

letters

Cool to be cruel

To the Editor:

Take a look at the enclosed [clipping from the Jan. 3, 1996, *Willamette Week*]. What the hell is that? It's not a fitting or appropriate tribute or acknowledgment of the people listed. It's not funny. It's not particularly nice.

[For this] fluff issue of cutesy filler stuff, one of those talentless hacks actually figured they'd lump these people together with Newberry's under the heading "Six Feet Under"? What is that? It must be that "irreverent" thing they brag about in that wordy, pretentious bit of business about their "mission."

It's repulsive: "Six Feet Under." If anyone I knew was on that list, there'd be hell to pay. I'm sure *Just Out* will be just fine with it, though, as you

apparently are with everything else [*Willamette Week* does in its superficial and exploitive treatment of gay people and issues. Did anyone there read the "review" of *Angels in America*? How about the cartoon asking the question "Raging or flaming?" of two stereotypical gay men entering a restaurant?

Forget about gay stuff: How about the full-page ad featuring a photo of women and children being led to their deaths at Auschwitz? Worse, read Publisher Richard Meeker's response to the Jewish Federation of Portland about that and then tell me this man or his paper is going to be doing anything honorable in the near future. Did you see the bit where they attack Wieden & Kennedy for the ad blitz for OK Cola?

This blitz took place in [*Willamette Week's*] own pages with the most environmentally and civically irresponsible ad insert in the history of same.

I'm not from this ridiculous little town, and it's astounding to me the passive acceptance of this pretentious, opportunistic, exploitive piece of crap by the community at large and the gay community in particular. Gay people in [that paper's] pages are a campy, fashionable attraction, an opportunity for self-serving pontification and finger-pointing, or discussed with all the humanity and sensitivity of someone discussing ocelots. And, no doubt about it, objects of ridicule if that suits [*Willamette Week's*] purposes at the moment, [as it has] on more than one occasion.

Look at the letter from the black gentleman wondering why the white-owned and -operated paper would run a cartoon ridiculing Martin Luther King Jr. He wasn't to know that so-called "political incorrectness" for its own sake is a popular, fashionable (and *white*) phenomenon that can lend a paper like that an air of being "cutting-edge," in lieu of anything like original thought or genuine risk-taking. We're talking not just white people here, but the beautiful people—all of them from privileged, well-to-do backgrounds and college-educated courtesy of their parents. They run a cartoon presenting perhaps the most esteemed of black leaders in a ridiculous light for some faddish, incidental entertainment, and no one, at least no one white, bats an eye?

Portland deserves that paper. Don't let them use your friend's death as opportunity for a clever headline. That was incredibly disrespectful and glib

and blatantly dismissive of the people listed. Why? What the fuck for?

Steve Henry
Gresham

Editor's note: Thank you for bringing this to our attention. The headline is truly rude, crude and thoughtless. To be honest, most of us at Just Out stopped reading Willamette Week long ago. Before Publisher Richard Meeker and Editor Mark Zusman got their hands on it in the early '80s, Willamette Week was a respected newspaper with news and views that truly represented an alternative voice in Oregon. Now it seems an issue doesn't go by that Willamette Week doesn't abuse its

position in our community while touting the premise of a "free play of ideas." Portland doesn't deserve that.

Just Out could dedicate a column in each issue to pointing out and challenging Willamette Week's smirking, gratuitous slurs disguised as journalistic integrity. For one thing, we don't have the space or desire to do that. For another, no one here wants to read it on a regular basis.

We appreciate the efforts of those who take the time to send in items they find that are offensive to queer and other marginalized communities. Anyone who knew, loved, or was inspired by the people whose names they read listed beneath that headline must have been sickened, as we were.

I am very hopeful that in the forthcoming year we as a community will grow closer. In doing so, I believe we will see that the battle that is being fought every day will make even more headway.

