


Speak Out



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More from the 'Grandma' department

TO THE EDITOR:

The first thought I had when I read Marty Davis' editorial ["Your Grandma Is Watching. Keep Your Pants On," *Just Out*, June 4] was that she's got guts. (Actually it was balls, but I thought I'd get slammed by dykes who felt that wasn't a politically correct way of saying things.)

I thought, here's someone who has the means to get these thoughts out to lots of gays and lesbians and has the courage to say something that needs to be said.

Davis' editorial didn't make me feel chastised. I'm not uptight about sex or exhibitionism, but I am uptight about [certain behaviors]—especially around children.

My partner and I have five children of varying ages. After seeing some of the things I saw during pride (bare butts and breasts), we'll either just not go next year—or if we do, we certainly won't bring our kids, at least not the younger ones. And that really makes me irritated because my kids have been sharing this with us since they were toddlers and they love it! But the scenery is just getting progressively worse.

(One letter writer suggested there be another festival where people can parade around the way they want to—just don't call it gay and lesbian pride.)

In response to all the negative letters regarding Davis' editorial: Y'all sound like a bunch of selfish whiners! So what if you have to conform a little for one or two days. We all have to do a little conforming one way or another during the course of our lives—it's a part of growing up.

Try thinking about more than yourselves—it's not only your pride festival, it's all of ours, and many of us are beginning to choose not to come back.

TINA CONOVER
Vancouver, Wash.

What about the children?

TO THE EDITOR:

What about the kids? Times have changed. The gay, lesbian, bi and trans community has come a long way since Stonewall. We have children now. If we want to have the parade include family members of lesbians and gays and gay children, then we have to have a parade that includes their needs, too.

Sex and children don't belong in the same surroundings. I know children are sexual beings—duh. But they are sexual in an innocent, tender way. Not in a down and dirty, let's party and have our freedom of expression way. That's scary for kids and not developmentally appropriate, either. Standing next to three children who were under 10 years old, my partner and two of our friends felt the children's vulnerability. We couldn't be the only ones feeling uncomfortable watching the parade [while] standing next to children.

We, the gay, lesbian, bi, trans community of Portland need to decide whether we want the parade to include any and all who want to be there, and if so, then we, the pride participants, must agree to respect the needs of everyone there. It means asking ourselves: Will I bring my kids to the parade when somebody is rubbing

her nipples at the crowd or marching in the parade with a visibly naked penis behind a tiny little skirt. Can we all agree on what kinds of parades we want to bring our children to? We certainly want our children to learn who we are. How do we want to tell them or show them? Let's ask our community.

If we decide the parade isn't for children, then we send the political message that the nudity and freedom of sexual expression are more important than the reflection of who we are as a whole community.

KRIS BALLE
STEVIE NEWCOMER
IZETTA SMITH
Portland

A plea born of love

TO THE EDITOR:

In mid-March, Sven Gomez was found dead in his apartment ["Murdered?" *Just Out*, April 2].

Sven was one of my best friends. He had an outlook on life that brought hope to the most depressing situations. He always had a smile and was willing to help anyone in need.

His death was a great shock to me. All I could think about was the last time I saw him, some days earlier, at Silverado. I went over to give him a hug and say hello, never realizing it would be the last time I would ever see my friend.

After Sven's death, I spent several hours with Portland police detectives, going through personal pictures and details of Sven's life. During this time, I realized that Sven had no immediate family here in the States. (They're back in his native Colombia.) We, the gay and lesbian community, we're his family. My partner and I made the arrangements for a memorial service in April in Portland's South Park Blocks. About 40 people showed up, many of whom I had never met. There were people from Sven's apartment building, co-workers from Il Fornaio, and friends from all walks of life. We all had a chance to say a few words in remembrance. I was amazed at how deeply Sven had touched these people.

To date, Sven's death has gone unsolved. If there is anyone out there who knows anything about his final days or has overheard something that just didn't sit quite right, I urge you to call the detectives at (503) 823-0400. Sven's family and friends need to know what happened. He was too great a person to let it end like this. I have faith in my fellow humans and have to believe that someone out there knows more information.

BRIAN HARRIS
Portland

Stand and deliver

TO THE EDITOR:

I was infuriated by the arrogance of the born-again bigots promoting their sexist, racist, homophobic ideology at the gay pride march. These are the same right-wingers who have been picketing queer functions and nonprofit agencies that support the sexual minority community ["Hello Hate," *Just Out*, June 18].

Instead of hoping they will go away, we need to organize a system of communication and mobilization of activists who will counterprotest whenever they show.

Left to their own devices, these "God-fearing" gay bashers will multiply. Our community needs to come together to defend each other from this harassment.

JORDANA SARDO
Radical Women
Portland

Why we march

TO THE EDITOR:

Pride '99 is over, but some of the reactions of the media remind us that there is much to be done in the way of informing the public what is being celebrated. Lars Larson and some other daytime radio talk show hosts made capital over questioning why anyone would want to celebrate pride, even asking questions such as "Would heterosexuals want to parade to tell who they are?"

The raison d'être for the gay pride parade, interestingly enough, is the same as the initial motivation for the St. Patrick's Day Parade, which has no religious significance in spite of its name. The treatment of poor, starving Irish when they arrived in the United States in the 1840s and '50s is a blight on our history. They reached the point where they were no longer going to be put down for being who they were. Using the cover of St. Patrick, they asserted themselves, marching in parades as an expression of in-your-face we're-Irish-and-proud-of-it. Such a parade was unknown in Ireland.

Whether the parade is by gays and lesbians or the Irish, the initial reasons are the same: assertion of who we are and our right to be proud of it.

NESTOR PERALA
Portland

Sending thanks

TO THE EDITOR:

In the small Eastern Oregon town where I grew up, there's a custom of publishing "cards of thanks" in the local weekly newspaper. These published thank-yous usually acknowledge those who help in an illness, those who are there for a bereaved family, those who pitch in when a house burns down and help the family get back on their feet.

Here is my own card of thanks to your newspaper for the article about the Lesbian Community Project's new office ["LCP's New Digs," *Just Out*, May 21]; I think the article was well done. Another card of thanks is also due Pam Monette and Elise Campbell for all that they did to help the Lesbian Community Project in its time of need. I want to especially thank them for providing office space for LCP in their home during the past year and a half. Without their help, the organization could very well have died.

SALLY COHN
Acting board chair
Lesbian Community Project
Portland

justout
Welcomes letters
to the editor.

Letters must be accompanied by a phone number for verification purposes. Anonymous letters and letters without sufficient contact information will not be published.

just asking
is on Page 9.
(It will return to its usual location in the next issue.)