

# LETTERS

## What it is like being young and gay, period.

To the editor,

The question is not what's it like being young and gay in Portland (*Just Out*, Oct. 1985) it's what's it like being young and gay, period. No matter where the youth live there are many problems they face. Being gay has been for years taboo. This generation, though, has made remarkable strides in the trek to make homosexuals a part of today's society, and to finally let "closet cases" "come out" and be recognized. Yet, all these strides are but small steps for those still in hiding in small towns and communities like Klamath Falls.

I "came out" in, what I feel to be the most restrictive place any gay male could possibly come out in, Klamath Falls. I grew up in a suburb of Los Angeles, and moved to Klamath when I was 13. I did not realize I was gay until my sophomore year in high school! And to admit to one's self that he or she was gay as well as the many other problems a teen faces, has been the cause of many trying years.

Activities for youth, whether gay or not, are very limited in Klamath Falls. Like many small towns, Klamath has its gay population, most of which is forced to remain "closet cases." There just is not enough public awareness, and initiative to give us the freedom we desperately seek.

After a recent trip to Portland I found that being around a more informed and accepting society was indeed a change of pace. I found it difficult being around other gays and lesbians who were so open and expressive of themselves. They were very proud to be who they were, and weren't afraid to show it. I have come out in a community that frowns on ANYONE being different than the "norm." This conformity has been a detriment to my own individuality. I have found difficulties in relating to other gays, other than those here in Klamath. I have met others in Portland, Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles to name a few, and have found them to be rather expressive and forward. All these years I have refrained from being myself, I have had to conform to the mold society has given me. I have tried the transition from the small town

to the big city, but I have shied away, and crawled back to the submission of the small town. Maybe being restricted to the life of the closet has kept me from seeing what the world is really like.

I have found many times I could have used a social group like Windfire or the Bridge Group, but due to my locality traveling 600 miles round trip is just a little much. Being caught in a constant battle with one's self, as well as others who just plainly do not understand is, at times, just too hard to face alone.

After meeting Lanny Swerdlow, the owner of The City in Portland, and spending an evening in his club, I realized how caught-up I was in this world of intentional molding. It is difficult for those of us trapped in small towns, unable to make the move or transition to the big city, to become fully aware of our sexuality. I praise the work that Lanny, and others like him, are doing for those of us young gays and lesbians in today's society.

Scott Michaels (Steiner)

for more than\* one avenue of expression or focus. I challenge the Editorial Staff of *Just Out* to print this letter, and only regret that they failed to have the moral integrity to air such criticism while the\* Eagle was still in print.

Ours is a very diverse community, and knowing the need for alternatives\*, I am saddened to see personal\* competition\* or vindictiveness take precedence\* over the greater goal of united action and community good.

Sincerely,  
Sallee Huber

\*(sic), ed.

to help. Some of the women not only volunteered for a shift but donated blood as well. We thank the Red Cross nursing staff who worked the drive in a professional and caring way. And lastly, a special thank you to each of the women who took the time, the energy and the selflessness to come in to give blood.

It was wonderful to see such powerful and pure cooperation from all the parties involved in this success. Watch early in 1986 for the next drive!

Sincerely,  
Lynda M. Oakley  
Red Cross Consultant

## Lesbian Blood drive great success

To the Editor:

A very good thing happened on Thursday, October 10th. A successful event brought diverse elements of the community together. C.C.S.M. (the Gay and Lesbian Hotline) and Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays co-sponsored a blood drive for the American Red Cross at the Y.W.C.A. This blood drive was special in that it was a women's only drive aimed at the lesbian and women's communities. Fifty-nine women came to give blood. As always, some were unable to donate for various reasons and in the end 49 units were added to the blood supply. Through component therapy, well over a hundred patients may have their lives extended or saved through these gifts of life.

Many, many thanks are in order. The staff of the Y.W.C.A. downtown provided the site, tables, chairs and people to help setup and keep things flowing smoothly. Beyond this however, they were highly supportive and cooperative in a personal, giving way. For helping spread the word, we thank KBOO Radio, Ragtimes, *Just Out*, City Week, Lesbian Forum, Gay Mayor's Committee, Primary Domain, Old Wives Tales, A Woman's Place Bookstore, Club 927, members of C.C.S.M. and Parents F.L.A.G. and a host of individuals who did personal signing up, passing out flyers or just talking it up. Those who prepared the delicious snacks for the drive were really appreciated and often complimented throughout the day. Then we come to the volunteers who spent hours helping out that day doing a variety of tasks. Their enthusiasm and supportive attitudes kept everything on a positive note. Some of the volunteers were gay men recognizing an opportunity for them to help the blood program in a different way since they cannot donate at this time. Some were members of the sponsoring organizations showing their support. Some were individuals just wanting

## Blood drive courageous step

To the editor:

This letter is in appreciation of your support and courage showed on October 10, 1985 by initiating, hosting, feeding and participating in the Women Only Blood Drive held at the YWCA.

At a time that the AIDS crisis is casting a chill and a shadow over the two-decade-old Civil Rights Movement as it relates to lesbians and gay men, it is indeed encouraging to have the support of all your communities.

It is particularly strengthening to draw upon your efforts to demonstrate that there is a common bridge between our respective communities — a bridge of care and concern. And indeed, it is also a clear statement that the safest, most risk-free blood in America is that of our sisters in the movement.

It is also encouraging that the Portland Chapter of the American Red Cross dared to do what some other Red Cross chapters have steered clear of — a controversial subject. I would simply encourage a more open, announced and visible effort the next time you do so, and I hope you are already planning such a second effort.

But for now, and for your effort, thanks for taking the time, the risk and the chance to lend your support in behalf of who we are: gay and lesbian people who are fighting for our lives.

Sincerely,  
Bernard N. Merrill

## Comics clobbered

To the Editor:

Well, I see that, once again, the Editorial Staff of *Just Out* has chosen to take yet another cheap shot at those whom it disagrees with. Though not necessarily\* a big fan of "Paunchy Bobby" I still regard the Oct. issue of Cathartic Comics as offensive and immature.\*

The glee over another papers\* demise, as shown in the Editorial page cartoon is both unprofessional and self-serving. It does not show the communities\* best interest to label an entire paper "unconsciencess"\* simply because of personal differences that may exist between people.

As a woman who is both a former staff member of *The Eagle* and a leatherwoman, I took offence\* at the inference that the entire staff of a paper would be held accountable for personal disagreements. There were too many people involved with *the\* Eagle*, people dedicated to the Lesbian/Gay community to be able to make a blanket judgement about the so-called shortcomings of the publication.

Portland needs choices and alternative\* viewpoints, and the loss of one is a loss to everyone — not one that should be gloated over. The petty remarks of *Just Out* insult all the readers, staff and advertisers\* of *the\* Eagle*, and do a disservice to the Lesbian/Gay community in general.

As a writer and a person, I will still continue to voice my opinions in whatever manner may be available. The loss of one alternative\* then only impresses upon me more the need



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