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Speak Out

Silence is pathetic

TO THE EDITOR:

The Day of Silence Project, a national protest of anti-gay harassment in schools, was held April 10.

I first heard about this on a talk radio show where the hosts were sympathetic but not very understanding to the idea of silence for the issue. And many of the callers to the show were concerned about how a day of silence in our schools would affect the education that the students go to receive.

Some callers even saw this protest as yet another attempt for our community to seek "special rights." To a degree, I respectfully must agree with those against this idea of a Day of Silence.

Silence seems like a pathetic way of getting the point across to an important issue—just as violence against violence shows no meaning for what you are trying to express. In our schools, we have many educated people, faculty and students who are more than capable of expressing an idea or opinion about many important issues that face us every day.

Even for just one day, why should we silence them? If someone tells a lie about me, should I be silent and allow that lie to live and gain credence?

Or do I stand up proudly for the truth? For what I believe in, which is me. The Day of Silence protest might have been a good idea for a publicity stunt, but what true effect did it have on such an important issue as sexual minority harassment and violence?

In the 1980s, one of ACT UP's mottoes was "silence = death." In this day, where the gay youth have no clue what the beginning of HIV/AIDS was truly like, except through what they are able to read, it is more important than ever to be vocal and stand proudly for who we are and what we believe in. To educate and inform.

The rate of sexually transmitted diseases is on the rise in men between 18 and 29, at a higher level today than at the height of the AIDS crisis. Should we be silent about this?

The news media seem to be distant from this issue now, even with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warnings. Would it not be better for us to be vocal and educate people than to stand silent, even for one day, for nothing more than a media event?

We all have a topic or issue we feel passionately about. We can do more by sharing and educating others with the truth from within our heart than allowing only the lies of fears to be heard.

Silence is pathetic and only holds us back from our journey in this life. A voice of truth may be muffled under the fears of the unknown. But with courage, confidence and faith in what you believe in, the truth always shall prevail. By speaking up and being heard, we can silence the lies and fears.

RIC BERRONG
Portland

No excuses

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to commend Marty Davis for her decision to change her life and to work toward being healthy ["Choose Life," April 5]. However, I am compelled to share a startling epiphany I had while reading the commentary.

I'm fat. I was a chubby kid and an obese teenager, and now I'm a fat adult. I have been bullied, chided and teased for an eternity.

I used to cry and diet and freak out until I was nearly suicidal. I made the nearly fatal mistake of listening to people, government standards for fat, fashion magazines and the media.

Then one day the tension just kind of disappeared, ironically around the same time I got fairly comfortable with my sexuality. I realized those voices didn't matter so much.

In fact, my best friend, Rebecca, is a former fatty, a triathlete who is healthier than anyone I know and never once has put me down or told me I was anything less than gorgeous. She gets it. Size acceptance does not negate the fact that we all should try to care for our bodies, be healthy and feel good.

Ideally, we all should eat well and exercise. It does, however, speak to the fundamental belief that no one's human rights should be trampled on.

Lesbian, trans, gay, bi, straight, black, Jewish, white, Latino, fat, thin, foreign, Christian, Muslim, differently abled, etc., etc. No person should be disrespected and discriminated against because of the way he or she looks.

Our society shoves size down our throats in the exact way it shoves white down our throats. Apparently, skinny and white equals perfection.

It's about human rights, civil rights, love and acceptance. How dare you imply it's as simple as a choice?

I shuddered when I read that and when I read: "Nothing about obesity is simple. Not the reasons for it, not the excuses for it, and certainly not the means to control it."

I urge you, take out the word "obesity" and insert "homosexuality." Wow, sounds like Oregon Citizens Alliance rhetoric.

Size acceptance is not about the blatant and intentional ignorance of health concerns; it is about loving yourself and those around you despite appearance. Many people who are taught that same self-deprecating bullshit get fatter and fatter because they feel unloved and unworthy of love. It's a downward spiral.

Only now that I have soul-friends like Rebecca who love me just the way I am and know I am a beautiful creature can I gain the self-worth to move forward and care about my health. I'll never make excuses for being fat; I don't have to. I also never will let other people's judgments get in the way of my life.

