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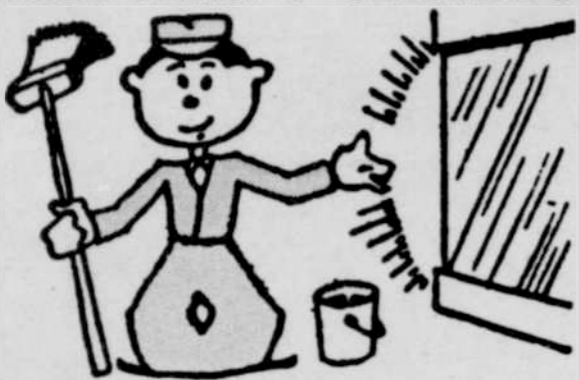
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Speak out

Don't give up the fight

TO THE EDITOR:

A commentary by Marty Davis in the Aug. 3 edition of *Just Out* discussed the controversy regarding Derry Jackson's statements and called on Basic Rights Oregon to take a leading role in building stronger bridges with the African American community ["Tip of the Iceberg"].

As active participants in Portlanders Against Prejudice, the coalition pushing for his recall from the school board, we are focusing on speaking out against what we see as a pattern of ignorant and offensive remarks. It comes as no surprise to us that Bruce Broussard, who is one of Jackson's close advisers, was heard spouting anti-gay remarks, because Jackson was making anti-gay references months before he turned on the Jewish community.

BRO's purpose is to oppose discrimination and prejudice on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, and this work heightens our commitment to speaking out against all forms of bias. Rather than taking a position against Jackson alone, however, we chose to join with a coalition of other groups, including Jews, parents and various community organizations.

We think this is the best way to make our position clear and avoid the problems Davis fears of pitting the GLBT community against the African American community. In fact, BRO has worked in successful coalition with groups and individuals from several communities of color on many issues, and we will continue to do so in the spirit of our mission.

One thing troubles me, though, and that is Davis' suggestion that we "divert some time, energy and even money, if necessary, away from the tedious Lon Mabon." That is a luxury the GLBT community and our many supporters cannot afford.

The fact that the Oregon Citizens Alliance has targeted our civil rights in almost 40 different state and local legislative initiatives during the past 13 years does nothing to make the threat of its latest attack any less serious. No matter how tired or fed up we are, our kids and teachers are too important to sacrifice to our own apathy.

They are counting on us to protect their rights and the progress we have made, and it is irresponsible to suggest we do otherwise. Yes, Mabon is tedious, but more importantly, he is hateful and relentless. If we let him win, our kids are the ones who lose.

ROEY THORPE

Basic Rights Oregon Executive Director

Let the games begin

TO THE EDITOR:

Congratulations on being the latest contestant in the "Oppression Olympics." In your effort to look "beyond Derry Jackson's dilemma" you have played right into the divisive game.

Bruce Broussard's ambiguous comment "It's the gays...it's the gays" needs more explanation. But why should his comment hold "greater significance" than anything said or not said by Jackson?"

It's a little like comparing the Holocaust with slavery. My pain is greater than your pain.

Should it hold "greater significance" to us because we are the "gay community" and therefore don't care about the achievement gap in our public schools, gentrification or issues of racism and class? If you are calling for all of us to get to know each other and work together, then *all* inequality is of great significance.

How can you even say Broussard's comment is of "greater significance" when we haven't even read the complete comment? Please provide more substantial quotes in the future.

And while you're at it, why not give Jackson and Broussard the same courtesy you gave to Portland Police Chief Mark Kroeker after his

hateful comments about homosexuals, women and children? Invite them and their supporters to do a commentary piece in the coming issues, unless you would rather just toss ambiguous quotes and empty suggestions about.

JANINE H. OSHIRO

Portland

Better sorry than safe

TO THE EDITOR:

I don't care if Derry Jackson commits political suicide by making impetuous racist comments. Nor do I care about Mark Kroeker's philosophical viewpoints on whether gays live an immoral lifestyle.

One would think with all the education and political advice these two individuals have access to, they would not make such explosive and damaging statements. However, some politicians still are not savvy in cleaning up the blood after they cut their own throats.

Jackson is a good example. It does not take a political genius to know the best thing he should do is say, "I am sorry."

No excuses, no why-I-did-its, no he-made-me-say-its. Just "I am sorry."

These two should take lessons from President Clinton; he said he was sorry, and look what happened: nothing. He has an astute way of convincing us of his sincerity, and he was successful.

