

Speak Out

just asking *Does it remain culturally acceptable for gay men to engage in public sex, or should these behaviors be taken out of the bushes and into the bathhouses?*

First I am surprised that it is "culturally acceptable" for gay men to engage in public sex; I didn't know that. I knew it was probably "tolerated culturally" but definitely not accepted, especially in these days of religious invasion of our politics.

That said, I am a believer in a simple idea that if a behavior does no harm to others then it's none of our business. I don't care what a person's label is.

More importantly, I am intrigued by a question of this sort in this forum. I will admit to being new at this site but was taken aback by the question, as I am unsure of its purpose.

Is judgment being passed here? Is it appropriate to perpetuate the unfortunate illusion that it's appropriate for communities to judge and direct personal behavior?

I can only hope not and that I have misread the purpose of this forum. As a transgendered person I am fighting for my freedom of expression, and having my behavior be subject to approval of the larger community, to me, is a dead-end road.

Let's not forget that this country of ours is created on a Christian foundation (unfortunately) and thus will never accept our "abnormal" behavior no matter how much you talk about it. Unfortunate but true in my eyes.

MICHAEL KNIGHT
Clackamas

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Ever since the catacombs and into the distant past, men have had to hide their love away. I think love in all its many varied forms ought to be out of the closet and out of the cave.

In my opinion the "baths" and other "closed caption" environments are nothing more than toll booths and cages. Let's keep it out in the open.

Hey, I'm queer, I'm here, and I'm used to it! Think free!

JOHN ANGEL
Phoenix, Ore.

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Perhaps we should expand the drug-free and prostitution-free zones to include a fag-free zone throughout the natural world to prevent naked men from fucking in the bushes. It also would give us control over the naked women having drumming circles in the woods.

We could force the fags into the bathhouses and Metropolitan Community Church. There, the women would be forced to wear clothes (burkas), subjugated to religious dogma that they would be banned from challenging in seminary and regulated by tax and zoning laws.

It is the power of our love that you fear so much, Ms. Davis. After making love in the bushes, we are inspired to make our world a better place for our new boyfriend.

Never doubt that a small group of committed individuals can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

DAVID SMOOT
Portland

next issue As Multnomah County acknowledges National LGBT Health Awareness Week, what do you feel is the greatest health risk facing the sexual minorities community? HIV/AIDS? Smoking? Obesity? Compulsive behaviors? Breast cancer? Others? (Please see related item on Page 9.) Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)

The bad thing is that in many, if not most, of the smaller cities, towns and rural areas, nonstraight people either have to blend in or take their lives in their own hands.

There are laws, and then there is common sense. Many of the people in the town where Matthew Shepard was beaten to death—in broad daylight and with television cameras rolling openly—swore at and verbally condemned the nonstraight individuals who came to pay respects.

I am not suggesting that people go back into the closet at all. I am suggesting that people don't confuse reality with what should be.

In the past 25 years or so, great strides have been made in the pursuit of having nonstraights recognized as on equal ground as straights. Unfortunately, for the past 10,000 years, anyone different, or even thought to be different, was denied the right to live.

Just as in the classic book *The Art of War*, there is a way to fight and a time to fight, and a time not to fight and a way not to fight. What is needed in some sectors of the nonstraight world is a change from thinking "what should be" to "what is" and to pragmatic ways of first physically surviving and then bringing about changes.

Being too radical or too "badass" or too much "in the face" of whatever "enemy" of nonstraight men and women and those who are both men and women, in many circumstances, in many areas of the country, including parts of

Oregon, is a really good way to become a martyr.

A person can be "right" and seriously hurt or dead. This is not a fight that will be won by cute parades every year or signs or chanting. This is a fight that only will be won a day, a circumstance, a person at a time.

Matthew Shepard's parents did not want him to come back to the redneck "cowboy" town, and he did not have to financially. They had a really good reason for him not to come back: his life. Be "out," but like a deer/deer, always remember the predators.

JOHN BOYNTON
Vancouver, Wash.

Death without dignity

TO THE EDITOR:

What will happen if some of the draconian budget cuts are not revisited and reinstated? It means people are going to die! It means the people who made the decision to cut the budgets had better start doing a lot of soul searching.

Our state representatives haven't taken responsibility to do the job they were elected to do, which was to balance a budget doing whatever is necessary to keep the fabric of our society together and to care for those unable to care for

Continued on Page 7

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