

<http://blogout.justout.com/?p=33830>

## Thousands Hold Hands Across Hawthorne Bridge to Protest Anti-LGBT Violence

Posted by [Erin Rook](#) on May 30, 2011 in [Local News](#) | [8 comments](#)



More than 4,000 people of all ages and identities gathered in the rain Sunday night to hold hands on the Hawthorne Bridge, according to Ernesto Dominguez of Cascade AIDS Project. The demonstration was an act of solidarity with [two gay men who were apparently attacked after doing just that](#) on the Eastside Esplanade the previous Sunday.

Demonstrators packed into the space beneath the west side of the bridge at about 7:30 p.m., spilling over onto the ramp and stairs to hear from the attack's survivors, Brad Forkner and Christopher Rosevear. Afterward, the crowd filed down both sides of the bridge with hands held. Despite being tightly packed together, some attendees could not fit on the bridge.

More than 2,800 people had responded that they were attending on a [Facebook page for the event](#). More than 1,200 were "maybes." The demonstration was [organized by](#) BRO, Q Center, Cascade AIDS Project and Pride Northwest.

Before the crowd moved to the bridge, Forkner talked about the attack, explaining that the violence he experienced is part of a larger culture of discrimination and fear.

"This is not the first time I have feared for my safety or my life and, sadly, I don't expect it to be the last," Forkner said. "What I want to talk about is a much larger cultural issue we have with making different people feel like they're worth less than normal people, as if there is such a thing as "normal." In this instance, it was because we are gay."

Forkner listed other examples of harassment sparked by religious intolerance, racism and fat phobia. Not only do such attacks cause external harm, Forkner said, they can lead to internalized hatred.

Thousands of people walk the streets of America and yes, even Portland, feeling like they are less than human, that their life is not as valued by society as their other, supposedly more “normal,” peers. The effects of this internalized hatred are endless. They contribute to gang violence, to depression, to self-medicating via alcohol and drug abuse, to sexuality that people feel must be kept secret, explored in dark alleys and bathhouses rather than openly and safely. How can we talk about keeping ourselves safe, about being healthy, about being loved, if we are doing so in secret, if we are hurting in silence?



After Forkner’s speech, Basic Rights Oregon Executive Director Jeana Frazzini thanked Forkner and Rosevear for their courage and invited the crowd to take part in a display of love and affection.

“Holding hands,” Frazzini said, “is an act of love. It’s an expression of affection and it’s a symbol of faith in another human being. And tonight in this crowd we’re surrounding Brad and Christopher — and everyone who’s been the victims of violence and oppression and hateful words because of who they love or who they are — with the love that is Portland, with love that is Oregon and with the love that we can spread across this city, this state, this nation and the world.”

Frazzini also encouraged attendees to build on the momentum of the night’s demonstration and consider getting involved in other ways, such as by volunteering for [Q Patrol](#). Those who were unable to attend the demonstration can still show their support by sending a photo of them holding hands to [edominguez@cascadeaids.org](mailto:edominguez@cascadeaids.org) to contribute to the [Holding Hands In Solidarity](#) photo album.

Check out [video](#) from the event, posted by David Mcfatridge to [YouTube](#).