

letters

From one of the "traded-off"

To the Editor:

This letter is in response to the letter from In Other Words, Portland's newest "feminist" bookstore (*Just Out*, May 6, 1994). I, too, visited the store when it first opened, was sadly disappointed at the lack of access in the design, and wrote a letter to the store. The response I received back was as disappointing as the store, and as disappointing as the ongoing discrimination that occurs within our own community. In my letter I pointed out marginalization not only by structural design, but also by spatial segregation—by relegating the works of minority writers (African American writers and the books on lesbian and gay sex) to a segregated area that was inaccessible not only to those who were mobility-impaired, but to the easy visual access of the general public.

The response I received contained a glowing report on the bathroom facilities, and ignored the valid points that I raised regarding front door access, shelf height and spatial marginalizing. What does it matter if the bathroom is in fact accessible, when the front door is not? And, how do you pick out your books? Is it from a list of authors and topics, or do they visually reach out for your eyes, draw you to pick them up and read the back cover, and *then* do you go on to the author and topic? How can you do this if the books are several feet beyond your visual field?

The greatest pain I feel as a Deaf, Lesbian, Woman is from my own community. A community that decries discrimination, and marginalization of minorities, but tends to view that with tunnel vision. It only applies if it is discrimination based on sexual orientation?

Halfway is not enough. Some is not enough. A little is not enough. The decisions and reasons for anything less than full access are mere excuses that are not acceptable. Whether non-profit or not, if the Women's Community Education Project [the owner of In Other Words] gets grant money, foundation money, or federal bucks, they can lose all financial support if their funding source finds out they are discriminatory in access. Talking to "a" person at one agency, who uses one model of wheelchair, does not a wide representation of the disabled population make, and will lead to exactly the type of inadequate access In Other Words now has.

All that aside, what is meant by "women's community"? Some of the women? Only the abled women? All in all, I found the whole store to be a white-middle-class-ableist-homophobic experience, and I'm boycotting it until they change what needs to change to make it work. If that works for you, join me. Write them and tell them why. Put some pressure on. Until we as a community develop a zero tolerance level for discrimination of any type, we will see no progress. "Mostly" doesn't get it, in my book. And if all the civil rights movements, human rights movements and women's movements before us would have settled for "mostly," we would all still be home baking cookies exclusively, going to separate schools, getting paid less than men, and not voting. A

bookstore that isn't all-inclusive is not "viable." It perpetuates the dominant paradigm!

Dee StarDancer
Portland

Distraction from the truth

To the Editor:

We didn't know Ben Merrill personally, so we cannot sing his praises well. We know a little about his professional conduct. All the reasons given in the letter to the editor (*Just Out*, April 15, 1994) to mitigate the circumstances surrounding his demise[sic], sound like so many excuses to us. They only serve to distract our attention from the truth.

Ben Merrill's service to his community and his sexual orientation do not exempt him from either failure or triumph. Ben Merrill has shown the stuff of which he is made. Ben Merrill is a person just like the rest of us. He puts his pants on one leg at a time.

We have a choice. We can boldly face the truth, or we can stay in the closet of lies. Ben Merrill is allowed to make mistakes. He also has permission to face the music. We don't know how he feels about his deeds. We will withhold judgment. But we should say, greed is greed. We shouldn't insult ourselves by calling his greed self-sacrifice.

Steve Callihan and Cliff Swan
Portland

TRANSITIONS

Joseph Marshall Brown 1966-1994

For Joe

In the morning
I rolled over
and put my gentlest kiss
on each of your sleepy eyes.

My heart didn't know
what was right or left
but found in you
a spring of shining love.

I never saw anyone
as tender and honest as you
and I miss feeling your hand
the warm touch of your hand on my face.

Joe, a million years
and days do not diminish
the white light
the gentle light of
your love.

From Steven

CORRECTION

Inaccurate information

In the May 6 issue of *Just Out* there was erroneous information in the article on the City Council race between Fred Neal and Earl Blumenauer.

My reading of Neal's position paper on crime left me with the impression that he wanted to start a hate crimes unit in the Portland Police Bureau. That was incorrect. Neal's position, in fact, was that he wanted to start a hate crimes unit within the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office.

The *Oregonian* made the same error in a snippet James Meier wrote regarding Neal's po-

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sition on crime, which reinforced my impression. The fact that the information was inaccurate did not affect our endorsement of Earl Blumenauer.

Renée LaChance
Publisher



Kathy Tysinger
Member, Portland
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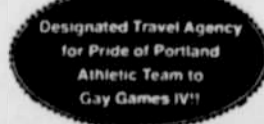
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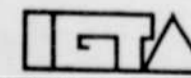
Good Luck and Travel Safe, to all members, partners and friends of TEAM PORTLAND at the Gay Games in NYC. Thanks for all of your support!

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