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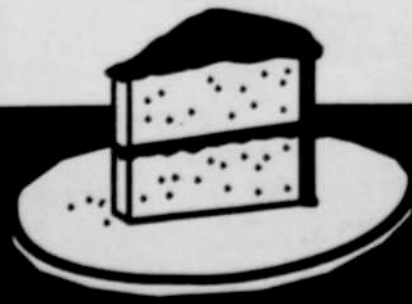
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TO THE EDITOR:

I didn't have strong opinions about the June 4 editorial requesting that people dress "appropriately" for gay pride, but it didn't surprise me that so many others did.

In the follow-up editorial July 16, Marty Davis seems to twist together two different issues, and in the process commits the same sin she accuses others of: not being open to respectful disagreement.

The first issue, that of nudity and general behavior at pride celebrations, is a perennial favorite. We always have people trying to get us to look like everyone else. As a lesbian and a grandmother, I have to say that nudity doesn't offend me. It doesn't offend children, either, unless someone has taught them to be offended by it. As to how a parent "explains" such things to their children, one can say simply that people are different, and like to dress in different ways.

Censoring expression, whether in dress or speech, is always troubling. If we start with nudity, then what about leather, what about bondage, what about cross-dressing? What about censoring the words to a song? To be fair, Marty didn't talk about banning or enforcing a ban on anything. She only requested that people be thoughtful about whether this would be appropriate at a very public event which would include all kinds of people, including children and grandmothers. Being thoughtful and mindful is something I endorse. Condemning other people's behavior is not.

Which brings me to the second issue, that of divisiveness in the community. Accepting each other in our various stages in our various processes means accepting nudity, expressions of S/M, transgender displays, and all sorts of things that I don't happen to subscribe to personally. It also means accepting mothers and children, gay Republicans, old fogies, baby dykes and Radical Faeries, to name a few.

Writing an editorial exercises power. There are very few effective ways to respond to it that can exercise the same level of power. A power imbalance lends itself to frustrated explosions in response. These explosive responses are not always constructive, elegant or respectful, but they are expressive.

I find it interesting that the letters printed in the July 16 issue were all in agreement with Marty's original editorial, in spite of the fact that she mentions opposition. That looks like an unfair exercise of power. To say that people who disagree with you are being divisive and disrespectful is in fact being divisive and disrespectful to those doing the disagreeing. A deeper analysis of the situation might be helpful. Practicing diversity is not an easy thing, in spite of all our easy talk about it.

SYLVAN RAINWATER
Portland

Marty Davis responds: There is no unfair exercise of power here. All verifiable letters received by deadline were printed. For a more comprehensive overview, you'll need also to read the letters in our June 18 and July 2 issues. Back issues are available at the Just Out office.

TO THE EDITOR:

Don't we all feel sorry for poor Marty Davis? Just when the poor thing feels safe in sticking her neck out we all go and grab our hatchets. Tsk tsk, shame on all of us queers for not giving her "support" and for not following her little candy-coated notion of how the world should be by engaging in "dialogue," blah, blah, blah.

Here's the deal, Marty. We are indeed a diverse, intelligent and thinking queer community—that part you have correct. But just

because you stirred up a hornets' nest because you don't want to see some dick or some boobs at gay pride doesn't mean that we are a community in crisis—that's your problem, not ours. We have never, as a community, agreed on much of anything and probably never will, and we've done quite well for ourselves, thank you very much.

We will continue to struggle against those who don't like us because of our differences. They will continue to drag our eccentricities out and rub them in our faces and we will continue to succeed in fighting the battles in spite of ourselves.

Drag queens, West Hills A-listers, Bear lovers, pagan sisters, Lesbian Avengers...all of us are here, we're queer and we know what to do without any help from you or your harebrained ideas about how we as a community should behave or present ourselves to the world.

We have struggled all our lives to get to the point where we are today. Some of the tactics we used fit nicely into your "legitimate" standards, but mostly the freedoms we enjoy today were accomplished by brave and subversive people who were not afraid to get into someone else's face.

If it's dialogue you want, I suggest you go see your therapist and leave the real world up to the rest of us. And if you are so worried about what grandma may see, how do you explain the last few pages of your newspaper? All that sex just may upset her.