Airlines whose planes have crashed and killed our loved ones come right out and say, "We are sooooo sorry." It's the new political and corporate strategy that researchers are finding really works.

My advice to Jackson: Grow up politically before you consider politics as a career. And get your facts straight; after all, everyone knows the heterosexuals and closeted homosexuals run everything.

KATY MURPHY

Portland

Shop around

TO THE EDITOR:

Bigotry is alive and well at Wal-Mart. I am a 50-year-old trans woman, unambiguously "female" in appearance and identified as such on my Oregon driver license.

In any event, one should be able to make the reasonable presumption that people can conduct their business without fear of intimidation and ridicule. Apparently not at Wal-Mart.

I was shopping July 28 at the Troutdale store when an associate grabbed and moved my shopping cart toward me, at one point forcing me to grasp it before it hit me. This young man, Terry, then glared at me and said with sarcasm, "I'll just put this here." He and his co-worker Donald then proceeded to glare at me, exchanging knowing glances and snickering, as though I were the Bearded Lady at the turn-of-the-century freak show.

This happens all too often; nevertheless, I was so stunned that, as they moved down the aisle, I was speechless with indignation and impotent rage. Determined to report this incident, I asked the cashier for the store manager.

After some reluctant back-and-forth Terry was located. Together with Patsy, the assistant manager, he denied it all: "We weren't laughing at you, sir."

I replied, "I'm a woman; it's ma'am." Both of these Neanderthals persisted throughout the entire episode in referring to me as "sir," "he" and "him" and seemed to be enjoying the whole proceeding immensely.

After this pointless exchange, Patsy and Terry flounced off without so much as a hint of an apology, let alone any serious attempt to question him as to his inexcusable behavior. Nor is there any excuse for their reaction—or

lack thereof—from Wal-Mart "management."

These people need to be dragged—kicking and screaming, if need be—into the 21st century. Consider where you spend your hard-earned dollars, Oregonians. You could be next!

ANN ARMSTRONG

Salem

Bi and large

TO THE EDITOR:

Why does it seem so impossible for otherwise intelligent people to grasp the concept of bisexuality?

In the "Just Asking" section of the Aug. 3 issue, readers responded that they thought celebrity queer women such as Anne Heche were engaging more in "lesbo temping" than a true and valid expression of their sexuality. In fact, Heche identified as bisexual, not lesbian; her decision to take up with a man reveals nothing about any trend in the lesbian community because she was not a lesbian.

Moreover, both reader responses addressed the issue as though it were a question of either/or: Either you're gay or you're straight. For bisexuals, the world is not limited thusly; many of us espouse a both/and approach.

For decades, researchers have known most people fall somewhere in between purely heterosexual and purely homosexual. Why, then, do so many gay and lesbian people (and straight people, for that matter) refuse to acknowledge bisexuality as a legitimate identity and orientation, seeing it instead as a phase of denial on the road to becoming a "real" queer?

KATE O'NEILL

Portland

Identity crisis

TO THE EDITOR:

When you spoke of Anne Heche, Sinéad O'Connor and other celebrities "lesbo temping" or pulling publicity stunts, I have to wonder why you discounted bisexuality as a reason for these women's various relationships.

Bisexuals exist, although a lot of the queer community, and the straights, seem to wish we didn't. From what I can see, we often actively are ignored and, at times, even are treated with hostility, as though we were "traitors" to some cause we never signed up for.

There's room for all of us in the queer community, if we're going to be as accepting of diversity as we all claim. Bisexuality isn't just some "phase" people go through to get to the queer side of the road. Our sexual identity doesn't depend on who we're sleeping (or not sleeping) with today; it is based on our feelings for both women and men, however you want to identify those.

A bi woman doesn't "turn straight" if she's sleeping with a man, just as she hasn't "turned lesbian" if she's sleeping with a woman. She's still bisexual.

Most folks wouldn't identify a celibate lesbian as "asexual" just because she's not in a sexual relationship. It's not about whether you're getting any or with whom; it's about what you feel, where your desires are.

Different people will identify differently, of course. Some bi women identify as "lesbians," while others identify as "straight." Still others refuse labels at all. But in any case, we still love both women and men.

Why does our difference discomfort so many other queer folk? I shouldn't have to be saying we're just as capable of love and commitment as anyone else. We're all human here.

ERYNN LAURIE

Seattle