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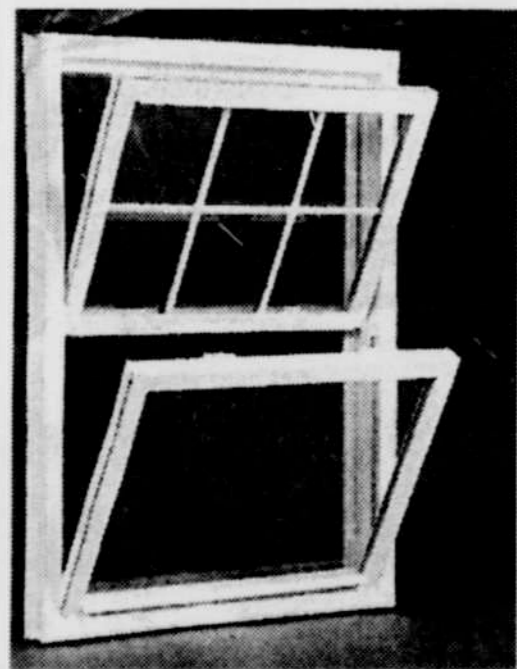


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Speak out

Get off my back

TO THE EDITOR:

We live in a society in which state after state rapidly has passed laws forbidding gays to have a "sacred union" akin to marriage. The very thing that would promote less casual sex is being denied the gay populace ["Strangers in the Night," July 21].

The issue of public sex has many facets. I've been back in Portland the past five years. However, I do know the Omaha, Neb., police generally have had an extremely poor relationship with gays for decades, and the city has not had adult bookstores as a "safe" outlet. Atlanta also has a serious problem of guys cruising in cars plus sex in parks in large part because of some fine Baptists refusing to allow gay movie arcades and bookstores.

A simple effort of thinking can lead one to conclude a public park is vastly different from a bookstore with a defined legal age limit. If I go into an adult bookstore or movie arcade, I fully expect some gay or straight guy to be jacking off in a booth.

That is the nature of the stimulus in such a store. I am neither surprised nor offended.

What is missing from the article is that sex among gay men in our open society tends to be consensual and not forced. We don't have the problem of rape that heterosexuals do.

Likely, most activity in a bookstore is to some degree private. It is also very often low-risk activity or even safe sex—for example, jacking off.

While rightly being against sex in public parks, the article doesn't mention that one by one, bookstores in downtown Portland have been closing, thereby limiting the outlet for men. Simple reasoning would imply bookstores keep guys out of the parks.

Not all guys drink, and some might find bars to be boring and tedious. I can walk down West Burnside between First and Sixth avenues any day of the week and see people selling drugs...and the police are going to worry about some guy getting off sexually in a bookstore?

The problem isn't simply public sex. It is that the male libido is not easily outlawed.

Further, given the male anatomy, some sort of outlet is warranted. Bookstores might be the better option.

Given the large population of gay men in greater Portland, a small percentage going to bookstores likely is not a high-priority problem. It is, after all, consensual sex, among adult men, behind closed doors.

Considering your article—because parks are taboo and adult bookstores are not sanctioned, and if one doesn't go to bars or social/church groups—can you list 10 alternative ways men can meet and possibly be intimate? It might be easy to write an article against something; however, where are the alternatives?

CHUCK ENGEL
Portland

Pride and prejudice?

TO THE EDITOR:

It is apparent to me that *Just Out* has become an ally of Janna MacAuslan ["Pride Northwest Board in Turmoil," July 7]. I've never seen a clearer example of "one-sided reporting" in my life.

Not once in the article was there any reference to the official position of Pride Northwest, nor was it mentioned that anyone tried to contact Pride Northwest representatives. Much, if not all, of the information in the article either was stated by Janna MacAuslan or was "her" opinion.

The article stated, "Pride Northwest, the

nonprofit group that orchestrates Portland's annual pride event, is experiencing what can only be described as infighting." How can you say this without comment from Pride Northwest? It seems clear to me that this was just the position of the person you talked with, Janna MacAuslan.

You also stated that both Janna and Tamara Swan were ousted from the board because of petty grievances and personality clashes. Again, this is the opinion of Janna and Tamara, and *Just Out* should have attempted to get the "official" reason(s) directly from Pride Northwest. This sounds more to me like the opinions and perspectives of two disgruntled ex-board members.

Finally, the article opened with the comment, "Members of the Pride Northwest board of directors haven't really been able to enjoy their success." I disagree. I think the current board members are very happy with the success of Pride 2000, as they should be, and anxious to go forward with planning Pride 2001.

Again, considering Pride Northwest was not consulted for this article, maybe it's Janna and Tamara who cannot enjoy the success of Pride 2000. Maybe they are spending too much of their energies instigating the "infighting"!

KEVIN WEICHE
Portland

Book smarts

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing in response to the "My Queer Life" column by Michael Thomas Ford regarding queer and independent bookstores [July 21]. He raised several issues and inaccuracies concerning Barnes & Noble that I would like to clarify.

The column refers to "the story of the independent bookstore forced out by the ever-encroaching chains." Barnes & Noble does not measure success by another bookstore's failure.

We never go into any area with the intention of hurting another business. Our only criteria for choosing a particular market are the income levels of potential customers and their levels of education.

Wherever a store opens, it is our policy to work with local bookstores and refer our customers to them if we don't have the selections they want. In many of our locations, independent booksellers exist and thrive alongside our stores. Powell's here in Portland is one great example.

Ford also refers to a less-than-comfortable atmosphere when browsing gay publications "at Barnes & Noble surrounded by 6 billion copies of the 15th Harry Potter installment, Oprah's latest pick and a stack of Dr. Laura's current abomination." Barnes & Noble is committed to providing a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere for all sorts of book lovers.

We do not discriminate. We are committed to providing a selection of books that appeals to the widest variety of cultures, backgrounds and beliefs of our stores' very diverse communities and individual customers.

With regard to our gay and lesbian studies areas—described as "those little sections for gay literature"—and to the implication that booksellers in Barnes & Noble have to work "covertly...to make sure queer books don't disappear," clarification is needed. In addition to the wide selection of books available to customers from the gay and lesbian studies shelves in our stores, Barnes & Noble offers access to more than 1 million titles through daily special orders, and we usually are able to deliver to our customers anywhere within four to five business days.

Also, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation acknowledged the impact and importance of our gay and lesbian studies