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Gray matters

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to respond to the recent "Just Asking" debate about *Kissing Jessica Stein* [May 3]. Like many critics, a number of the respondents seem to have misread the film. *Kissing Jessica Stein* is not, as some would have it, a lesbian story.

This point is quite clear in the interviews given by the two lead actresses, Heather Juergensen and Jennifer Wesfeldt, who also wrote the screenplay. Their interest was in telling a human story, a story that defied the homo-hetero binary so ingrained in our culture.

From this perspective, *Kissing Jessica Stein* owes much to the philosophy of sexual liberation, so central to gay liberation and lesbian feminism. These movements in turn drew on notions from the free love movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The great value of a story like *Kissing Jessica Stein* is that it shows how all people can be freed once they begin thinking outside the box. Jessica and all the other characters undergo a process of personal growth as a result of her foray into a queer relationship.

In meeting her former boyfriend and boss, Jessica does not "return" to be dominated by a "traditional male" but rather meets this man on an equal footing because both of them have grown immensely as a result of her relationship with a woman. The relationship challenged received notions of human love as only either gay or straight. In the final analysis, the film affirms the queer relationship as a positive: Perhaps it is ultimately not for everyone, but it can be a truly beautiful thing indeed.

As a bi woman, I found this film to be surprisingly refreshing. It affirms the existence and visibility of bi-curious and bi people. Finally, I would note that there are in fact human stories like Jessica's—individual lives that do defy the homo-hetero binary.

MELINDA MARIE JETTE
Milwaukie

Terms of endearment

TO THE EDITOR:

First let me thank all of you for being such a great resource for the community. Many of us rely on you more than you know.

The purpose of this letter is to make one suggestion: Drop the term "gay rights" from your vocabulary. Use instead the terms "civil liberties" and "civil rights."

When any media use "gay rights" to tag an issue, it causes an almost inescapable separation in the minds of most people between your community and theirs. It seems to me that the central issue always comes down to equal protection under the law. The more you use the term "civil rights," the more people will identify queer civil heroes with other civil heroes such as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, et al.

It will help stop the right wing's use of rhetoric to control people's minds and undermine freedom. Please don't let the right choose your terms and definitions!

Thank you for your godly efforts and kind attention.

LOREN CUNNINGHAM
Eugene

All Portland citizens deserve representation

TO THE EDITOR:

This month voters will decide whether all of our neighborhoods and diverse communities should be represented on the Portland City

Council. If passed, Measure 26-30 will make it so our councilors are elected by districts instead of citywide.

It also will give us a city government that is more efficient and costs less. It's written so the combined number of politicians and staff stays the same while improving our representation.

Why is this important? As Portland grows, we're becoming more diverse. Different communities, ethnic backgrounds, neighborhoods and economic levels run throughout our city.

Voting yes on Measure 26-30 will give each of our citizens a stronger voice at City Hall. It will require our councilors to live in and be elected from each area of the city. Their offices will have to be located in one of the neighborhoods they represent—probably in a community center or storefront so people can walk in and discuss a problem or get information within a short distance from their home.

When electing councilors by smaller areas, they'll look more like our entire city. They'll also know more about the areas they directly serve—what our streets look like, the businesses, the traffic problems and the ways each of our different citizens lives.

It will be a whole new ball game for those wanting to run for City Council. Elections will cost less—making officials more accountable to us. Being in touch will matter most—not money.

What's wrong with our current system? The easiest answer is that we have outgrown it.

Our charter requires every commissioner to have two jobs: 1) trying to represent every community and neighborhood in the city and 2) directly managing several bureaus. They can't give 100 percent to either job—and we deserve more.

Measure 26-30 changes this by shifting the administrative duties to one branch—but still under the watchful eye of the mayor. Now, complex bureaus and problems are managed by separate commissioners who often don't have the experience in that field—leaving them at the mercy of the bureaucracy. When Measure 26-30 passes, experienced professionals will run our city departments—not untrained elected officials.

Portland has changed, and our city government needs to change with it. We can do a better job of representing all of our citizens and using our resources.

Our communities deserve it. Our neighborhoods deserve it—and so do you.

On behalf of the 21 neighborhood association chairs, Rainbow Coalition, Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, Association for Portland Progress, Portland Chamber of Commerce, labor organizations (including American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 189, Service Employees International Union Local 49 and Portland Firefighters) and elected officials including Mayor Vera Katz, U.S. Rep. Darlene Hooley, state Sen. Kate Brown, former state Rep. George Eighmey and a host of others endorsing Measure 26-30, I urge you to vote yes. It might be the first and last chance in your life to vote for representation.

ROBERT BALL
Good Government Initiative Chief Petitioner

Moral of the story

TO THE EDITOR:

I support Marc Abrams for Multnomah County Circuit Court judge Position 38 in District 4. As a vice chairman of the Portland Public Schools board, he stood on the principle that the district should ban all discriminatory employers from recruiting students.

Fred Stickel's *Oregonian* vilified Marc during

the past seven years for insisting that the board not exempt the military from this ban because it continues to discriminate against gay and lesbian servicemembers. A good judge must resist external pressures and follow the rule of law.

Marc Abrams clearly has demonstrated he has the moral courage to perform the most difficult duties of a judge. Please take the time to mark your ballot accordingly.

FRANK DIXON
Portland

Weight and see

TO THE EDITOR:

When I read Marty Davis' editorial in the April 5 issue, I had to remind myself to take deep breaths ["Choose Life"]. I wholeheartedly support your right to control your own body and to express your opinion.

That said, I am saddened and angered by your fatphobic assumptions about others. You assume that if you know a person's weight, you know their health status; you assume that fat people are "killing themselves."

The fact is, diabetes, heart disease and other health problems sometimes are correlated with fatness, but they have not been proven conclusively to be caused by fatness. What's more, some studies say weight changes (up and down) cause health problems.

With 90 percent to 95 percent of diets failing within two years, losing weight might be doubly dangerous, because you can bet on gaining it back. Fat people's health also is affected by, dare I say it, fat oppression.

I'm talking about harassment, denial of health insurance and job discrimination. And now we have that stupid tax deduction.

Hey, if the Internal Revenue Service says fat people are diseased, who am I to argue? Really.

So what's a queer/bi/pansexual fat chick like me to do? Perhaps, like many fatsos, I'll eat a healthy diet with lots of organic veggies and get regular exercise—all without losing my big, happy fat ass.

I've done the research, and I know that's the best way to be healthy. But you won't know my health status by looking. And even if you did, it would be none of your business.

Let's stop fanning the flames of fat hatred. Let's treat our own and others' bodies with love and respect. Let's stop making judgments about people.

Let's stop assuming fatties are interested in hearing every random (fat or not) stranger/friend/family member's health advice. Let's wear clothes that fit. Today.

I hear sex is fabulous for the cardiovascular system. Or should I say...*fabulous*?

FRANCIE NEVILL
Portland

Courage of convictions

TO THE EDITOR:

I was reading with interest Marty Davis' commentary about obesity. I applaud her courage to point out that obesity is a health risk for many people.

For many people their health is suffering because they are overweight. (By the way, I am overweight, so I know what I am talking about.) Accepting oneself is important, but admitting that there might be health problems and changing one's behavior are equally important.

Let's take me, for example. My health is suffering because I am overweight, so I am doing something about it.

I watch what I eat, exercise more and generally listen to my body. I never will be a Barbie doll, but I can be a big woman with good health.