4 ▼ september 15, 1995 ▼ just out



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Hey, let's not vilify Republicans

To the Editor:

In your closing comments of your Sept. 1 editorial, "The price of bigotry," you take it upon yourself to subtly insult Log Cabin Republicans, and to vilify [Gov.] Pete Wilson of California as "slime personified." You do this with almost total indifference to gay Republicans, affording them no more respect than your parenthetical comment "(at the risk of offending our Republican readers) " Rest assured, you did precisely that, and wrongly so.

At every political rally and forum for gay rights, we almost always hear the admonition that we must recognize and include diversity in our ranks. You are a publisher of a newspaper-the major gay publication in Oregon. You are also the editor-a position of prominence and responsible commentary. Comments as the one above do nothing but send a very clear message that gay Republicans are not truly accepted under this umbrella of diversity-at least here in Oregon. At best, they are begrudgingly tolerated.

Few, if any, gay Republicans have any love for many parts of Bob Dole's and Pete Wilson's political platforms-particularly their stand on gay issues. Political criticism is certainly acceptable-even encouraged-but when it has no more maturity of thought than adolescent name-calling, you do a grave disservice to gay journalism and an even graver disservice to yourself personally.

Despite the fantasy held by Oregon lesbians and gays that we almost all fall within the ranks of the Democratic Party, that simply is not so. There are thousands of gay Republicans right here in Oregon-many who are on the front lines fighting the OCA, and who are bleeding and hurting as much as anyone else. Their lack of visibility, however, is invariably due to the all-prevalent indifference, and often hostility, towards them by the gay Democratic machinery, which in essence pushes them politically back in the closet.

Does it need to be said that fostering such an oppressive environment for gay Republicans is pathetic, even ironic, coming from gays and lesbians who for decades have themselves been oppressed? Has anyone ever set aside their skewed, and often ignorant, view of gay Republicans long enough to realize that if it were not for them working behind the scenes with the leadership committees and the rank and file of the Republican Party (certainly not a place where gay Democrats would be welcome or listened to) that we would not be anywhere as far along in our gay rights battle as we are today?

gay Democrats. Let us all serve in an environment that affords an equal measure of distinction and respect.

Jim Shurtliff Portland

Thanks and correction in order

To the Editor:

Thank you for providing coverage of transsexuals' criticism and protest of the history of transphobia [in the] Unitarian-Universalist Association and its Beacon Press ["Mixed Signals?" Just Out, Sept. 1, 1995].

I would like to make one correction, however. I did not state "Feinberg is no friend of transgendered people." What I stated was that "Feinberg is no friend of transsexual people." The mistake made in quoting me is easy to understand, given the tendency to confuse "transgender" with "transsexual."

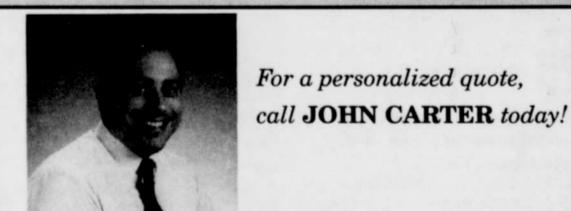
Feinberg's antipathy towards transsexuals is nowhere more evident than her lobbying the National Organization for Women National Convention held July 21-23 in Columbus, Ohio, to pass a resolution calling for the removal of "gender identity disorder" from the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Without a recognized diagnosis by an established medical association such as the APA, transsexuals will find access to hormone therapy and sex-reassignment surgery on the basis of medical necessity curtailed, and it will be reduced to nothing more than plastic surgery, affordable only to those economically privileged individuals who can afford to pay for it out of pocket.

Leslie Feinberg has written and spoken a great many things which have touched the hearts of lesbians everywhere. As a butch lesbian who explored the option of changing sex in the 1970s and rejected it for herself, however, Feinberg is simply in no position to address the needs and issues of transsexuals.

I wish to commend Just Out for its continued commitment to allowing transsexuals to speak for themselves and in their own voices. Were that commitment shared by Leslie Feinberg, the Unitarian-Universalist Association and Beacon Press, there would be no need to protest the comments and actions of people who should be allies, and we could all turn our attention to those forces which threaten us all, such as the Oregon Citizens Alliance.

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As Greta Cammermeyer said, "We are everywhere." That includes both gay Republicans and Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan Portland



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