

A powerful ally

There is no room in the Billy Graham Crusade for doctrines of hatred and bigotry



Fearing that the impending Billy Graham Crusade in September would whip the fanatic "religious" right into a frenzy of gay-bashing, *Just Out* decided to contact the crusade headquarters and see just what Billy Graham preaches.

We talked to Tom Phillips, the senior crusade organizer, about some of our fears and concerns regarding the crusade coming to Portland. He was very receptive to us. Phillips stated, "The Billy Graham Crusade does not target groups. Billy Graham's message is about the love of God through Jesus Christ." There seems to be no room in the crusade organization for people who do not have that level of loving acceptance of all people. Doctrines of hatred and bigotry will have no platform during this crusade.

The crusade's organizers are well aware of the escalating attacks from hate-filled people in our communities. Phillips said, "The Jewish community is usually the most fearful of the crusade coming to town and triggering a tide of anti-Semitism. We always meet with the [Jewish] leaders and they are immediately reassured by the message of love that Billy Graham preaches."

Rally organizers are committed to reaching all people, with a special emphasis on "the multicultural community." Many comments are made in the crusade's literature about the diversity of people that are welcomed. "Every night from the

platform, Mr. Graham urges the crusade audience to go out of their way to meet and make friends with a person of a different race. He preaches about peace, love and unity among all people and ethnic groups. The crusade reaches across ethnic, cultural, language and physical boundaries."

The crusade does not teach a sectarian doctrine or in any way try to influence people toward a specific church or denomination.

"All seats are available free of charge on a first-come, first-serve basis. Special provisions are frequently made for other language groups and for persons with disabilities," reads the crusade's literature.

In talking to Police Chief Tom Potter about concerns of escalating violence as a result of the Billy Graham crusade, Potter said, "Billy Graham is inclusive, he's not exclusive. This is the most well-run organization I've seen doing a production in Portland."

The crusade is very open and aboveboard in all financial matters. Billy Graham remains the one major evangelist that is scandal-free.

Preaching love, acceptance and diversity to people is what Oregon desperately needs right now. We can only hope that Billy Graham's message is able to heal the hate-torn "Christians" who are turning themselves inside out trying to annihilate everyone who doesn't agree with their dogma.



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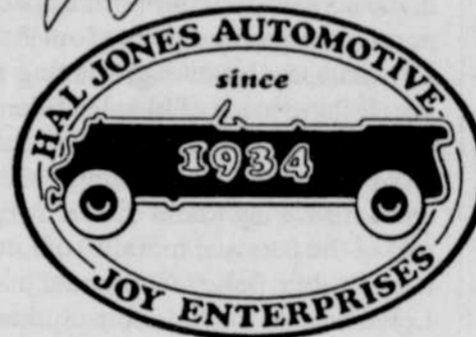
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