

# L E T T E R S

## Shocked, angered, frustrated

To the Editor:

I have been an avid reader and fan of *Just Out* since moving to Portland several years ago. It is usually an informative, well-written publication that strives to address the countless issues pertaining to an extremely diverse gay/lesbian community. It is the last place I would expect to find bigotry, stereotyping, or catering to sexual paranoia.

I was therefore shocked, angered and very frustrated to read the most recent installment of "Cathartic Comics," which dealt in a derogatory manner with NAMBLA (North American Man/Boy Love Association). In this particular strip, the author (Rupert Kinnard) chose to exploit a very real group of people in an extremely one-sided, negative fashion. NAMBLA was portrayed as an organization whose very name strikes terror and paranoia into the strip's characters, a tactic, I presume, designed to elicit a knowing chuckle from the reader. I did not chuckle. I know better.

Whether or not you agree with its policies, or are even mildly aware of the group's activities, NAMBLA is at the forefront in the struggle for human rights. It is a radical, politically active group dedicated to securing personal freedom for one of the most oppressed minorities in our culture: youth. It is strongly opposed to any form of child abuse and/or molestation, and has participated in numerous marches protesting our government's human rights abuses in Central America. Yet, repeatedly, NAMBLA has been ridiculed and persecuted in this country by both the "gay" and "straight" media, which persist in revealing only one side of a complex issue. Mr. Kinnard, by employing ageist and homophobic terms like "jailbait" in his supposedly humorous references to NAMBLA, has done us all in the gay community a great disservice.

After speaking to both Jay Brown and Renee LaChance (the co-publishers of *Just Out*) I am still very confused with the paper's policy concerning NAMBLA. In June, 1985, *Just Out* made it editorial policy to refuse any advertising from NAMBLA, presumably because the staff considered the group far too controversial. Since then, little or nothing has been printed about NAMBLA. When I voiced my concerns about September's "Cathartic Comics," I was told that a small, unbiased article on NAMBLA

was printed in the same issue to offset any negative implications from the comic strip. Curiously, the same issue carried the following classified ad:

"BOY, CALL ME NOW! Don't keep your hot, horny DADDY waiting for you on the Private, Low-Cost, Sex-Link." (Capital letters are from the original ad)

Your publication's inconsistency is frightening. Am I, as a reader of *Just Out*, to assume that it is editorial policy to reject legitimate advertising by a legal, internationally recognized organization, and yet ridicule this same organization in a comic strip authored by someone listed on the paper's masthead as "Graphic Inspiration"? Am I to assume that *Just Out* accepts ads seeking "boy(s)" (of unspecified age) to contact "your hot, horny DADDY," and yet feels that any advertising by NAMBLA is too controversial? Am I, as a member of NAMBLA, to feel compensated for this unjust "comic" portrayal of our organization by a small article concerning the group? Would the editor still have published that article if Mr. Kinnard had chosen some other group to pick on?

It was pointed out to me (on page 3 of *Just Out*) that "views expressed in letters to the editor, columns, and features may not be those of the editorial staff of *Just Out*." This disclaimer, however, does not let the editor off the hook. Your newspaper's policies also "allow the rejection or the editing of an article or advertisement that is offensive, demeaning or may result in legal action." It would be interesting to find out if the latter policy also applies to Rupert Kinnard's "Cathartic Comics." It does not appear to.

I will no doubt be chided by the editor for choosing not to sign my name to this letter. I am not an official spokesperson for NAMBLA, only a dues-paying member, and I have not yet made that very personal decision to be publicly "out" concerning my beliefs. Your feelings on credibility are to be respected, Mr. Brown, but at least acknowledge and/or show some respect for those NAMBLA members who have put their names, jobs and lives on the line to battle ignorance. They deserve better than cheap-shot cartoons. Perhaps when publications such as *Just Out* can summon up the courage to be more accurate and fair towards all of its readers will I be able to summon up the courage to sign a letter such as this.

T.  
Portland

## Stunned, shocked, disappointed.

To the Editor:

I am so stunned, shocked and, mainly, disappointed, that I'm not even sure how to begin.

I have been reading *Just Out* since its inception, generally cover-to-cover. Perhaps you have had articles like this before and they escaped my notice, but I don't recall ever seeing anything about NAMBLA before, at least not in so favorable a light.

And to think that it was only a couple of issues ago in which my organization advertised to your readership for volunteers for our child abuse prevention program!!!

What you refer to as "intergenerational sex" is known by everyone else as child sexual abuse. To refer to people who protest child abuse as "presuming to define (man/boy sex) according to their own preconceptions and prejudice" is completely absurd. On those very same grounds one can justify racism, sexism, genocide and certainly homophobia and gay-bashing.

If everything, after all, is simply a matter of personal preference, and those who protest are merely prejudiced and narrow-minded, then there is no room for questions of right and wrong, power versus powerlessness, free choice, personal rights or individual freedoms.

By approving of NAMBLA, you are agreeing with the "sex by eight" slogan. How much free choice do you think there can be in a sexual relationship between a grown person and a child

of eight, or five, or two years, or six months? Have you ever spoken with an adult who was molested as a child? Have you ever spoken with a child who is currently in a sexual relationship with a grown-up? Until now I considered *Just Out* to be responsible, informative and enjoyable reading. From now on I will be reading only to monitor it for irresponsibility and misinformation instead.

I am very, very sorry to learn about what seems to me to be a change in *Just Out* or maybe just my own awakening to the truth of your publication. I have spent hours and hours over the years telling groups of skeptical adults that no, it is not homosexual men who are raping your sons. Now I learn I am wrong, and I learn it from the very people I thought I was telling the truth about.

Mr. Brown, I hope you deem my letter worth responding to, because I most sincerely do wish to know your paper's position on this issue.

Arline Jacobson  
Community Advocates

The Editor responds:

I have talked at length with both letter writers. Both writers perceive me as an advocate against their respective points of view, although I am neutral.

*Just Out* provides a forum for many points of view; more than twenty people (not including the letter writers) have contributed to the copy in this issue alone. Not everyone agrees with everything in *Just Out*; the Priscilla Martins, for instance, would have us not exist at all.

*Just Out* welcomes correspondence of divergent points of view; we're just here to get the word out. And, apparently, we do. Other correspondence this month included a note from a teenager in a suburban community who wrote, "Thank you, *Just Out*. I'd be on the verge of suicide without you!"

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