

refuse us the tools to solidify these relationships.

I have been an activist in the past, and this has inspired me to start again. If Button indeed ended his life in this way, I lay his blood on the hands of Newt Gingrich and his ilk. Button's death will not be in vain, because he will have shown to every right-thinking person the pain of being considered a pariah, and perhaps some change will come. I know that he has inspired me to renew my vow to fight oppression in all its ugly forms.

John Todd
Via e-mail

Do you live in the real world?

To the Editor:

As a black gay man who recently moved to Portland from California, I take issue with your editorial charge that Portland Police Chief Charles Moose could not have acted in a racist manner when he referred to "honkies" and "fucking white bitches" at Nordstrom ["Who Is Served?" *Just Out*, May 2, 1997]. You claim that racism is prejudice plus power, but I don't know how much more power you can have than he did as a police officer. The man carried a gun, he could arrest you—so where does this terrible lack of power come in?

You engage in the same patronizing rhetoric that always puts the black man down, judges him by different rules, accuses him of being unable to know what's wrong. I'd like to yell "honky" (or worse) at some of you people, but those of us who want to participate in society know how to control ourselves. But no surprise, lesbians in Portland haven't got a clue.

Do any of your editors live in the real world?

Harold Benka
Portland

Editor's note: It should be noted that Chief Moose denies that he used the language you portray as fact.

Let's keep dialogue open

To the Editor:

I am very disappointed by your response to the three letters in the May 16 *Just Out*. Three people responded very articulately and eloquently in response to your assertion that racism is "prejudice plus power." My disappointment in your response stems from your lack of desire for continuous open dialogue. Instead, you say you are more "radical" than the letter writers, and your position is validated by the experts of the Metropolitan Human Rights Commission. It is my belief that the letter writers presented very good arguments of holes in the analysis that "power plus prejudice" is necessary for a person to be racist.

This theory deserves to be analyzed as well as deepened and expanded upon. It is of excellent quality that you printed these three very well-written letters, it is of equal quality to expand your knowledge and open a dialogue about racism rather than closing it with a comment that claims supreme understanding of the issue. Let's keep the conversation going with openness.

Pamela Pegg
Portland

Why are we so forgiving?

To the Editor:

I recently read about Brian Bennett, the former chief of staff and longtime aide to ultraconservative former Rep. Robert Dornan, announcing that he, Bennett, is gay. What astounded me was to read that he had decided to "go public" because he has been asked to serve on the board of directors of the Long Beach Gay and Lesbian Community

Center and AIDS Project Long Beach.

Is the gay and lesbian community so desperate for leaders that we need to sink to recruiting someone who spent 12 years of his life playing a key national role in the persecution of gays and lesbians? Is all forgiven by simply uttering the words "Oh, by the way, now I'm one of you"?

Don't get me wrong. I'm all for having people "come out"—it's both healthy for the individual and for the gay and lesbian movement as a whole. But I do have a problem with simply saying that all is forgotten and then bestowing upon them a leadership role in our community.

As Dornan's chief of staff, Bennett was the person in charge as he and/or other staffers were writing the dozens of hate-filled anti-gay bills that Dornan bombarded Congress with. He was there while angry speeches condemning homosexuals as sodomites and child molesters were being written and delivered. Bennett was there cheering Dornan on as he worked to cut AIDS funding.

And now Bennett's going to serve on the board of directors for a gay and lesbian center and an AIDS service agency?

If Bennett wants to make a positive contribution to his new-found community and eventually become a community leader, then he certainly should have that opportunity. But I for one want to see him earn it. I want to see him volunteering in an AIDS clinic. I want to see him stuffing envelopes for a community fund raiser. I want to see him facing an angry hate-filled crowd of far-right zealots as he demonstrates for a gay cause. I want to see him struggling to convince his extremist buddies in elected office to support gay-rights issues. I want to see him volunteering his political talents to get openly gay or lesbian leaders elected to public office. I want to see him do what thousands of gay and lesbian activists have done before him to earn their community's respect *before* he's given a leadership role among his gay and lesbian peers.

Jess Durfee
Via e-mail

Don't pervert trans plight

To the Editor:

Sharon Boyd's custody battle ["A Father's Rights," *Just Out*, May 16, 1997] illustrates the perversion of the transsexual plight in service to heterosexual privilege and the advancement of gay and lesbian rights.

Unlike Boyd, the typical transsexual isn't "an honors graduate of the Air Force Academy" capable of purchasing sex-reassignment surgery within two years of transitioning from the native sex. The typical transsexual is lucky to make it through high school without being harassed to the point of dropping out; the typical male-to-female transsexual is incapable of marrying and fathering children.

Because formerly straight parents often lose custody of children after coming out queer, however, the gay press perceives Boyd's story as integral to gay rights. In keeping with the new gay mantra that eliminating the "bi-polar gender model" will end homophobia, a sex change is considered a gay issue in and of itself.

It's a safe bet Boyd didn't do squat for queer rights all the years he was trained and ready to incinerate the world while his "finger could launch atomic warheads onto another continent" in defense of the straight white male power structure.

Except in the rare instances where a mother is unfit to have custody, married men and daddies who decide to change sex should respect the choices made by the wives who would rather divorce than be forced by their husbands to become lesbian. But perhaps that's too much to ask. After all, how often does the ruling class consider the needs of its subjects?

Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan
Portland

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