DAVID DIEHNEL
Portland

TO THE EDITOR:

Shock value has its place, but when using it, one must question who values it. We are not going to increase acceptance of our "lifestyle" by scaring the hell out of those that we are asking for acceptance.

I'm all for freedom of expression but everything has its time and place.

For those marching with the MCC dressed in full leather, is that your garb of choice while attending Sunday services?

A couple of years ago I waited tables at a restaurant on downtown Broadway. On a Saturday afternoon during pride weekend, a couple of ladies from the "mainstream" stopped in for a light lunch, Nordstrom bags in hand. While I was taking their order, Dykes on Bikes came roaring up Broadway, wearing full riding leathers with breasts exposed. At first I was amused, but then I was embarrassed. The two ladies were mortified. We are looking for credibility by expressing the incredible.

Certain behaviors need to be expressed in the proper forum and I'm not sure something as public as the pride parade is that forum. Diversity is one thing, absurdity is another.

People, let's think before we act. The conservatives in this country started the fire and we're throwing gasoline on it.

DON KEISALA
Vancouver, Wash.

TO THE EDITOR:

My life partner and I were both appalled by the June 4 editorial. We are both 40-something Jewish lesbian feminists and have been attending gay pride parades since the '70s. We could not believe how homophobic this editorial sounded—and by the new publisher of *Just Out*? That's a scary thought.

As far as we're concerned, the gay pride parade is not about impressing grandma or "Harold and his wife." It is a celebration for us, and to show people who we are in all of our diversity.

The Portland parade already appears to be rather conservative compared with places like

San Francisco. Marty Davis' editorial reminded us of ads looking for "straight-looking, straight-acting" lovers. How boring. And talk about internalized oppression! Why don't we just all go back in the closet?

So what if some women have bare breasts? If it's a hot day, why shouldn't they? Men are allowed to bare their breasts. And all kinds of people have tattoos and piercings these days. So what? It all makes the world more interesting and compelling.

By the way, my partner and I, walking arm in arm, were photographed close-up at the gay pride parade several years ago. And we were shown many times on the local and national television news during the No on 9 campaign. Neither of us had bare breasts or tattoos. We have not seen many of these images in the news, as a matter of fact.

We don't believe that we all have to look or act a certain way to show people that "we deserve their respect and good will." People can be offended by all kinds of things, but that doesn't mean that we all have to try to conform to some standard of non-offensiveness. (We haven't shaved our legs or armpits for decades.) We don't think that we should be policing each other's appearance or behavior. We sincerely hope that our gay pride parades continue to be a celebration for all of us, as we continue to honor and respect our differences.

CORRIE HOPE FURST
WENDY JUDITH CUTLER
Portland

TO THE EDITOR:

So Marty Davis' editorial on gay pride exposed deep division amongst the readership? Duh! One would have to be totally clueless to be shocked about that occurrence. I have long held that there is no such thing as a monolithic "gay community."

Rather, we are just as diverse and just as fragmented as the nation we live in. It's silly to expect 10 percent of the population—simply because of the single aspect of sexual orientation—to band together and agree on anything.

Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon LaRouche and George Wallace all called themselves Democrats. You'd be hard-pressed to find anything they could have agreed on. Nelson Rockefeller, Barry Goldwater and Tom McCall all identified as Republicans. I suspect if you had locked those three in a room, body parts might have been torn off. Are African American political figures all united? Let's ask Clarence Thomas and Louis Farrakhan. Should Barbra Streisand and Charlton Heston agree on everything simply because both have been in the entertainment industry?

In our 10 percent of the world we have some folks who are campaigning for legal gay marriage. On the other hand, we also have some who would rather have the government not recognize any marriage at all, much less add more categories of state-sanctioned partnership.

A segment waits eagerly for *Just Out* every two weeks and thinks the paper is an important view and voice of the "gay community." Others think *Just Out* is rather left-leaning and lesbian in orientation.

There are those who live in gay neighborhoods, shop at gay stores, go to gay movies and bars, have only gay friends, and stick rainbows and pink triangles over everything visible. Others, though, identify as gay only when they're in bed with someone of the same sex—the rest of the time, no one would ever know.

In my illustrious dating history, I've been out with Radical Faeries, Log Cabin Republicans, Maoists, closeted guys, bathhouse attendants, teachers, priests and police officers. I racked my brain and tried to think of a single thing these guys could agree on besides a shared attraction