

Speak Out

ongoing tirade against Marty Davis, the publisher of *Just Out*.

Let's see, where to begin... So many letters, so much name-calling, so much bickering. It's time to stop. I thought about tackling various points brought up in previously printed letters as well as past columns by Davis. I've decided not to, as taking sides with anyone will just add to the current derision. Instead, I'm going to focus on one thing: opinion.

It appears that the opinions of Marty Davis have sparked the creative thoughts and explosive emotions of quite a few readers. Bravo to Marty, you've kept your readers interested in the paper. For those writing in to attack her, bravo to you too, you're exercising your right to free speech.

But we're still talking about someone's opinion, something very subjective and personal. I don't believe Davis thinks that she speaks for the entire community. She writes what is, for the most part, an editorial column. It's her take on things. Everything Marty puts into her column (behavior, economic justice, etc.) is merely her opinion. If you disagree with her, that's fine. I'm sure that she doesn't agree with all of her readers either. But to attack her and say things like "uck off" is a bit on the extreme side.

I think some readers take things too seriously. (Note: This would be my opinion.) Rather than take offense, why not write a piece stating your take on things (without attacking others)? There's too much infighting in the community. Civilized discussion of issues would be far more beneficial than what's currently taking place (once again, my opinion).

As for Marty's column, keep it up. I like what you're doing.

JOE FERGUSON
Portland

Scouts out of schools

TO THE EDITOR:

Below is the text of a letter I have sent to the Portland Board of Education, encouraging them to stop giving the Boy Scouts special access to our school system, which I'd like you to consider printing in your letters column. If you do, please also let your readers know that they can find the complete text of this letter, as well as the e-mail addresses of the members of the Board of Education, at www.teleport.com/~ennead/portlandscouts.html. It would be terrific if hundreds of people wrote the Board of Education regarding this issue.

To all members of the Board of Education:

Like many people, I was disturbed by the Boy Scouts' firing of scoutmaster Jim Dale. Accord-

ing to all accounts, Dale was an exemplary Scout, and the sole reason the Boy Scouts of America dismissed him is his homosexuality.

As you know, on June 28 the Supreme Court overruled New Jersey's anti-discrimination law, agreeing with the Boy Scouts of America. In their arguments before the court, the BSA asserted that anti-gay beliefs are an essential message of their organization, and they therefore have a First Amendment right to fire employees for being homosexual.

I would never interfere with any organization's First Amendment right to express its beliefs. However, now that the Boy Scouts have declared opposition to homosexuality to be one of their essential principles, it is inappropriate for the Boy Scouts to be given any assistance by the Portland school system beyond that given to any other community group. In particular, the practice of allowing the Boy Scouts access to an essentially "captive audience" of students during school hours should be halted immediately.

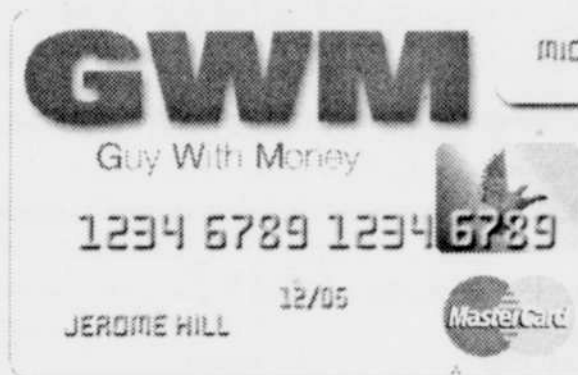
That practice has always been questionable, due to the Boy Scouts' policy of not allowing atheist boys to join. However, they have now piled discrimination against sexual minorities on top of their discrimination against atheists. How many groups will the Boy Scouts have to exclude before Portland Public Schools stops giving them special assistance?

I appreciate that, as *The Oregonian* (March 30, 1999) described the Board of Education's position, the Boy Scouts' "emphasis on honesty, teamwork, leadership and morality" makes them "just the sort of community group that Portland wants to engage in its schools." However, I doubt you would find it appropriate or acceptable to help the recruitment efforts of an explicitly racist, anti-Semitic, or sexist organization—even if the organization did significant good apart from its prejudices. Portland's lesbian, gay and atheist citizens have the same right to feel that their government does not purposely assist in recruitment of members for an organization which is explicitly bigoted against them—which has, in fact, testified before the highest court in the land that being anti-gay is one of their central principles.

Therefore, I urge the school board to set an example and cease offering any assistance to the Boy Scouts that is not offered to all other community organizations. Honesty, teamwork and morality are admirable virtues; but a group that considers bigotry an essential principle is not qualified to teach Portland's children about any virtue, least of all morality.

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