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Speak Out

Trans mission

TO THE EDITOR:

The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival protests illustrate the lack of perspective on the part of certain elements within the women's and genderqueer "movements" ["Trans Activists Protest Concert," Oct. 19].

The Butchies defend "the continued need for separatist events" while for years millions of Afghani women have suffered the ultimate in sex segregation at the hands of the totalitarian Islamic fundamentalists known as the Taliban. The Transformers whine about the policies of a "womyn's" music festival while Malaysia's government declared July 23 that transsexualism is against Islamic teachings and that "men" who have sex-change operations won't be recognized as female.

Meanwhile, right-wing Christian demagogues such as Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell—inherently opposed to the separation of church and state—continue to promote misogynistic and transphobic policies for our own country that threaten to return us to the Dark Ages without any help from the mullahs.

Protesting the policies and supporters of the festival does nothing to improve the lot of countless transsexuals—at home and abroad—whose lives are blighted and even cut short by lack of access to adequate food, shelter and health care. Protesting the festival does nothing to curtail the male violence that kills transsexuals here and abroad.

In short, protesting the festival is irrelevant to the vast majority of transsexuals. Just as the festival is irrelevant to the vast majority of women.

MARGARET DEIRDRE O'HARTIGAN
Portland

Tipping the scales

TO THE EDITOR:

I'm a 40-year-old lesbian fitness consultant and sports massage therapist. My passionate mission is to inspire and empower people to lifestyle changes through the use of creative, innovative and factual tools.

As queers we face potential discrimination when we join any group or even when we go out into the general public. Our level of apprehension is related to our experiences with past discrimination.

When we are out, we are open to judgment not only for our weight or lack of physical prowess but also for our queerness. If we choose not to be out or not to participate in a gym or class, we forfeit the added support of others and the external motivation of commitment to a group and often financial motivations. When we choose not to be out, we can feel vulnerable, isolated, alone in a crowd, like a fraud, discounted, angry and frustrated.

Lesbians who rebel against size and weight discrimination might be using their outward rebellion as a defense against inwardly directed self-hatred, repulsion and disgust, which is incredibly painful emotionally ["Bigger Isn't Always Better," Oct. 5]. I do not advocate size, weight, gender, sexuality or any other kind of oppression. Neither do I advocate excusing, fogging, blaming or any method of shirking our personal responsibility for our health, self-care and well-being.

How many of us feel unattractive when we are heavy, cover up and hide behind "comfortable clothes" with our defense being rebellion against the oppressors? How many situations do we refrain from participation in, and how many activities are we not able to do? Is it because we are heavy or because of "them"?

I would like to challenge us as a progressive

and enlightened crowd to be honest and take responsibility for our choices. If we choose not to exercise, eat well, deal with stress and learn to care for ourselves better, then let's at least have the guts to own up to our choice instead of blaming our schedule, boss, lover or mood!

Let's reframe our picture of health: Lack of exercise and generally unhealthy lifestyles kill far more of us than breast cancer or AIDS. Perhaps it is time to fight against this dis-ease with similar vigor!

PAÑ PEDJOE
Portland

Read between the lies

TO THE EDITOR:

Chinese government sources claim Falun Gong materials containing anthrax were sent to a U.S. company in Beijing, thereby attempting to frame Falun Gong as a terrorist organization.

Does this make sense? What does a peaceful meditation practice have to do with anthrax?

Why would people sending anthrax be foolish enough to identify themselves? Why is this report coming out now, when the 3,000 journalists in Shanghai for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting could be focusing on China's human rights issues?

Who to believe? The Chinese government ran over its own citizens with tanks.

It claims no torture occurs in its jails and labor camps despite contradictory reports from both the United Nations and Amnesty International. Jiang Zemin's regime fabricated a self-immolation incident in January (clearly seen when the footage was played in slow motion).

It even legalized a death penalty for exposing the establishment's crimes. This government tightly controls its country's media and repeatedly refuses international investigations.

Jiang's current scapegoat is Falun Gong, a practice advocating truthfulness, compassion and tolerance. He has labeled Falun Gong's founder, a two-time Noble Peace Prize nominee, an "enemy of the state."

In more than two years of horrendous persecution, Falun Gong practitioners have not provided Jiang with even one act of violence. Relying on the public's ignorance and apathy, however, Jiang fervently is trying to portray these people as terrorists.

With a little information and a clear mind one easily can see what's going on. Who are the real terrorists?

SARAH COOK
Portland

Thank you, readers

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you to everyone for your encouragement and support as we have raised \$20,000 so far for AIDS Project Los Angeles and its efforts to provide services to people living with HIV and AIDS and to educate others about the disease. Congratulations!

So many of you have responded so generously, and your names will go on my running jersey so you get to run the National AIDS Marathon with me Dec. 9. And special thanks to Jim Radosta for the flattering *Just Out* story, which prompted so many of my wonderful Oregonian brothers and sisters to donate ["Hooray for Hollywood," Aug. 17].

E-mail me at JGraigory@aol.com if you would like to participate in this group effort. We are making a difference together.

J GRAIGORY
Los Angeles