

Senator Kennemer set straight

To the Editor:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter I wrote to State Sen. Bill Kennemer in response to his letter to Ms. Carrsyn that appeared in the May *Just Out*. As you indicated, Mr. Kennemer's attitude reflects ignorance. Unfortunately, it also represents the continuation of oppression against gay people.

Sen. Bill Kennemer
State Capitol Building
Salem, OR 97310

Dear Mr. Kennemer:

I am writing in response to the letter you wrote to Ms. Carrsyn that appeared in the May edition of *Just Out*.

First, I found it incomprehensible that any elected legislator would consider ignoring a letter from a constituent, just because he happened to disagree with its contents. Legislators have a duty to consider all points of view when deciding issues; it appears not only is your mind unalterably closed on this one, but that you do not want to even hear about alternatives. Please consider that many individuals write to their elected officials not because they are in agreement with them, but for precisely the opposite reason.

You are concerned with the cause of homosexuality, and the fear that somehow gay people might cause young charges to follow their foster parents' sexual orientation. If the patent absurdity of this belief were not so widely held (even by educated people like yourself), I suppose it might be amusing. I, and every other gay person I have ever known, diverse as our backgrounds might be, have had one thing in common; heterosexual parents. Gay people are brought up in a heterosexual environment, with heterosexual role models, often with heterosexual siblings. All the societal training reinforces the heterosexual message. Yet from this milieu come gay people. If homosexual behavior is learned, as you contend, we learn it from heterosexuals.

In fact, no one really knows the cause of homosexuality. Or heterosexuality, for that matter. I argue that cause is immaterial, anyway. Sexuality simply is. The sooner we all accept its various manifestations, that we become tolerant of people who are different, the better off we will be.

Sincerely yours,

David L. Gunn
Beaverton

Names Project, PGMC resolve difficulties

To the Editor:

Just so there is no misunderstanding, we would like to go on record regarding the "Family Squabbles" article in your May 1989 issue.

The Portland Gay Men's Chorus has profound respect for the quilt. Besides contributing funds, nine panels, and entertainment for the local display last summer, the Chorus has always been and will continue to be as supportive of this international treasure as reasonably possible.

The Portland Chapter of the Names Project appreciated the opportunity to display a small representative portion of the Quilt to the audiences of the *Song and Ballet* concert. The local Chapter will continue to bring small

displays to Oregon as part of an ongoing effort to educate while raising vital funds for direct service organizations, and insuring that the lives behind the statistics will always be remembered.

The Names Project display was clearly identified in the rotunda during the concerts. The 32 panels were accompanied by an information and merchandise table staffed by Names Project volunteers.

To use the expression of Ecumenical Ministries' Rodney Page, we are glad we "drew a circle around ourselves, rather than a line between us." Both of our organizations will continue to seek resolution of community issues in a productive, mutually supportive manner.

James Bryson
Executive Director, Names Project/Portland Chapter

Richard Brown
General Manager, Portland Gay Men's Chorus

Individuals, not organizations, faulted

To the Editor:

I was disappointed in your article "Family Squabbles," concerning the controversy about the censorship of a quilt panel celebrating the lives of eight men who were lost in this time of AIDS.

You lost sight of the fact that these two fine organizations, The Names Project and the Portland Gay Men's Chorus, are not to blame. The blame lies with a few people with some power placing themselves as the moral guides for the rest of us. Richard Brown's (PGMC) comment, "It looked like a billboard for a nudist camp" is positively ludicrous. I do not want Mr. Brown, or anyone else, dictating his aesthetic values to the rest of us.

A very small portion of the panel depicted two men silhouetted against the sun, and they were nude... yes, they had penises. I heard the argument that "children might see it." May I remind these critics that half of the world's children are boys and have already seen "it." Why do they want to keep "it" a secret from the other half when an estimated 90 percent of them are going to find out anyway. An informal survey of the remaining ten percent (lesbians) proved they had found out about "it," also.

I resigned from the board of the local Names Project chapter when I learned that their solution, when showing panels at other organizations' events, is to have a signed contract that would forbid censorship. And, in turn, the Names Project/San Francisco stated they would not send out any other "controversial" panels. It appears that The Names Project will be getting into the business of censorship, also.

Might I respectfully suggest that we cease bickering among ourselves and "go forth, never to sin again."

Fred Menard
Portland

Carbon Copy

Portland Gay Men's Chorus
PO Box 3223
Portland, OR 97208

To whom it may concern:

It was with great disappointment that I attended the recent performance of "Song and Ballet" and found that there was no sign language for the hearing impaired. I was appalled at the Chorus's lack of sensitivity to the deaf community; it is inexcusable. Even more so considering the beautiful works that were performed.

I should like to know whose decision it was not to provide sign and why such action was taken.

Friends in the deaf community informed me that offers of volunteer signing were made and refused, so we can thankfully assume that money was not the issue. The question remains then, why?

Why would an organization which itself has been the victim of discrimination turn around and discriminate against a part of society?

Your supporters deserve an answer and I for one am hinging my continued support on your reply to the community along with a heartfelt apology to the hearing impaired.

Steven D. Higham
Portland

cc: *Just Out*
Portland Monitor
Willamette Week



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