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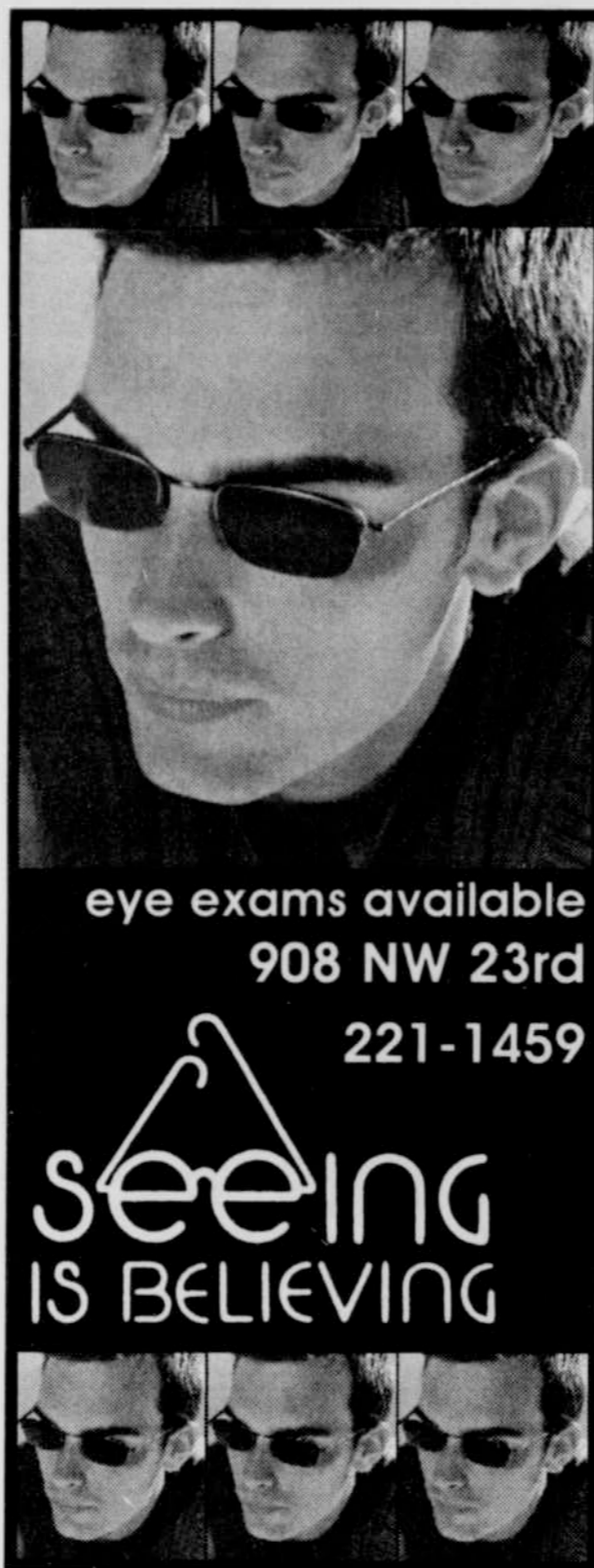
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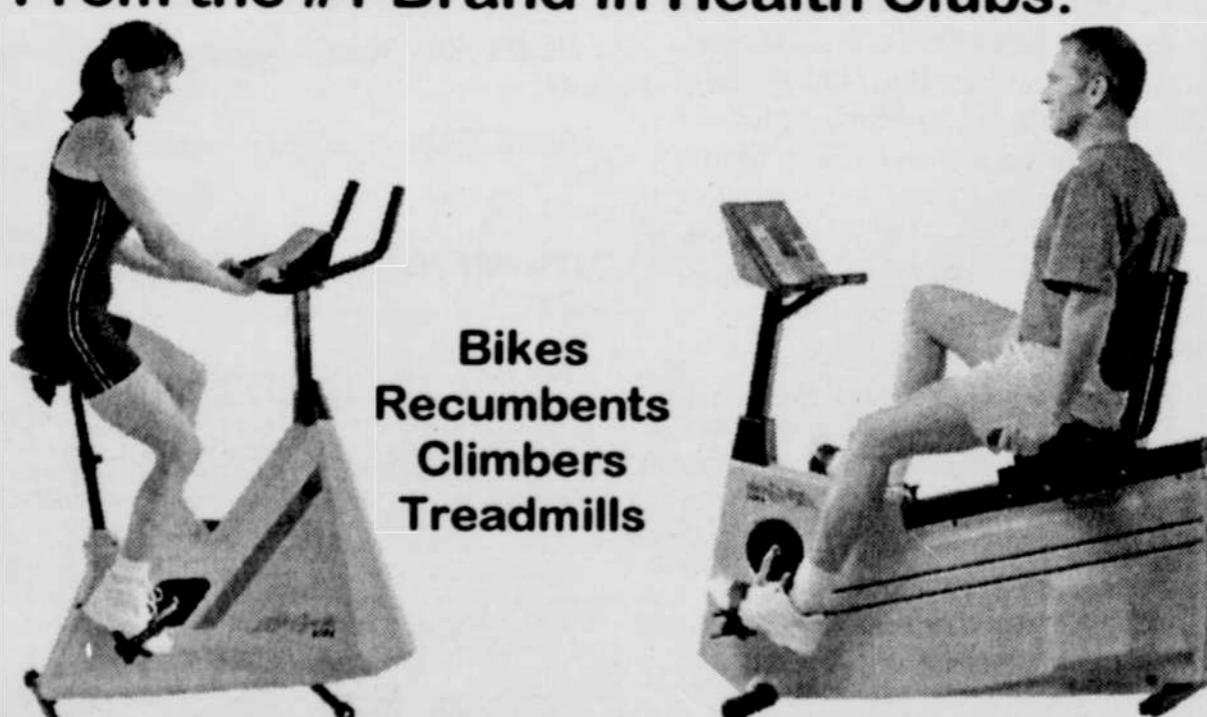


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Speak Out

Be careful what you wish for...

