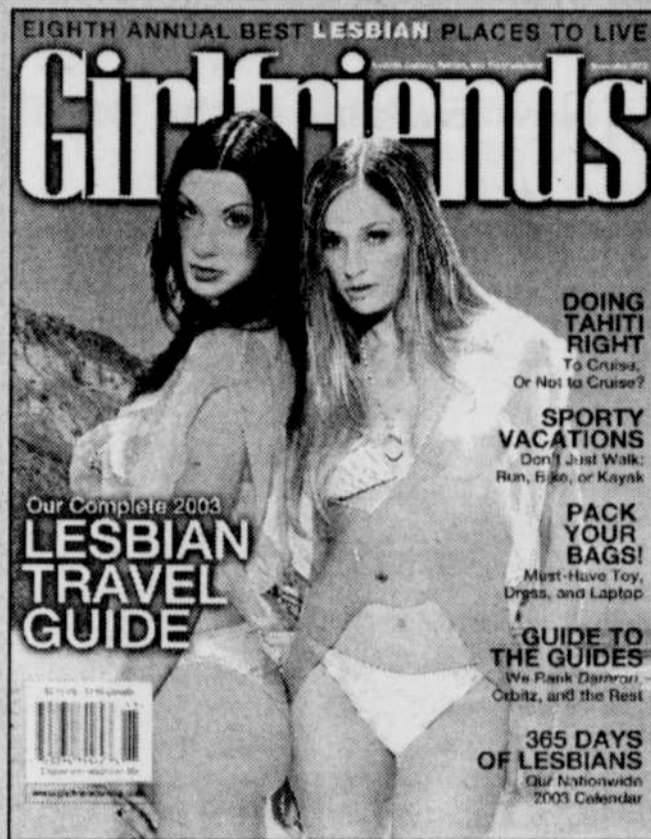


speak out



just asking *Portland tumbles 42 notches down the lesbian livability list: What happened? Are dykes fleeing the urban core for rustic relief, or is Girlfriends magazine simply out of touch?*

basis of sexual orientation, initiated a ban on discrimination in city contracting, provided gender identity protection for city employees, provided domestic partner benefits to city and county employees, and created a city and county domestic partner registry.

On top of that, Portland was recently named "Most Livable City in America" by Money magazine and "Best Bicycle City in North America" by Bicycling magazine. Portland is a wonderful place for lesbians and gays to live, and as mayor, I am committed to keeping it that way!

VERA KATZ
Portland

• • •

It's a simple answer: *Girlfriends* magazine sucks—always has and probably always will. The end.

Seriously, though, the magazine caters to

the L.A. Lipstick crowd. Portland doesn't exactly fit that description.

Too bad for *Girlfriends* and its readers. Great for Portland, because that crowd won't move there. Consider yourselves lucky!

TRACI WILLIAMS
Oakland, Calif.

next issue *Despite all of the documented health risks, queers smoke more than heterosexuals. Is this because of low self-esteem, youthful foolishness or sheer stupidity? Have we been duped by shrewd tobacco company marketing techniques?*

(Please see related item on Page 7.) Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)

If indeed true, I applaud these other cities for having made such great strides in creating livable communities for lesbian and gay citizens. In the past decade, Portland has passed a civil rights ordinance barring discrimination on the

I am more than willing to pay a few more cents at the store to give working Americans a livable (hear me laughing?) wage. The minimum wage never has kept up with inflation, and if they figure inflation into the raises that are made to the minimum wage bill, they will use whatever figures that make it the lowest percentage possible, so that the increase will be as small as possible and still not keep up with inflation.

Another bill you endorsed with a no vote was the labeling bill. I would like to know what I am eating.

The government keeps statistics such as how many grasshoppers, bees, spiders, roaches, etc. are "acceptable" in our food, so I see nothing that can prevent it from being more forthcoming about genetically engineered food. The "Food for Thought" letter in the Nov. 1 paper states the case better than I ever could, so I just must say I agree 100 percent with Barbara Ford when it comes to this bill.

ROGER STEFFANI
Beaverton

Now is the time

TO THE EDITOR:

A recent editorial in the *Register-Guard* about the Eugene City Council's consideration of an ordinance to protect every person from discrimination because of their gender identity misses the point entirely.

The public is told to allow its possible ignorance and misconceptions about the needs and lives of transgendered people to remain unchallenged. In the absence of any evidence to support the fear that giving transgendered people access to public space poses any threat whatsoever, readers still are urged to accept this biased presumption as compelling till disproven.

Statistical and common-sense evidence argues for the compassionate protection of an already victimized class of people, but there seems to be a disconnect on that for some folks. It's not the details of the ordinance on gender identity rights that are being put to a real test here but the broader conception of a society that protects and respects all its citizens.

