

letters

Not a disappointing turn

To the Editor:

In response to the [guest] editorial by Teri Ventura [Just Out, July 21, 1995] I am very disappointed that Ventura chose to criticize Assistant Chief of Police Bruce Prunk, the new police liaison to the Sexual Minorities Roundtable, on his absence at the meeting of July 11, while failing to mention his attendance at other roundtable-related meetings. I am also disheartened that other facts pertaining to the meetings of the roundtable on the proposed ordinance regulating underage nightclubs were not noted.

I have been in attendance at the roundtable for almost two years. In several of those meetings, there were more representatives of the Portland Police Bureau in attendance than [members of] our community. This absence of our community at past meetings did not and has not hindered our rapport or relationship with the Portland Police Bureau. So why should one absence of our new police liaison be labeled as not setting a "positive tone" and be seen as "a disappointing turn"?

I also need to express the fact that it is not the total responsibility of the Portland Police Bureau to conduct outreach to queer youth on the proposed ordinance and amendment to the City Code regulating underage nightclubs. Nor is it the Portland Police Bureau's total responsibility to bring the queer youth voices to the roundtable. We as a queer community share in this responsibility. We as representatives to the roundtable share in this responsibility. Blaming the Portland Police Bureau for not increasing queer youth participation at the roundtable to address the issues of the proposed ordinance is not partnership problem-solving.

I was in attendance at the June 13 meeting, and prior roundtable meetings, when a few representatives of youth organizations and youth providers also agreed to do queer youth outreach on the proposed ordinance. This fact was not noted in the aforementioned editorial, nor were the facts and issues of previous roundtable meetings on this topic, which included queer youth prostitution, drug-related issues and homeless queer youth, that began many months ago.

I commend all of the liaison work the Portland Police Bureau has contributed to the foundation of the Sexual Minority roundtable and point out that this is a partnership.

I would like to note that the new police liaison, Assistant Chief Prunk, has been meeting with myself, William Warren, Roni Lang and other members of the Sexual Minority roundtable to create and establish a Crisis Response Team. This team will be called to the scene for accidental death, robbery, serious assault, fatal traffic accidents and fire, to assist and support victims when they are from the sexual minority community. This Crisis Response Team will be the first of its kind in the nation for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender victims. Neither the Crisis Response Team nor the new police liaison's involvement was mentioned in the editorial.

The Anti-Violence Project of the Lesbian Community Project is committed to maintaining a positive working relationship with the Portland Police Bureau in order to advocate for victims of hate/bias crimes. I feel that the Portland Police Bureau is equally committed. In working with Assistant Chief Prunk in the short time he has

been the liaison to the roundtable, I have not experienced a disappointing turn. I do suggest that Ventura re-read the partnership agreement for purpose, responsibilities and stated commitments.

La Verne Lewis, Executive Director
The Lesbian Community Project

Editor's note: Just Out stands with the Sexual Minorities Roundtable and its mission in our community. We have run many stories and editorials detailing the overwhelmingly positive results of the partnership between our community and the Portland Police Bureau. This does not negate the need for occasional constructive criticism. I feel Teri Ventura's guest editorial asked necessary and meaningful questions without negativity and gave Assistant Chief Bruce Prunk every benefit of the doubt.

Ventura has been attending meetings of the roundtable on behalf of Just Out since June 13. I fully support her efforts, and I believe that her guest editorial is in line with partnership problem-solving.

'A little perspective' indeed

To the Editor:

The letter written by Brand Dayne and Millie Vandervelden in support of Starky's [Just Out, July 21, 1995] unwittingly underscores the point of the debate about its owners' treatment of women. Male patrons of the establishment are treated differently (i.e., with more respect) than women patrons. To ask women to tone down their behavior while men's rowdiness is ignored is undeniably discriminatory. The writers even describe the treatment as occurring on several occasions. If the owners' vision for the restaurant is "a quality dining experience," that experience should be extended to all customers. Does the rowdiness of the male patrons somehow add to the "ambiance" while the same behavior from women detracts from it?

To suggest that it was they who were at fault, and that they needed to adjust their behavior to accommodate the owners, shows a lack of self respect on the part of the writers. Again, I think the women need to get a little perspective themselves. It is clear that they are probably friends of the proprietors. I suggest that they re-read their own letter and then decide if Starky's is worth patronizing. We are bombarded daily by this type of treatment from the straight community. We do not need it from our own.

Finally, this debate began when a woman complained about her treatment at the restaurant. In response, the owners wrote one of the most vicious diatribes against lesbians that I've ever seen. They did not once mention their "vision" for the restaurant. Rather, they railed against lesbians and their loud, cheap skate ways, and promoted ridiculous stereotypes. To now say that they are only trying to promote their "vision" for Starky's is cowardly. As I've said in a previous letter, the owners of Starky's are clearly predisposed to discrimination against women who enter their establishment. Dayne and Vandervelden's letter simply proves that point.

Mark Mardon
Portland

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