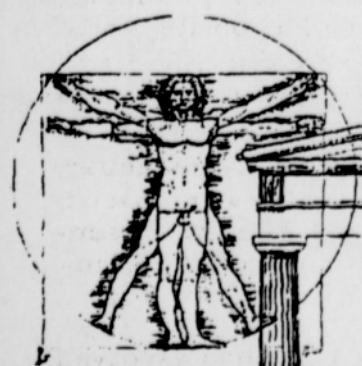
the 63,578 signatures necessary to support the ballot measure. They gathered 118,000 signatures in 68 days, with a top signature gatherer posing for pictures in a T-shirt bearing the slogan "I love Jesus." This campaign would eventuate in the first major victory for the OCA.

An Oregonian poll of voters conducted early in what would become known as the Measure 8 campaign found that 58% of voters polled agreed with the governor's executive order banning discrimination against gay men and lesbians, and 60% said they would support state laws banning most discrimination based on sexual orientation. Despite these poll results, the OCA won by a margin of 626,751 to 561,355 votes.

In 1989, the OCA sponsored House Bill 3211, which would have prevented gay men and lesbians from being certified as foster parents. The bill was blocked in committee and never came to a vote. However, in the course of this campaign, the OCA was able to further develop and consolidate its anti-lesbian and gay constituency, through educational campaigns linking homosexuality with child molestation and the deterioration of "family values."

In 1990, the OCA sponsored a ballot measure to eliminate what they call "convenience abortions." The measure lost, but not before significantly polarizing sentiment on the issue of choice in Oregon. During these same elections, the OCA introduced their vice-chair Al Mobley as a "pro-life" independent in the Oregon gubernatorial race because, they claimed, Republican candidate Dave Frohnmayer and Democrat Barbara Roberts, both pro-choice, "give voters practically no choice in political philosophies" and are "far to the left" of voters.

The OCA's sponsorship of the Al Mobley gubernatorial candidacy, and their sponsorship of the anti-abortion ballot measure caused controversy in the evangelical community. The Oregon Association of Evangelicals has criticized the OCA for their unwillingness to compromise with more moderate forces. The OCA responded to criticism in a pamphlet put out by members Scott Lively and Mike Wiley in which they state, "The moderate, go along to get along," approach to politics favored by what they term the "gradualists" in the evangelical community has brought us "from 1973, when 90% of Americans opposed abortion to the place where, in 1990, polls show that nationwide, only 40% oppose abortion."



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In spite of opposition by some in the evangelical community, and, in part, because of their unwillingness to compromise, the OCA has built a strong and relatively well organized grassroots base in Oregon. One way in which the OCA has been able to build their organization has been through the use of radio and print media. In 1991, the OCA brought in new communications director Scott Lively to manage a campaign called The Media Project. As a result of the project, the publication of the OCA's newspaper The Oregon Alliance went from quarterly to monthly, and began using commercial and classified advertisements. Concurrently, the OCA's capacity to pressure the media has risen.

The OCA's tactic of harassing the mainstream media around coverage of the Gulf War and anything less than malicious reference to the lesbian and gay community has also been successful. Most recently, The Oregonian gave front page coverage to the new influence of Lon Mabon and the OCA in Oregon politics. The story directly followed a call to boycott The Oregonian. (The OCA has also called for a boycott of the Daily Astorian, which continues to regularly denounce the OCA, and Lon Mabon in particular.)

Other efforts to use the boycott strategy include an April 1992 boycott of the Fred Meyer department stores. The OCA boycott of Fred Meyer resulted from the company's decision to prevent OCA petitioners from gathering signatures for proposed initiatives on store premises.

The positions expressed in the OCA newspaper and OCA campaigns are largely developed and tested by nationally-based Christian rightwing groups. While the OCA has a relatively small treasury, millions of dollars annually from corporate donors and the electronic ministry go into the major think tanks of the Christian Right from which strategies like the "traditional family values" and "No Special Rights" slogans emanate. These same think tanks are active in the foreign policy arena (aid to contras; opposition to sanctions against South Africa, etc.) and on environmental issues. Most single issues from prayer in schools to opposing welfare are explored through these think tanks and put forward by the OCA and its array of single issue groups. In Oregon, the OCA serves as the legislative vehicle and political umbrella for bringing political institutions under the discipline of rightwing Christian fundamentalism.