The truth is that transgender people exist in this world, and even in Eugene. They pay taxes, raise families, work and shop next to everyone else.

They assume the same risks and responsibilities as other citizens and should be held

accountable on an equal basis for their actions toward others. But what they don't need is hysterical suspicion about their motives for activities of daily living and for wanting to be a part of this culture.

Many other cities, including Portland and Salem, passed gender identity protections, finding that irrational fears gave way to a more inclusive, less suspicious reality. These jurisdictions opened their eyes to the clear facts that transgender people are routinely abused, excluded and threatened, opened their minds to the concept of a society that cares about this bias and opened a door on a real future for folks who might have been afraid to live in public before.

These topics aren't common for a lot of people, but then this is a world of many diverse individuals, and we all have a lot to learn about each other's lives and struggles. Hiding behind hysteria won't help that, nor will an appeal to intentional ignorance.

Those people who are already at risk, and those who are willing to acknowledge this risk, are asking for a higher standard of conduct from their leaders—informed, principled advocacy for human rights and public safety. Unfortunately, some of what they have gotten in return is the very discrimination that already serves as an excuse for current abuses.

Human rights aren't optional, nor should they be contingent on appeals to biased stereotypes and hysterical fears. The ordinance will allow for reasonable, cooperative and respectful civil conduct and a fair and consistent basis for access to gendered facilities and services.

If our children are unsettled and confused, perhaps it is because of the discrepancy between our society's statements and its actions, in support of those who are most at risk. That hypocrisy is still in the closet, and desperately wants to stay there.

LORI BUCKWALTER
It's Time, Oregon! Executive Director

Separate but equal

TO THE EDITOR:

I have been reading *Just Out* since its inception, and I always have been frustrated by its coverage (or lack thereof) of the bisexual community.

Sally Sheklow's virulent biphobic comment in her Nov. 1 "Living Out" column was simply

the last straw for me ["Rusty Mojo"]. She slams Joann Lulan, claiming she "bilked our community of thousands of dollars for her workshops and books and is now married to a man for Chrissake."

I know lots of women who found Ms. Lulan's insights liberating. Is she now completely discredited because she dares to be bisexual?

Aren't we the gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans "community"? Oh, that's right, that phrase is just for marketing purposes. Silly me.

Marching in lockstep with the lesbian supremacist agenda, a woman can leave a hetero relationship for a lesbian one and be praised and lauded. Doing the reverse is a basis for rage and recrimination from "undefiled" dykes (and, of course, from many dykes who have enjoyably defiled themselves with men but are too cowardly to come out as bi).

Wasn't freeing women to make their own choices one of the goals of feminism? Doesn't it seem strange that members of an oppressed minority would demand segregation, not integration? And, like, who made them God?

The freakish thing is that comments similar to those from Ms. Sheklow are made in virtually every issue of *Just Out*, right alongside the lovely, penetrating and insightful social commentary of "Dykes to Watch Out For." Alison Bechdel gets the constantly evolving issues of gender and desire just right.

The rest of this paper often seems mired in 1970s, with all of its ugly separatist fascism, when it comes to discussing bisexuality. Bisexuals deserve fair coverage in the paper that purports to serve them.


TAMARA SWAN
Portland

Cure for the race

TO THE EDITOR:

I think it's been strange to hear some gay men in Portland say they're not attracted to certain races, and I've met a few overtly racist gay men. And wasn't the "people of color and their friends" party at Pride touted a bit too much like a Special Olympics event? And why do you publish racially specific roommate ads in your paper!!! Does everyone do that?!

DAVE WEBB
Portland

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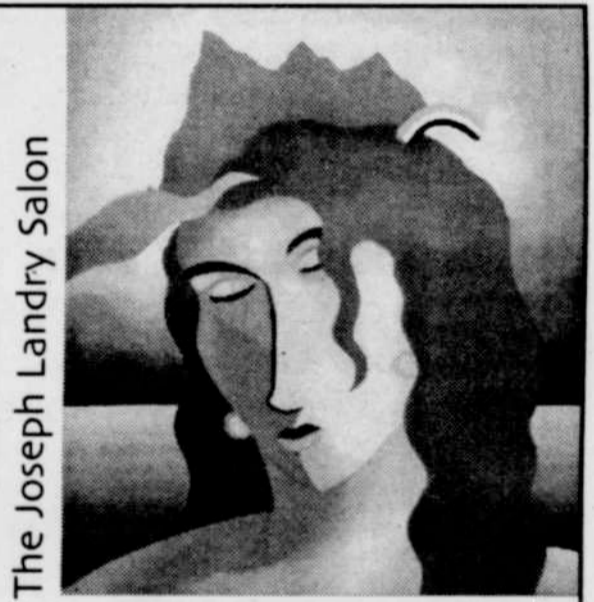
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