

letters

Angry at the loss

To the Editor:

I just recently learned that Ariel Waterwoman died on Jan. 3. Her love and energy and fighting spirit will be missed.

I also learned that Assoto Saint died in 1994, and it makes me mad. I'm angry that we've lost yet another sister to cancer and yet another brother to AIDS. I'm angry that the queer community has seemed to lose its fighting edge and has developed a short memory.

I'm angry that Assoto's passing hardly made a blip in the predominantly white gay media. Like Ariel, Assoto spoke the truth about the isms that are strangling our community from within and without. He loved fiercely enough to fight the violence we face day to day, be it physical, economic or medical.

Oregon, don't let Ariel's struggle for the community and against cancer pass without *someone* expressing some outrage. Queers cannot afford to fail to acknowledge that one of us has died from the scourges that we are dying from. It is up to us to make sure THEY—the right, the liberals who make us their cause of convenience—know that we will not die silently and unnoticed.

I will miss you, Ariel.

LaTricia Ransom
Beijing, China

Warrior of light

To the Editor:

Although I didn't know her well personally, I knew her well enough to know that she was one to speak the truth and to understand that that's all that's really required of any of us right now. Speaking the truth.

Ariel was like sister friends I know all over this country who are warrior women. Warriors of Light. Webster's defines a light as that which makes it possible to see, anything that emits or is a source of light, a person whose brilliant record makes her/him an example for others.

The Warriors of Light that I know provide knowledge, enlightenment and mental illumination. Ariel Waterwoman was and still is a Warrior of Light. Let us say her name aloud often. Now and forever...Ariel Waterwoman.

Avel Gordly
Portland

Must one be a poster boy?

To the Editor,

I feel the need to comment on your "Media Briefs" section for the Jan. 6, 1995, edition. Michael Stipe's response to questions about his sexuality has continually been "None of your business!" This does not sit well with the people who want Michael to confirm what they are sure they already know. You decided to label his response as "absolutely homophobic." Then you decided to call the question homophobic because it wasn't "Are you straight?"

Michael and R.E.M. have continually been on the positive side of this and various other important issues, yet you've decided that since he doesn't want to open his sex life to public scrutiny, he must be a closeted homophobe. You even jump to the conclusion that since he doesn't want to discuss it he must think it is "evil" or "vile" to be homosexual. He says it doesn't matter if he is straight or gay, and you say it does. Why does it

matter that a person must state their orientation at all? Does stating one's orientation determine the validity of what follows? Isn't that what we are working against?

It would be great if more celebrities felt comfortable enough to make their sexuality public domain, but do you really believe they should be badgered into it? Obviously you do. Try this on: Michael is straight, but his sexual ambiguity serves to get the point [across] that sexual preference is not something [on which] to base one's view of another, so he leaves the mystery unsolved. (Michael Keaton made a similar point when he avoided all gender-specific speech when he won his Oscar for *Philadelphia*.) Would you then notice all the positive things that he has helped accomplish, or would you turn your guns on another public persona who wasn't meeting your standards of furthering the cause. With the rise in conservatism and the Democrats losing their hold on grass-roots involvement, you would think there would be plenty of organizing and letter-writing campaigns to be done to help turn that tide instead of infighting and blurring the issue further by outing people.

I have read your magazine for some time now, but I am starting to wonder what "The Issue" is. I thought "The Issue" was the right for consenting adults to private sexual lives without the threat of reprisal from other individuals and groups who would like them to behave otherwise. Are you not becoming one of those groups or individuals? Must one be a "poster boy" for the cause before you acknowledge that one is indeed making a difference in people's view of sexuality? I found this brief to be ludicrous from the headline to the "homophobe's" address at the conclusion.

Bill Leeds
Portland

Editor's note: "Media Briefs" is compiled by Al Kielwasser and Tom diMaria of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. Just Out prints a diversity of opinions and insights that may or may not reflect those of the editor. Yours is one. By the way, Tom Hanks won the Oscar for his performance in Philadelphia, not Michael Keaton.

TRANSITION

Loving nature will be missed

Lonnie "Ray" Riley quietly left this earth Jan. 7, 1995, after a year-long battle with AIDS. His loving partner was at his bedside at the time of his transition.

Ray's loving nature and playfulness will be missed. His inventiveness, strong character, and love of people will live on in his memory and spirit.

He is survived by his longtime companion, Joe D. Gray of Portland; his sons, Donnie and Dwayne; and his parents, Gordon and Kathleen Buening of Seneca, Mo. Ray is also survived by several brothers and sisters.

Graveside services were held Jan. 13, 1995, in Seneca. A memorial service was held at Portland Metropolitan Community Church on Jan. 21, 1995. Remembrances may be sent to Portland MCC.

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