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just news

Census '90

National gay and lesbian activists in Washington are aggressively encouraging gay and lesbian couples to make sure their relationships are counted in the 1990 census.

For the first time, the Census Bureau has added the category of "unmarried partner" to the relationship section of its questionnaire, reportedly to find out how many unmarried heterosexuals live together.

But activists have pointed out that two males or two females living in the same household who check the "unmarried partner" box will clearly show up as a gay couple, and Census officials have agreed to publish those statistics.

"For those of us working in the lesbian and gay families arena, this information could prove vital to the success of our efforts in the future," said National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Lesbian and Gay Families Project director Ivy Young.

"Public and private industry programs are affected by census data; social and economic policy is guided by that same data; legislative agendas are set, initiatives launched and priorities determined by the numbers gathered," Young said. "If we choose to deliberately absent ourselves from this process, if we elect to disappear, what advantage do we gain?"

Young acknowledged that some gay and lesbian couples will be concerned about government intrusion into their privacy, but said "our community must be persuaded to put aside the fear of being exposed."

Census data is confidential and, barring some dramatic change in government policy, could not be utilized to expose, track or identify homosexuals.

Some gay leaders have called for a gay boycott of the census, arguing that the lack of education by the Census Bureau coupled with confidentiality concerns will lead to a gross undercount and a skewed statistical profile.

However, a recent poll by the *Washington Blade*, a gay newspaper, found that 75 per cent of gay couples surveyed said they would record their relationship on the census form.

"Granted, [the *Blade*] survey was conducted in a major metropolitan area with a history of gay visibility," Young said. "Similar results may not emerge from some small town or hamlet. But then again, they might."

Questions regarding the census may be directed to Young at 202-332-6483 or the Census Bureau at 202-340-1570.

First arrest in Laurelhurst bashings

A 16-year-old boy arrested last month has become the first person formally charged in connection with a series of gay-bashing incidents in Laurelhurst Park, according to police.

Timothy Shuell was charged with robbery, assault and intimidation, all in the first degree, in connection with a November 18 incident. He was released March 7 on conditions of "close supervision" — meaning he must call Juvenile Court four times a day, attend school and obey all laws. Also, a court counselor will make unannounced visits to his home.

A pre-trial conference, which is closed to the public, is scheduled for April 5. The maximum penalty for a juvenile on those charges would be commitment to the MacLaren School, a detention facility, until the age of 21, according to Shuell's court counselor, Bill Fogarty.

The incident in which Shuell is charged was typical of the gay-bashings that have occurred in or near the park during recent months, according to police. Detective Lloyd Higgins said that the victim, a man, was in his car when a woman stepped in front of the vehicle and refused to move. When the man got out of his car, he was attacked by three men who beat him and took his wallet.

A law passed by the Oregon Legislature during the 1989 session made it a crime to threaten or harass gay men and lesbians. The law added "sexual orientation" to a statute banning intimidation on the basis of a person's race, color, religion or national origin.

Police spokesman David Simpson said that a lack of information from victims is making it difficult for police to pursue the gay-bashing incidents in Laurelhurst Park. "One of the big problems we're having is that they're not getting reported — I'm sure for a variety of reasons," he said. "It's late at night that most of the stuff occurs, and victims can't always get a good look at their attackers."

— Anndee Hochman

L E T T E R S

Longtime JO staffer resigns

To the Editor:

I am deeply grateful for my years at Just Out. I love the paper and I have undying respect for the blood, sweat and tears that Jay Brown and Renée LaChance have put into it to keep it alive all these years. I see Just Out as a successful means of communicating lesbian and gay culture within our communities and to the world at large. I appreciate the dedication and hard work of all

the people with whom I have been associated during my involvement with the newspaper and through it — my connection to the lesbian and gay communities of Oregon.

It is with great difficulty and sorrow that I now find it necessary to discontinue my association with the paper. This is my loss. I trust that the newspaper will continue to flourish and grow. I hope the readership will do what they can to see Just Out through a period of intense and much-needed change.

Ann Hinds
Portland