

Serving all women

TO THE EDITOR:

Over the past couple of years in *Just Out*, I have read many articles and letters that address the issue of including trans people in lesbian, gay and bisexual organizations, and at women-only events.

What I hear in many of these letters is a tone of misunderstanding and fear. Those of us who identify as lesbians constantly face having our lives questioned, criticized and physically attacked. We know what it's like to be forced to struggle in order to create safety for ourselves and for the people we love, but somehow the threat of trans folks asking to be recognized as a part of the movement for sexual minority rights has resulted in an unsafe environment for these sexual minorities who have always worked alongside us in this movement.

As the sexual minorities' services coordinator at Bradley-Angle House, I would like to let folks know that it is our goal as a feminist organization to continue the struggle against oppression.

In the past few years we have found that we need to examine the ways in which we participate in the oppression of transsexual, transgendered and intersex people.

One of the results of our discussions is the creation of a policy that directly addresses who our agency serves. Our policy states that if "a person identifies as a woman, Bradley-Angle House will accept her into services as appropriate. Actual biology or participation in a medically-based transition is not the deciding factor."

In a period when some feminist organizations are attacking trans folks I understand that trans women are likely to feel wary of accessing the services of our organization. I know we have and will continue to make mistakes in our attempts to serve trans women, but it is important to let members of the trans women's community know that our services are available to all women, and that we are working to create an environment that is safe for trans, lesbian and bisexual women.

While I believe it is important that this dialogue among our different sexual minority communities continues, I am uncomfortable with the manner in which we are communicating. It is my hope that the climate of this dialogue can change from one of fear and misunderstanding to one of empathy and respect.

When we understand the myriad ways that we are both affected by and participating in oppression, we can begin to recognize the strength and power we gain by working in alliance for social change.

JODY ANDERSON
Sexual Minorities' Services Coordinator
Bradley-Angle House
Portland

Kudos to LCP

TO THE EDITOR:

Congratulations to the Lesbian Community Project for having a brain and a heart.

Every lesbian knows what oppression is, and I am proud that I have access to a community project that does not push oppression on other people, e.g., transsexuals.

The people at LCP should be proud of themselves for having the courage to open their arms to all people. The signs that read "whites only" are still erect in many peoples minds, and saying "woman born" is a sign created in fear and ignorance just like the signs that segregate by color.

As lesbians, are we really so sure that we can

close our doors and be safe? Can we afford to put ourselves above another group of people? I will not submit to the mentality that says, "Well, at least I'm not one of them."

The women who want LCP to close its doors so they can have a "women-only space" should open the doors of their houses and invite these womyn-loving womyn over for a pot luck—and I hope they remember to check each other's panties so no one undesirable gets in.

MORGAN LEFEY
Portland

New name in order

TO THE EDITOR:

I read with interest the article about the meeting with Lesbian Community Project and people from the community ["Aboveboard Meeting," Dec. 17]. I was at the meeting and thought the article, while it was very nice to folks, missed some on the emotional issues being discussed.

In the October 1998 annual meeting, members were informed that part of the changes taking place was to remove the term "woman" from the definition of lesbian...this to many, myself included, was not OK. The reason many came to the annual meeting was to not only review the changes, but see what we as members could continue to do to support LCP. However, I, speaking only for myself, will not support an organization that decides to redefine who I am. We have long supported differences in LCP, but I refuse to be considered not woman-identified or as a "nontrans" by anyone. If LCP chooses to be an any-sexual-orientation-identified membership, then that is up to the organization, however, I think it is time for the name to reflect who they are, as I am sure many people in our community are not aware of some of the issues.

Women in the Woods has long been supportive of LCP both emotionally and financially. I think it's very narrow if the LCP board refuses to support an organization that chooses to provide a safe and supportive environment for women. It seems that those of us born women are continually expected to take into consideration the fact that trans people may not feel they belong.

In most instances, I could not agree more, but I also believe that many women need space safe for them with women who do not represent in whatever fashion, male origins or have a penis.

There definitely needs to be acceptance of who people are or choose to be—that also extends to Women in the Woods and their right to serve a specific need. LCP was instrumental in fighting the OCA, reaching out to the gay men's community, combating the onslaught of AIDS and the ignorance of who would get it. I have long believed that there should be sister-brother organizations: Gay Community Project, Trans C.P., Bi C.P. If this is not to continue being lesbian-focused allowing differences and allowing sameness, then the name and the membership needs to change to reflect this.

I wish the bi/gay/trans/nontrans Community Project all the luck in the future.

DONNA LUCKETT
Portland

correction


In the photo caption accompanying the Jan. 7 article "From Secretive to Supportive," Jennifer Jako was incorrectly identified as Allison Cox. *Just Out* regrets the error.

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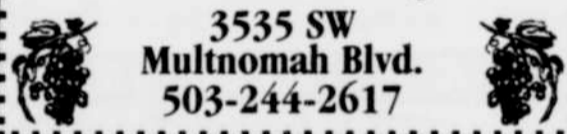
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