It is significant to note that although the Christian Right nationally is supported by internationally based electronic ministries and major corporations, the Coors Corporation and Hunt Silver being notable among them, the OCA is supported mainly by smaller businesses and individuals. In this respect they are very much a grassroots group and movement. The OCA's budget has historically been relatively small (they started out in the Abnormal Behaviors Initiative campaign about \$10,000 in debt) and they are not well networked into the usual status quo conservative corporate circles. However, this is changing rapidly as the OCA garners national attention in this campaign.

For example, the OCA's connection to the Christian Coalition has stimulated a national fundraising for the OCA's Measure 9 campaign. Through its nationwide network of electronic ministries, the Christian Coalition is shaking the money tree for the OCA in the hopes that a win in Oregon will translate into a win for the national Christian Right movement. On a "48 Hours" national TV presentation on hate groups, OCA leader Scott Lively announced that if the Abnormal Behaviors campaign is successful in Oregon, the strategy will be duplicated nationally.

The OCA is active outside the electoral and legislative arena. During the Gulf War, the OCA was the organizer of a series of rallies supporting U.S. military intervention in the Middle East. This was possibly the most significant step they have taken in broadening their tactics, scope of issues, and base of support. While more mainstream politicians confined their support for the war to speechifying, votes and TV spots, the OCA took to the streets through their "Home-front Coalition. By July 4th, the OCA had mobilized thousands in street actions statewide, and were rewarded with a portion of the Portland city government backing their "Defenders of Liberty Parade." Like a portion of the white supremacist movement which postures as a radical grassroots defender of white workers who feel over-taxed and under-represented, the OCA is clearly positioning itself as the standard bearer of "Traditional Family Values." At least how they, and other rightwing fundamentalists, define such values.

In 1990, the OCA sponsored a "Youth Congress for Life" at the Beaverton Christian Church. The congress kicked off the OCA-sponsored "Kids for Life PAC" which was designed to bring teens into the religious rightwing movement. During the conference, the OCA brought in a debate coach from Colorado to teach "principles of effective persuasion, methods of controlling the direction and tone of a conversation, and how to think on one's feet." Bonnie Mabon headed up the "Kids for Life PAC."

CONTINUED ON PAGE FOUR

THE MEANING OF OREGON

Oregon seems a meaner place than when I moved here from Chicago twenty years ago. There seemed to be tolerance for our differences. Wayne Morse and Mark Hatfield were leading principled opposition to the Viet Nam War. Clatsop County even voted for McGovern. There were still forests here and fish in our waters. The shift changes at Bumble Bee were like watching flocks of white butterflies hurrying home to their families (with paychecks). The idea that a fundamentalist ayatollah would be gaining support for a hate-based campaign against the civil rights of a minority of our citizens, burning books and trying to return Oregon to the fear-filled '50s was inconceivable.

Lon Mabon and his Oregon Citizens Alliance are taking advantage of hard economic times and political uproar (recession, spotted owls, Measure 5) to stir up fear and hatred against "them", our same-sexual brothers and sisters. The OCA has skillfully lumped homosexuals with pedophiles and necrophiliacs, and have framed their campaign of discrimination against equal rights as "No Special Rights". Measure 9 is one brick to the right of "Family Values" in the Republican propaganda edifice, which is designed to capitalize on fear and to drive a wedge between various majorities and minorities.

Legalizing and demanding discrimination against any grouping is a threat to us all. Any of us could lose our jobs or our housing after being accused. There is no due process in Measure 9.

After the homosexuals are suitably cowed and closeted, who is next? Pro-choice advocates? The OCA says that we are an abomination in the eyes of God. Mexican immigrants? They will bastardize our language and overburden social services. Single parents or battered women? "Family Values". AIDS victims? Sin, sin, sin. Handicapped citizens? They use up too much of our school funds, and those ramps and toilets are irritants. Who else will become the enemy? Environmentalists, liberals, the poor? A case could be made for discrimination against any group, particularly if it would foster the political fortunes of Mabon and the OCA.

Don't let the mean season envelope us. Don't sit twiddling your thumbs until Measure 9 becomes law. Write, call, demonstrate. Send money to the campaign for a Hate Free Oregon, P. O. Box 3343, Portland 97208 (232-4501).

I think it was Camus who said that the only thing necessary for evil to triumph was for good folks to do nothing.

— HARRY JOHNSON

Harry Johnson lives in Astoria. He is a member of the board of directors of Clatsop County Community Action.



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