

speak out

just asking *The Burnside Triangle Advisory Group seems to be facing nothing but hostility from conservatives and apathy from queers. Is this a doomed effort, or can it be salvaged?*

Maybe a majority of Portland residents do not want an official Burnside Triangle. You can say it, but not everyone wants to say it.

The only thing that really makes it official no matter what anyone says or does not say is you say, "It's official." If "they" can say it's official, "they" also can say it's unofficial. If you look in Portland's Gay & Lesbian Community Yellow Pages, you'll see gay-owned businesses are all over the city and beyond.

You probably never asked anyone to "officialize" you being gay or lesbian or whatever. I understand the area is well known for gay entertainment, but that is not all being gay is about.

I hardly have spent any time in the Triangle, but I've spent time at gay places all over town. If I were heterosexual I think it would be a bit silly to have a heterosexual "square." I think the more we are integrated into society, as in "Gay people are basically everywhere," not thought of as just in some "triangle," the world will be a better place.

LEE SERENETHOS
Beaverton

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Has *Just Out* taken the time to really find out what the Burnside Triangle project is all about? Has anyone from *Just Out* come to one of our meetings to see what we are doing as a body? It seems that *Just Out* is making some major assumptions here without researching what it is writing about.

How can a project that is only a few months old be doomed? Who said we are facing apathy from the queer community? And the only hostility we have faced so far came from a conservative group that failed to materialize.

Doomed? I think not! I also think it would be wise for *Just Out*, our community newspaper, to research the facts before making public comments like this.

NORMAN NEVERS
Portland

Eugene Weekly published a half-page opinion piece April 11 promoting the idea that "HIV doesn't cause AIDS." My reply, published April 25, questioned its ethics in publishing advice that might lead to somebody's death without at least providing a link to "The Evidence That HIV Causes AIDS" (www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/evidhiv.htm) by the National Institutes of Health.

An outreach director for the Eugene HIV Alliance provided the only other rebuttal. All of the many other letters accused the "AIDS establishment" of conspiring to suppress scientific dissent.

Peter Duesberg is a leading scientist who claims nothing proves HIV causes AIDS, but he needed no proof for his personal decision to avoid infection. He refuses to infect himself with HIV to prove his theory that HIV is harmless because he is worried that an undiscovered co-contaminant might cause AIDS, according to the carefully documented interview notes in Edward Hooper's book, *The River*, which linked African HIV infections to 1950s oral polio vaccines. Despite this, many people are volunteering to become HIV-infected human lab rats in an unethical experiment to prove his theory right!

On a recent visit to Borders, I found 90 percent of the books in the AIDS section deny the link between HIV and AIDS. Many easy-to-find Web sites supplement these books, which



PHOTO BY JIM RACOSTITA

As a member of the Burnside Triangle Advisory Group from the beginning, I found the task quite daunting. To turn a portion of the downtown with a reputation as a gathering place for homosexual men into a place for folks to meander on a Sunday afternoon under shade trees to eat an ice cream cone seemed improbable but not quite impossible.

But not many other people seemed to see it that way. Apathy in the gay community abounds. Gays are accepted in many neighborhoods in Portland, and they do not need to congregate in this area downtown.

As a historic place, as a monument as what used to be in the past, the Burnside Triangle should be preserved. Markers should be placed showing the public what fascinating events happened years past at places in the blocks in the

area. The streets should be made attractive. But for attitudes of the people to change will take time and lots of effort.

We cannot abandon the place to gentrification. We must involve the businesses and developers to help preserve the past along with opening the future for a clean and lively piece of downtown Portland.

KATHY BAMBECK
Portland

next issue Will you be participating in Cascade AIDS Project's AIDSWalk02? Why or why not? Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)

have influenced the South African government to deny AIDS treatment to its citizens. These conspiracy theories further were fueled when U.S. AIDS officials refused to sign the Durban Declaration affirming, "HIV is the cause of AIDS," which more than 5,000 world-class scientists have signed to refute South Africa's decision.

The problem of AIDS denial needs to be addressed, but our government's HIV programs appear unwilling to confront it. I no longer can remain silent about this.

THOMAS KRAEMER
Corvallis

Smoke screen

TO THE EDITOR:

A special thing happened Aug. 15 at the Egyptian Club. People got to come together and feel good about themselves.

We were treated to free drinks, free smokes and a table of beautiful food, complete with a lovely human centerpiece. After being expertly decorated with body jewelry and henna tattoos, groups of friends got to pose for professional pictures in a luxurious tent right out of *1001 Arabian Nights*. It was like drifting into a genie bottle.

There was even a gorgeous belly dancer behind a Moroccan screen. So why did we get

treated to such a dreamy celebration of sensuality? This fantasy evening was brought to us by Camel's 7 Pleasures of the Exotic.

Why would this big cigarette company create such an elaborate party just for the patrons of the Egyptian Club? Perhaps they want sexual minorities to feel good about their community and to treat them to something special.

Or maybe corporate America finally has recognized the benefits of marketing to gay men and lesbians. While it's wonderful to be recognized by the suits in the boardroom, is it really so great that those suits are being worn by big tobacco?

Tobacco kills four times as many people as AIDS, suicide, homicide and car crashes combined. And this number might be even higher for sexual minorities, because approximately 50 percent of gay men and lesbians smoke compared to less than 30 percent of straights. HIV-positive smokers develop full-blown AIDS faster than nonsmokers, while lesbians who smoke have five times the risk for breast cancer.

Smoking and bar culture are a big part of coming out, and tobacco advertising is designed to teach us that smoking is an easy way to be tough, cool, sophisticated and sexually desirable. It's pushed as a way to fit in and deal with stress.

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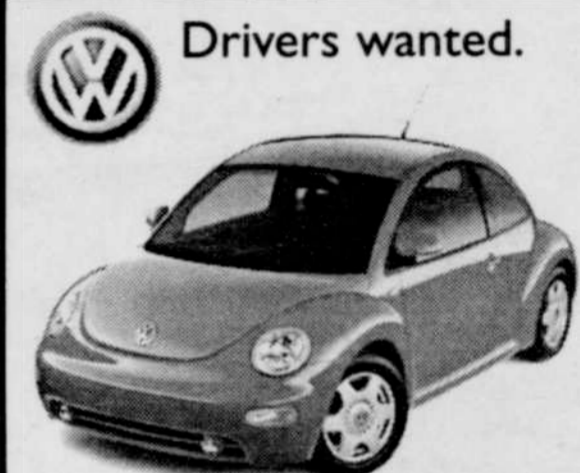
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