

by Mike Smith

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The Gay press continues to slam Black people and no one seems to care. It's not so much the Whites-only message blared by the commercial advertisers with their White young men peddling one thing or another — I've gotten used to that. And, what the hell, you have to pay the bills, right? I'm also getting used to the editorial end of things, the virtual, uh, . . . blackout of news about Gay and Lesbian people of color. That too's been going on so long I don't notice it much anymore. No, what's getting me down is the insensitivity, the plain stupidity.

Then there are the well-meaning liberals. Another local Gay publication put a Black man on its cover. Good, I thought to myself as I turned to the inside. The article began promisingly enough. The publisher related how the Black man, a supervisor's aide at City Hall, had expressed surprise at being invited to appear on the cover of a White-dominated paper. Wow, I thought, it takes guts to print something like that. But I should have known better. Having the last word — as all papers do — the publisher weaseled out of this one simply, claiming, "Ethnic minorities have often appeared in . . . [our paper]." No, I shouted to myself, they have not. Not by any definition of 'often' or 'appear.' But I guess if you say they have, somehow it'll seem true. As I read further, things got worse. After listing some of the personal accomplishments of the politically-ambitious Black man, the article added:

He is also a Regional Director for the Committee of Black Gay Men, a political organization that does both lobbying and provides an opportunity for its members to engage in introspective discussions. "The Gay community needs to recognize that ethnic and racial prejudice among Gays is counter-productive to our Human Rights

goals," he says.

Never mind that there is no Committee of Black Gay Men in San Francisco 'lobbying' and 'providing opportunities,' — and that there hasn't been for two years (at least according to four Black men I know who belonged)! Never mind that those pretty words about racism are just words, nothing more. (It isn't the first time a politician has padded his credentials at the expense of those who are active in a cause, in this case, anti-racism.) What's noteworthy is that the publisher who, just a few sentences before espoused his paper's ethnic pedigree, doesn't even realize that he's never printed Word One about this 'political,' 'lobbying' Committee (how could he — there's been nothing to report!). The whole thing is a send-up, just so much hot air packaged to give us what they think we'd like to read. As for a simple journalistic exercise like verifying facts, why bother? If this upright, White-selected Black man says such a group exists and is engaged in all this activism, why, it must be true. Even if it isn't, it . . . helps the 'cause,' doesn't it? (One of them must have sensed they were close to the edge. Specific information about the Committee — a contact phone or address, a meeting schedule is conveniently omitted.)

(Unfortunately, racism in the Gay press isn't always that subtle. Take this employment ad from a Washington, D.C. paper:

Help Wanted: GWM (Gay White male) for 3-4 days job, helper, home fix-up. . . . Exp pref but not nec if good worker. Must be clean, dependable. . . .

Or this from a San Francisco paper:

Jobs: Bartender, conservative GWM to work in straight establishment. Work into partnership. No exp required. . . .

It works in reverse too. In Philadelphia:

Jobs Wanted: GWM painting student seeks weekend position in art gallery. Seriously interested in learning the gallery business. . . .

Our GWM artists at least knows his colors. White is so much more . . . preferable for this kind of job. Or this kind (from a national publication):

Prof pilot — White male, 30, straight looking — seeks flight crew position. . . .

Or, for that matter, just about any kind. From Memphis:

GWM seeking any type of employment. . . . All offers considered.

He sounds desperate, doesn't he? But he does have one thing going for him and he knows it. He has another too. A Gay press

that's perfectly willing to help him trade on his Whiteness and the system's preference for it. And, well, why not? Freedom of the press and all that. If Whites are somehow more . . . employable — and let's face it, they are — who are we to buck the system? Besides, there's nothing illegal about describing your race when looking for a job. There's also nothing relevant about it. Or is there?

Whites are also more "houseable." From coast to coast, North, South, East, and West, Gay newspapers carry hundreds of discriminatory housing ads. In Denver:

Responsible roommate(s) to share large 3-bedroom Victorian. Quiet area near City Park. Must be GWM, neat, clean, with stable employment. . . .

In Seattle:

GWM couple seek gwm couple or single to share 3-bedroom Capitol Hill home. . . .

Chicago:

Responsible GWM 21-35 to share my Des Plaines apt. \$170/mo. . . .

And Washington, D.C. — with a twist:

GWM/F to share NW townhouse w/3 M and pets; must be stable, neat. . . .

This last one in a city where the population is 70% Black! (There were *twenty* such ads in

the one issue of this paper I looked at. Just what kind of message do you think they're trying to convey?)

Wait a minute, you say? There's a difference between refusing to rent to Blacks — Fair Housing and all that — and refusing to live with one. Sure there is. One is overt racism, the other's subtle.

Subtle too is this:

GWM, prof, quiet, clean, seeking apt for Sept. 1. . . .

Someone else out to trade on a system which favors Whites. The Boston paper which printed that one advises ironically:

Dear Advertiser, if race is not a crucial issue for you, why put it in your ad? It is not a required formula: GWM, GWF are not necessary. GM; GF would do as well, unless you really want it otherwise.

I'm tempted to respond:

Dear Editor, it's your fucking newspaper. If race is not a crucial issue for you, why run the ad? . . . Unless you really want it otherwise.

Do we really want it otherwise? Is it our intention to continue promoting Whiteness by shutting out people of color? Well, maybe not. Maybe we want them to have the same freedom and privileges we have. Maybe it's just that we don't think about it. Maybe.

The regular writers for **Just Advice** are on vacation this week. However, we present the following advertisement.

Dear Readers:

Are you stuck in a low paying, dead end job? Are you tired of the rush-rush pace of nine to five work? Are you sick of people saying "Mind your own business!" Then perhaps you are one of the many who could become an advice column writer. Yes, enter the exciting world of journalism. Lay around all day and wait for the mail. Sit in the jacuzzi or answer the telephone from your very own Rolls Royce. Earn the right to stick your nose into anybody's business. Meet Ann Landers.

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How would you answer the following letter?

Dear Just Advisor:

My lover and I have different sexual appetites. S/he is always on and I, it seems, am always off. What should we do? S/he is frustrated and I am insecure. Please answer soon.

— Unaroused in Aloha

Check one.

- A. Cheat
- B. Lock her/him up in the bathroom with a plastic blow up doll
- C. Take hormones
- D. Other (Please write your own answer here.)

Please address all answers to: **Just Advisor**, 923 SW 17th, Portland, OR 97205.

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