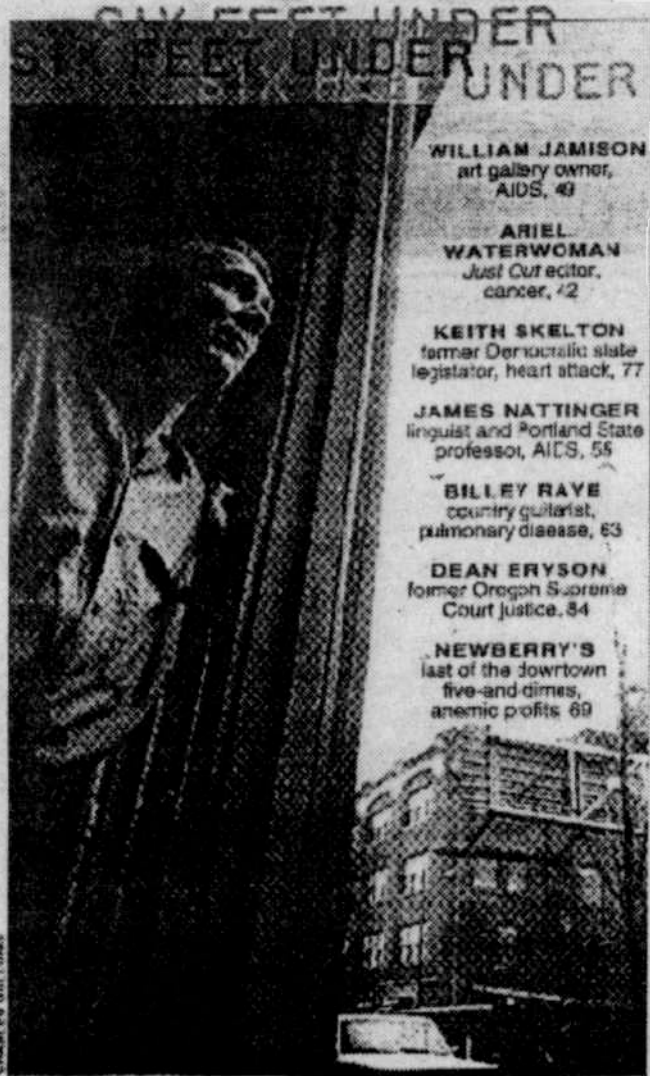
Those of us homosexuals who are incarcerated have our own battles to fight. We are constantly dealing with harassment and discrimination, both from staff and other inmates. The lack of unity among us allows this to continue.

Once again, with a little unity these everyday problems would be easily handled and dealt with.

In closing, I wish each and every one a wonderful New Year. I ask that we all try to unify [our community]. I believe it will open a much-needed path to what we are all striving for.

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Mark Smith
Pendleton



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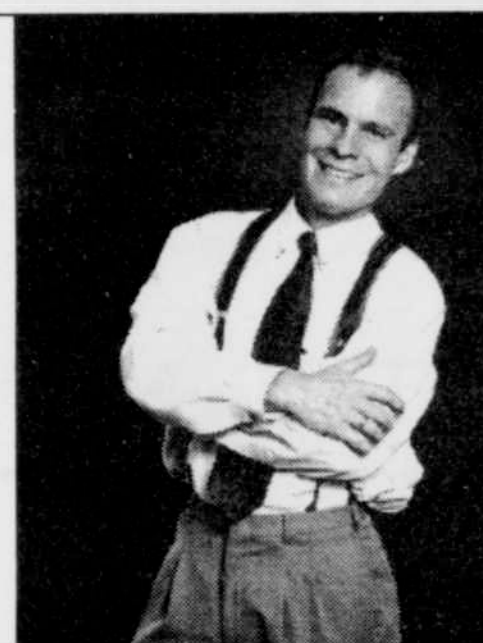
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Are we not fighting for the same cause?

To the Editor:

I sit here in my incarcerated state keeping in touch and staying informed through *Just Out*.

In my three years of incarceration there have been many changes. Some changes have been wonderfully welcome, while others have sadly been seen.

I read of gay couples adopting children. I cry over stories of loving, caring couples being senselessly murdered. I bask in the splendor of gay and lesbian couples joining in matrimony and it being recognized legally.

Then I hang my head in shame when I see the gay and lesbian community still so very divided. Are we not all fighting for the same cause? Damned right we are!