

# letters

## Confusion aired

To the Editor:

As a Washingtonian, I appreciated your coverage in the Aug. 18 issue of *Just Out* on the death of Washington state Sen. Cal Anderson. Many of us in Southwest Washington had worked with Cal on issues important to the gay and lesbian communities throughout this state.

However, early in the article I was confused by your describing Sen. Anderson as having become "Washington's first openly gay European American public official upon his election to the state House in 1988."

First, did I miss something? Was there a non-European American openly gay public official in Washington prior to Cal Anderson's assuming office? I have been actively involved in Washington state gay/lesbian politics for the past eight years and have heard and read many references to Cal Anderson having been the state's first openly gay elected official—irrespective of ethnic background.

Secondly, just to clarify, Anderson was first appointed to his house seat and then won the election to that seat in 1988.

Jess Durfee  
Vancouver, Wash.

*Editor's note: Long ago, Just Out established a policy to shake assumptions based on white privilege and get people thinking about marginalized groups and how racism is institutionalized in this society. In the mainstream U.S. media, if the ethnicity of a person is not mentioned it is assumed that that person is European American. If it wouldn't create an editorial quagmire, we would identify everyone's ethnicity in every article. Instead, it is our policy that when the ethnicity of an individual is mentioned in an article the ethnicity of all individuals in the article must be mentioned. In this instance, we referred to City Commissioner Sherry Harris as African American, which made it necessary, in order to adhere to our policy, to refer to Anderson as European American. We should have mentioned Anderson's ethnicity somewhere else in the article, where it would have been less confusing.*

## Giving credit where due

To the Editor:

It was heartening to see coverage of youth concerns in the Sept. 1 issue of *Just Out*, and in particular I was glad to see space given to the good work Kathy Belge has been doing as a case manager/support person. Her position is part of an ever-growing web of services, however, and I'd like to give credit to some of the others working to support the younger members of our community.

When I first started working with lesbian, gay and bisexual youth four years ago, "youth services" in Portland consisted of one support group, Windfire, sponsored by Phoenix Rising. We've had astonishing growth since then. Now there are six groups sponsored by a variety of agencies: Harry's Mother, Outside In, the Urban League, and Phoenix Rising. Outside In has an HIV-prevention program aimed at our youth. Harry's Mother is working on a program to keep our kids in school. Roots and Branches offers counseling to individuals and families regardless of ability to pay. Outside In and Roots and Branches are collaborating to begin counseling groups later this month to assist youth affected by drug and alcohol use, either their own or that of those around them. Portland hosts a conference to educate teachers and others on the needs of sexual minority youth, this year to be held Oct. 13-14. To be sure, there are gaps in what is available—for transgendered youth, for young people ages 21-25, and spiritually oriented groups, to name a

few—but youth have many more opportunities to feel understood and included than only a few short years ago.

A year ago, Harry's Mother, Outside In, Phoenix Rising and Roots and Branches collaborated to develop the position *Just Out* described, [a position] which is now housed at Roots and Branches. This collaboration has been a rich experience, both for me and, I believe, for the youth we serve. Because of it, the case manager/support person has ongoing contact with all the programs described above, and can meet with youth at a variety of locations. And because of it, we have come together to continue to create the vision of a better world for the next generation.

I also have a few corrections I'd like to make to *Just Out's* article. Roots and Branches is not itself a nonprofit agency; it is a program of the Network, a community mental health agency. Friends are important to have in all places; I believe it is important to acknowledge larger, mainstream organizations willing to go out on a limb and support our community. And not to nitpick, but only \$30,000 has been contracted with Roots and Branches to fund Kathy's post; if it were \$40,000 as reported, she would be able to provide her services full time and be there for even more of our young people.

And keep covering youth issues, please! Our young people need to see their concerns in print to feel that we include them as part of our community.

Ruth Gibian  
Program Coordinator  
Roots and Branches

## Concerning loss and how to cope

To the Editor:

This is in response to your article ["No End to the Grieving," *Just Out*, Aug. 4, 1995] concerning loss and how to cope with it all.

I lost my partner of 13 years in January 1989. He had been ill with AIDS for nearly two years. During this time I was having problems sleeping. The two of us had joined a 24-hour health club, so I started to go swimming—at 3:30 in the morning! This was a big help. I returned after about an hour and slept very well. I am retired now, but I still keep that date with the swimming pool three days a week. In short, any exercise is very helpful.

Also, volunteer. I volunteer for events sponsored by the Northwest AIDS Foundation, this is sort of an "on call" type of volunteer activity. For a more regular type I am on the hotline (counseling line) for the Seattle Counseling Service for Sexual Minorities. This is always interesting and challenging, and takes me outside of myself and allows me to focus more on others. In short, volunteer. It gets you out of the house and also lets you meet new people in a positive setting.

And I keep in touch with old friends, particularly those who live in other cities and states. I keep up a fairly large correspondence and a now-and-again diary.

And, if possible, a pet or pets help a great deal. I have two cats and I talk to them a lot—and they talk back. We have a great time.

I guess this sort of echoes what Sandra Jacoby Klein [recommended] in [the] excellent article, but one other thing, walk a lot. During this time Steve was so ill, and I was still working at the bank, I took every break—left the building and walked for 15 to 20 minutes. Walking always seems to clear the mind a bit and, again, it's exercise.

David Barker  
Seattle

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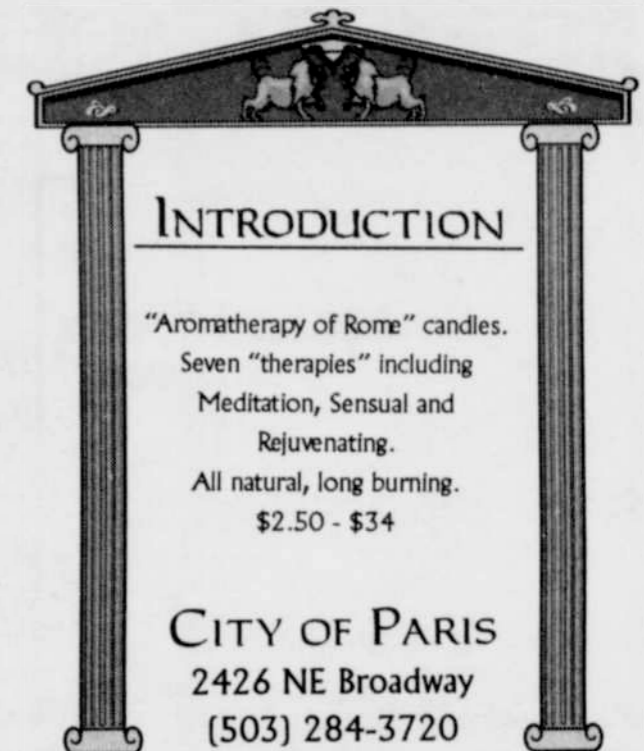
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