TO THE EDITOR:
Poor people and people of color are disproportionately denied sex-reassignment surgery due to their inability to afford the procedure, but Diana Courvant's implication [Speak Out, Just Out, Oct. 16] that lesbians are racist and classist because Women in the Woods has a "no-penis" policy is sheer self-serving hypocrisy.

I refer to Courvant's assertion that "it is time to talk about the subject honestly" in response to the Women in the Woods policy, which she says "labels people as 'safe' only if they have access to expensive surgeries almost exclusively at the hands of white men."

Courvant's accusation that the policy "highlights that racism and classism are still lesbian issues too" betrays a double standard on her part. What has Courvant ever done to bring sex-reassignment within the reach of low-income and working-class people? I don't see her challenging the Oregon Health Plan's exclusion of sex-reassignment surgery as Olivia Jaquay is doing ["Jaquay Paves the Way" Just Out, Oct. 2]—nor do I see Courvant among the many hard-working Oregon transsexuals seeking to change the discriminatory policies of this state's Health Services Commission and Medical Assistance Programs.

By all means, Diana, "it is time to talk about the subject honestly": It is racist for you—a white person—to invoke and appropriate racism in a self-serving attempt to win your own admittance to Women in the Woods. If you dislike the "no-penis" policy then confront it directly instead of exploiting people of color for use as your smoke screen.

If you were honestly concerned that the lack of access to health care negatively impacts transsexuals of color and low-income transsexuals, you'd direct your time and energy in ways other than hypocritically impugning the integrity of others who have—after all—done no less to rectify the situation than you yourself.

MARGARET DEIRDRE O'HARTIGAN
Portland

One person's invasion is another's progress

TO THE EDITOR:
I read with interest the Outword column ["The straightening of Stark Street," Just Out, Oct. 16] by Dinyar Mehta.

While I agree with many of the observations made in reference to straight people taking over gay establishments, I have to note that this is hardly a new phenomenon in Portland.

I easily recall this criticism being leveled at Embers 10 years ago. This has also long been the case for places such as Darcelle's, which, while obviously gay, are most usually frequented by heterosexuals wanting a glimpse into the other side.

Still, what we may lose in having our sanctuaries open to mixed crowds I hope we gain in the increasing change of societal perceptions. I fully agree with Mehta that we should try to be gracious hosts—even when the courtesy may not always be returned.

If we want true equality, we have to do more than talk about it, we have to do it ourselves—even when others may not.

It's true that when we go to a "heterosexual establishment," the level of acceptance can only be gambled upon—whereas when heterosexuals visit "our" places, the level of acceptance is assumed. Yes, it's obviously not fair, but little is necessarily fair in a changing social environment.

What I find important is the fact that there

are increasingly more people who are wanting to spend their time in presumably more accepting environments such as our bars.

I hope that this validates the gradual change in the level of general acceptance of alternative lifestyles. Having more people feel comfortable among us can only be—I hope—a positive change for everyone.

When I first heard complaints of "hets taking over the Embers" 10 years ago, it was often because of the fights, bigoted comments, etc. that happened. I certainly understood and agreed, at the time, that this influx of heterosexuals was a concern if that was the result.

If, 10 years later, with our guests now seemingly much better behaved, our biggest concern is that we wouldn't be as well received in het establishments, then I think we've come a long way.

Finally, as one woman who is familiar with the Eagle PDX (and thoroughly enjoys it), I would have to note that Mehta's comment about that bar being the only one that isn't so infiltrated is perhaps incorrect; but then, I also differentiate between gender preference and leather/kink-positive inclinations.

As the community grows, and hopefully becomes both more accepting internally and externally, such mix-and-match situations will no doubt become more common. All of this is a healthy thing on the whole.

SALLEE MALLARD HUBER
Portland

Thanks, but...

TO THE EDITOR:
I appreciated the spotlight on the Equity Foundation and myself ["Building Equity," Just Out, Oct. 2]. However, I did have a concern regarding some inaccuracies: My partner is not bisexual, and I was a staff member for SANE [Campaign for a Sane Nuclear Policy], not a volunteer. My colleagues at NGLTF were warm and supportive and in no way a reason for my very amicable departure, and I would never characterize LCP's process of positive organizational transformation as "really insane."

I am, however, most troubled by an apparent quote in which I supposedly described Equity's promise to "old people." This blunt and insensitive phrase contradicts my strong and abiding commitment to fighting all oppressions, including ageism. I am proud of Equity's long-standing efforts to support programs that serve seniors and could not support more strongly our commitment in this essential area.

KRISTIN TEIGEN
Portland

Reporter L.S. Loving responds:
After reviewing my copious notes taken during our hour-and-a-half interview, as well as the Equity Foundation's press release regarding Teigen's hiring, I must conclude the materials support the information contained in the story.

Furthermore, it was never my intention to cast negative aspersions on the groups and individuals Teigen has worked with; the story speaks for itself regarding the positive contributions made by progressive activists such as Teigen.

LCP on track

TO THE EDITOR:
As a Lesbian Community Project member attending the group's annual meeting on Oct. 16, I was reminded that probably every person in the room had, at one time or another, wished that they lived in a society that "honored diversity."

Indeed, a diversity of opinion and life expe-