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Speak Out

'Don't change now!'

TO THE EDITOR:

It has been awhile since I've paid money to hear a white man spout racial and ethnic slurs and call it "humor." I was stunned, hurt, outraged. For much of its 15 years, *Just Out* has been a strong anti-oppression voice. Don't change now!

Thanks for bringing us *Dos Fallopa* as a reminder that we can celebrate and laugh inclusively, and be gentle with each other. No more of that other drive—I can find all too much of the put-down, hate stuff just flipping channels.

DEB ZANG
Portland

Thanks to you

TO THE EDITOR:

This year, United Way is moving toward increasing its number of donors and raising more than the roughly \$20 million collected last year.

With a little help from companies, donors and volunteers, I know we can achieve this goal. *Just Out* has made it possible for us to get our message out into the community and I thank you.

You've helped your readers make informed decisions on where best to donate their hard-earned dollars. Thank you again for your continued support and for all that you do to help change people's lives.

DICK REITEN
UNITED WAY CAMPAIGN CHAIRMAN
PRESIDENT AND CEO, NW NATURAL
Portland

Mind your p's and c's

TO THE EDITOR:

In *Just Out's* Oct. 16 issue, there is a news article entitled "Able Allies," which reports on the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Honoring Our Allies awards. The first three awards went to African American people—two members of Congress and a minister. Partial text of two of the speeches is included, and is very moving.

In the same issue there is a book review about the Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickock relationship ["White House Correspondent," *Just Out*, Oct. 16]. The piece cites a letter from Hickock in which she mentions a "funny little colored maid." This includes no "sic," no caveat, no "whoops, sorry about this."

The statement is gratuitous, not relevant to the point of the article.

Didn't anyone notice that it is insulting as well as demeaning and stereotyping to a person of color?

These two articles are actually on the same piece of newsprint. The other pages had fallen out, and so the articles sat side by side staring at me.

As I looked at them I became angry, sad, embarrassed.

I fear that this is not an isolated incident, but symptomatic of the unconsciousness that white privilege gives many of us. It is a lack of awareness that is especially embarrassing when the article just before it shows a strong awareness and openness from people of color towards the gay community.

I appreciate the presence of this paper and the work you all do towards community build-

ing. I write this in that same spirit, towards creating more awareness and greater community.

RHEA
Portland

Will O'Bryan, entertainment editor and the book review's author, responds:

The excerpt I used highlighted the nuance of sexuality between two women in the early 1940s. It also includes a phrase that many find offensive. I admit I was hesitant about using that example because of the questionable text. On the other hand, I thought deleting the racist wording would have made me guilty of trying to polish history.

You suggest there should've been some notation to warn readers about the content. I'd hoped the date at the top—1942—was warning enough, but I was obviously wrong in this case.

Please consider that I grant your observations about white privilege and strive to be aware of my own, as well as the various degrees of enculturated racism that reside within us all.

I'm no monster

TO THE EDITOR:

I am often annoyed by the smug and classist portrayal of lesbian parenting found in Beren DeMotier's column, *I Kid You Not*. Her characterization of "some monster mother stalking her noncustodial child" ["Black Badge of Courage," *Just Out*, Nov. 6] went beyond annoying into the realm of cruel and offensive.

I am a noncustodial parent, and I also volunteer in my children's classrooms. In addition to the "spontaneous hugs" received from kids, I also get to explain, again and again, whose mother I am. I get to repeatedly ask that notices my kids bring home also get mailed to me. I get to miss parent-teacher conferences because the kids' dad "forgot" to tell me, and the teacher, who I had previously informed of this possibility, "forgot" to call me.

Teachers have been reluctant to give me access to my kids' school records, although I am allowed them by law. I am challenged point-blank. And I have to explain, again, that although someone else identifies as my children's mother, I actually gave birth to them and cared for them up until three years ago. And I am trying as hard as I can to be involved in their lives.

Noncustodials are invisible in general, and noncustodial moms are suspect, perceived to be monstrous and unnatural. What mother wouldn't be with her kids? My kids don't live with me because I am a dyke and I am poor.

Although I am certain that DeMotier didn't intend to vilify noncustodial mothers, she needs to be aware of the messages she sends in her column.

Not all parents live with their children. Not all mothers have unlimited access to their children. To refer to a noncustodial mother as a "monster" is unconscionable, especially in a queer-oriented paper. Lesbian mothers still lose custody, regularly and heartbreakingly.

Perhaps DeMotier should peek her head out into reality once in awhile, because only luck and money keep her from standing in my shoes. And portraying noncustodial mothers as she has does not lead to "planting the seeds of acceptance" in kids or adults.

JES NELSON
Portland

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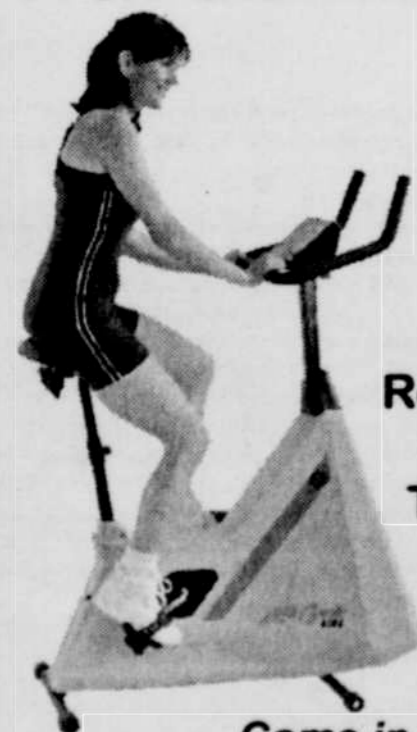
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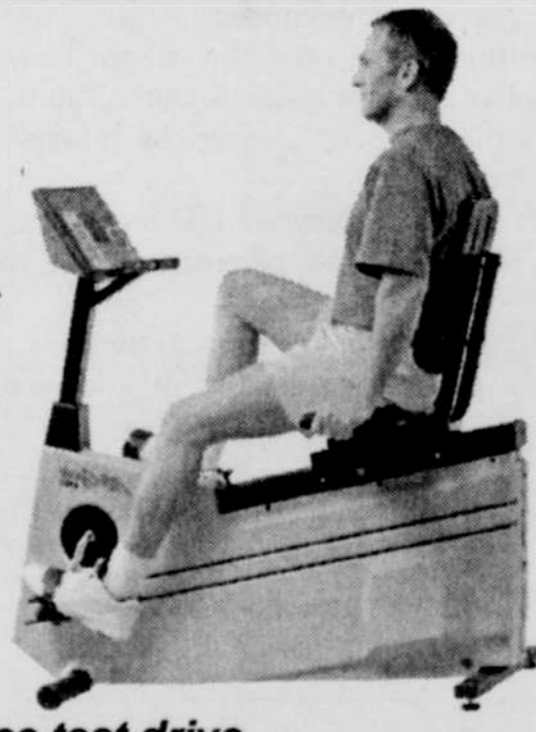
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