DENISE RENFROW
Troutdale

Pick on someone your own size

TO THE EDITOR:

I am both disgusted and disappointed with Marty Davis' commentary "Choose Life," which spread stereotypes and hate. Sounds like something we should speak out against, but I guess you used the most accepted form of discrimination and abused your platform to speak "facts."

If you choose to exercise more and eat more healthy, great! You will become more healthy no matter your size.

But that does not mean your size will change. Obesity is simply a medical word.

The truth is, obesity does not alone cause death or illness. The ridiculous cycle of dieting is what causes these health problems.

Studies have shown that, on average, fat people don't eat more than their thin counterparts. Many fat people believe that if they never were forced to diet with pressure and misinformation, they'd be a different weight.

I am medically considered an obese person, yet I am vegan, bike everywhere and am in better health than the average person. When I talk about fatphobia in our society I talk about generalizations that I am just an exception to the rule and that fat is unhealthy.

Because I am not an exception to the rule, I do not choose to be fat, and fat does not equal unhealthy. Of course, there are unhealthy fat people, just like there are unhealthy thin people. I am sick and tired of people using health as an excuse for stereotypes and discrimination.

And trying to say size acceptance is an excuse? How dare you even think that question! It takes a lot more courage to accept yourself

as a fat person than to do anything else. I choose size acceptance as my form of survival.

Size acceptance shows regard to yourself, accepting yourself as who you are without the mental abuse of society's lies. Size acceptance allows you to live your life without limitations.

Size acceptance shows respect for your loved ones, for when you accept yourself, then others can as well. Size acceptance is re-educating the public about what multimillion-dollar industries don't want you to know.

Does not every life deserve respect and understanding without all the stereotypes, misinformation and hate? And as for your job you didn't get in San Diego, if that was San Francisco this day and age, it would be considered discrimination legally.

There is so much information on this topic I could go on forever. That is why I write a 'zine called *Take It—It's My Body!* To receive a copy, please send \$1 (copy and postage costs) to P.O. Box 4926, Portland, OR 97208.

CHELSEA LINCOLN
Portland

Heaven help us

TO THE EDITOR:

I am addressing an article by Charles Colson in the April 10 issue of the *South County Spotlight* on the need for us to see the Catholic scandal as an issue of homosexuality that the media have whitewashed. He cites a "lavender mafia" in the church that perpetuates a gay subculture that needs to be rooted out.

Perhaps a better way to solve part of this issue is for the church to accept homosexuality openly rather than rooting it out. What needs to be rooted out is any child molester, gay or straight (statistics show 89 percent of all pedophiles are married men), and any church hierarchy that is organized to deny and perpetuate abuse in its ranks.

Pedophiles in the priesthood are gay and straight. Priests often choose their vocation as teen-agers and get "stuck" in adolescent sexual development, which would explain those who have gay or straight urges for kids.

None of these people should be in the priesthood, even though they might be seeking celibacy for impulse control. But their sexual orientation isn't the problem; it's their uncontrollable compulsion for underage sex objects. The gay community, just like the straight community, is appalled by the church's cover-up of pedophilia.

The church abhors homosexuality and does a lot to prevent this normal behavior among members. The church abhors pedophilia but doesn't do enough to prevent this abnormal behavior among priests.

Why would the acceptance of homosexuality benefit all people? The current prohibition results in denial, sexual suppression, secrecy and lies. This occurs among members of the church and within the church hierarchy.

Denial is the cornerstone to dysfunction, and the church is clearly dysfunctional. With acknowledgment and acceptance, gays could stay within their faith and make appropriate sexual choices within their orientation.

Several of my gay friends who are priests have closeted, age-appropriate same-sex relationships. They might not be celibate, but they are certainly not pedophiles!

They tried to suppress acting on their sexual urges by joining the priesthood, to no avail. Had they been accepted as homosexuals within the church as adolescents, they would have been able to stay in the church as members, and they might not have chosen a celibate priesthood as a way of denying their needs.

PAM RAHN
Columbia County Citizens for Human Dignity