

Speak Out

just asking 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?

Queers tend to spend more time in bars than heterosexuals, and we still tend to participate more in drinking and drugs. I think the reasons for this are twofold (at least): There is more pressure to fit into a certain kind of mythological queer lifestyle (i.e., pretty young gay men in bars), and bars historically have been our gathering places.

To those of us in large, queer-friendly metropolitan areas, it would seem it is getting "easier" to be out, but nationally, this is far from true—which is reason No. 2: We deal with the stress of coming out by numbing ourselves with cigarettes, marijuana, beer and a number of other coping mechanisms. Also remember that we are living on the "left coast" and tend to be more health-conscious here than, say, New Jersey or Missouri, where it seems everyone still is smoking and in denial about the dangers of it.

TRACI WILLIAMS
Oakland, Calif.

...

It is sad how many of us smoke! Way too many of my friends smoke. They say it's a lack of

confidence, low self-esteem.

And local bars cater to those who smoke. When the Camel crew comes to the bars and gives out free stuff, why don't the Nicorette crew come around and pass out free patches?

You'd think the whole idea that smoking destroys the small blood vessels at the base of the penis and makes one impotent would be enough for any man not to smoke!

EVA HOFFMAN
Milwaukee

next issue As we wrap up another memorable year, what do you feel occurred during 2002 that will have the most significant impact on the sexual minorities community—for better or worse? Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)

and race. For me, the film was a meditation on appearance and reality. It's an amazing and profound work, disturbing and delicious, where everything manages to be both familiar and weird.

Talking about it afterward, I realized that, for me, the issues of sexuality and race were almost incidental. I don't think I missed the point, any more than I think Shawn Levy "forgot" to write that Haynes is a gay filmmaker. If it's correct, to quote McQuain, that Haynes is "respected, uncompromising and innovative," he and his work are going to be considered from more than one perspective.

GEORGE S. ELTMAN
Portland

Gay for pay

TO THE EDITOR:

We were disappointed to see that *Just Out* chose not to endorse the successful campaign to increase the minimum wage for workers in Oregon.

This is particularly unsettling to us, as we are working to "create change" in the LGBT rights movement to include all queers: low-wage workers, people of color and transgender folks,

to name a few. Your position splits our community and is offensive to those of us who must take minimum wage jobs to support ourselves and our families.

We are all part of a civil rights movement, and the queer community, including LGBT business owners, should be supportive of all queers, no matter what their ethnicity, gender identity or economic status. Let's work together to dispel the myth that the gay community is only made of rich white men.

PRIDE AT WORK OREGON
Portland

Missing in action

TO THE EDITOR:

On behalf of Pride Northwest, I wanted to thank *Just Out* for last month's article on the new board ["There's No Place Like Homo," Nov. 15].

I also wanted to acknowledge three board members who were absent when the photo was taken: vice chairwoman Aimee Wilson, treasurer Alisa Simmons and technology director Paula Funatake.

JACK KEEGAN
Portland

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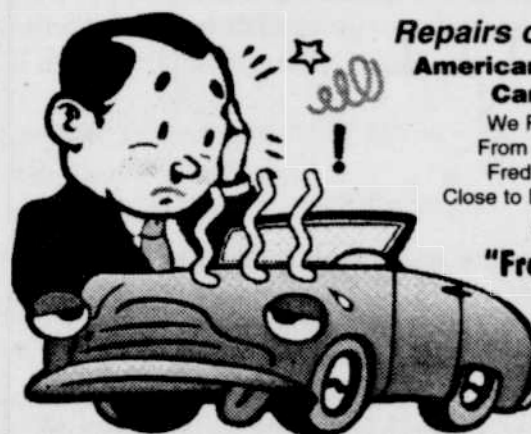
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