

just out

since 1983

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Letters to the editor should be limited to 400 words. Graphic material should be in black ink on white paper. Deadline for submissions is the 15th of the month preceding publication. Views expressed in letters to the editor, columns and features are not necessarily those of the publisher.

Display advertising will be accepted up to the 17th of each month.

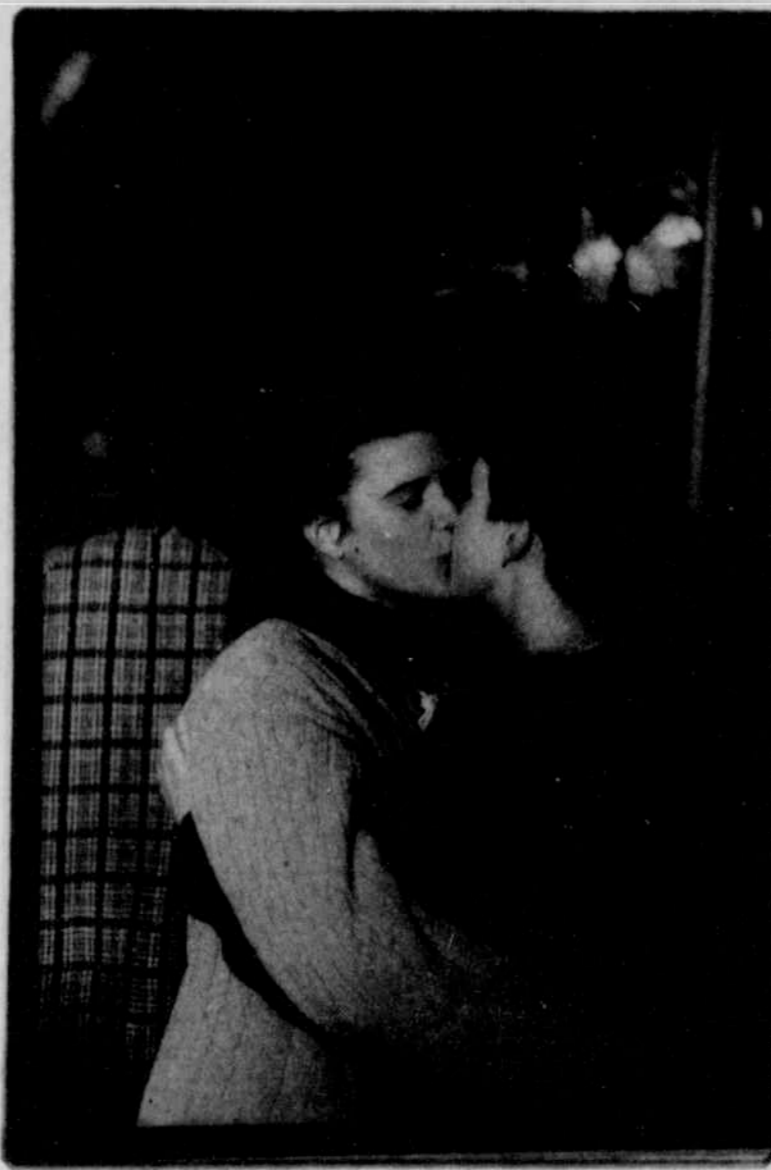
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A free copy of *Just Out* and/or advertising rates are available on request.

The mailing address and telephone number for *Just Out* are: PO Box 15117, Portland, OR 97215; (503) 236-1252

steppin' out



PHOTOS BY COYOTE DAYS

On Valentine's Day Queer Nation organized a Love-In on Max to remind people that queer love is good love. Over 100 lesbians and gay men and 25 police officers participated. Participants, (not the police), passed out flyers to commuters.

editorial

Doffing our fedoras

"Offensive names are perpetuated by their use in newspapers and other media."

This is a direct quote from *The Oregonian* editorial regarding their decision not to use sports teams names that are offensive to racial, ethnic, or religious groups. It's a stunning blow against institutionalized racism, and we, at *Just Out* doff our fedoras to them. It takes a lot of courage to be the first to rip away one of the last bastions of "socially acceptable" racism. *The Oregonian* is the only newspaper nationwide to listen to the voices of Native Americans who have been challenging the dehumanizing sports team names for decades.

This issue is really cooking over at *The Oregonian*. The public responses are running high against the new policy, with some people cancelling their subscriptions in protest. What is it about most European Americans that makes us/them resist such simple, cooperative changes? When is it going to sink in that EVERY PERSON deserves to be treated with respect and dignity? This is really a basic concept that is apparently difficult for some European Americans to implement. *The Oregonian* could use some letters supporting the editorial board's decision to put their policy where their words are.

A publishers struggle

I have a commitment to unlearn my racism. It has taken my entire lifetime in this institutionalized racist society to learn racism; it is taking a great deal of time to unlearn it, too.

For me, unlearning racism is an uncomfortable and an evolving process.

It begins with educating myself about racism and the ways this society and European Americans manifest it. At each new level of consciousness, I share with the people around me materials and ideas I have absorbed. The education process constantly challenges my comfort levels and creates as many

questions as I find answers.

When I began to incorporate my budding antiracist lifestyle into my work at *Just Out*, it was like trying to chew through a brick wall. *Just Out* is a monthly paper, so creating change is like swimming through molasses.

Racism wasn't created by people of color, yet they are the ones who have to deal with it daily. European Americans have the privilege of making a choice about dealing with their racism. For me there is only one choice to make. It is our responsibility as European Americans to educate ourselves and everyone around us about racism, and to eradicate racism from our language, our actions and our lives. As European Americans, and racism's creators, we have to learn how to recognize it and challenge it when we see or hear it.

I often fall short of my expectations for myself. I don't always recognize racism when I see it and don't always challenge it in the moment. I do denial well, so when I hear my European American friends or co-workers using insidious racial slurs I think, "oh they're not being racist, they're my friends." European Americans question my ideas when I tell them I have been told or I have learned that something is offensive to people of color. They say I'm splitting hairs or they ridicule me for reaching some new level of antiracism. It is difficult to stand up to that kind of social pressure, but it is nothing compared to what people of color face every day.

We have to listen to the people who are being oppressed and commit ourselves to end that oppression. Revolutions begin with an individual and a commitment: Just for today, I will not be racist or oppressive to anyone.

The Oregonian has taken a big step towards chipping away at the brick wall of institutionalized racism. I hope that we can all join together to chip away at that wall to make a hole big enough for everyone to pass through.

Renée LaChance

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