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PAUL MITCHELL

True colors

TO THE EDITOR:

While I certainly appreciate your article "Voices of Color" in the Feb. 21 edition of *Just Out*, it is troubling to me just the same that your progressive gay paper still seems to ignore people of color who are LGBT in Portland. I feel that the questions lacked depth and imagination in terms of the important concerns and interests of the African American and African diaspora LGBT community.

The article was actually somewhat insulting. You not only underutilized the minds of these brilliant and competent black gay people, but the article also was extremely short and limited in scope.

Yes, the African American and African diaspora LGBT community are small in Portland, but there are several issues that occur within its confines. You could have asked questions on economic empowerment and why for LGBTs of color, particularly those of African descent, that is not a reality.

Maybe you could have asked why still in this city there is a lack of culturally competent African American/African diaspora HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns. Perhaps you could have mentioned that for black men in this society, who are more apt to be thrown in prison than to be given a job or educational opportunities, adding an LGBT status certainly compounds issues such as the aforementioned challenges.

What about asking about the role of religious centers in the lives of LGBTs of African descent? For many of us our churches, cathedrals, mosques and life-sustaining faith in God, Allah, the Loas, the Orishas, the Virgin Mary and/or Jesus Christ are just as important to us as, if not more than, whether we identify as queer or how we "feel" about racism.

WE DESPISE RACISM IN ALL OF ITS MIND-NUMBING FORMS!!!! Come on, people, do you think we like the fact we are the descendants of people who experienced one of the worst genocides in history (slavery) followed by massive disenfranchisement to this day, and basically suffering under the white supremacy?

We don't like it; you all should know that much at least by now. I mean, my God, you ask the same question every year! How do you feel about racism?

Interracial relationships is yet another issue you could have touched on. It is, in fact, just as divisive an issue in the African American and African diaspora LGBT community as it is in the white LGBT community. The attitudes surrounding it at least should have been examined.

Going a step further, how about the fact that for black gay men in this city it seems that often to fit into the larger gay community we are pushed to give up our blackness and assimilate? You didn't ask questions about that, either.

And hello, what's up with only one lesbian being asked to speak? I mean, were you trying to be sexist, or were the opinions of black LGBT females just too difficult to find? Wait, I know: You were in such a rush to put our your annual Black Article, you never considered having more than one woman speak; you just didn't have the time.

At least you could have had two other African American or African diaspora lesbians and maybe even some bisexuals and transgendered people interviewed to gain a full perspective. They do exist.

I guess I'm just tired of the marginalization that people of color in general are shown by your paper. How could you even think to call your article "Voices of Color" when you only

interviewed African Americans? Latinos, Native Americans, Asians, Arabs and East Indian LGBT people also happen to reside in Portland and have equally intriguing and interesting voices that need to be heard by Portland's very WHITE LGBT community.

In short, thanks for considering me and mine in your article, but y'all gets no luv from me for its presentation. It was too short, the questions asked were redundant, you underutilized the minds of those interviewed, and you failed to get all of the voices of color.

Also, I was more than slightly insulted that you chose the last week of Black History Month to release this story and then made it so short that it seemed like you were just tokenizing us. I personally am tired of being a token filler for someone else's "education."

KYON SAUCIER

Portland

Thin ice

TO THE EDITOR:

I was in the middle of a planning meeting for a size-positive event taking place May 3 in Portland when I read Marty Davis' shocking editorial on obesity ["Choose Your Battles," March 7].

After I read it aloud, a room full of amazing, vibrant, creative, intelligent women, myself included, sat, jaws dropped, in complete and utter disbelief. Now, four days later, I am still aghast.

My shock, disappointment and anger have not faded in the slightest. Sheltering her bigotry and sizism under the protective frame of "personal opinion," dishing out unsound, unproven and undereducated nutritional philosophies in a manner that is both errantly "matter of fact" and unbelievably condescending, Marty has once again shown that her eyes are closed to the fact that the world is not a place of simple duality.

There are myriad plausible actions/reactions, causes/effects and personal preferences for any scenario at hand. She speaks to her readers with the narrow assumptions that all fat people desire weight loss, are unhealthy or are just not doing it right.

Fitness and fatness are not always mutually exclusive, and Marty would do well to remember that. One can focus on issues of personal health without worrying about appearance or size.

Making disgustingly low jibes like "Run now if you must—or if you can" is inexcusable. We as a culture are bombarded daily with images of an arbitrary physical ideal, are shamed into high-priced weight loss clinics and eating disorders, are taught to despise any deviation from that ideal, no matter how minor, in our physiques.

We are taught that the unavoidable and perfectly natural diversity of human bodies (size, shape and color) is negative, something to cover up or "work off." Marty's decision to use (or misuse) her position as editor—and owner—of this publication to further this terrible mind-set is not only misguided, but socially irresponsible.

I agree with the goals of health and fitness, and if weight loss is a byproduct of those healthful activities, so be it. But if it is not, so be it too.

I, for one, will not despise myself or my body. I would rather win the "battles" of self-love, self-acceptance and compassion than the so-called battle of the bulge.

Health, mobility, energy and vitality are not the rewards of only thin folk. And neither are joy, happiness, self-esteem and love.

I am now going to work twice as hard as I'd

planned to bring the message of size positivity to the people of Portland and beyond. See you in May!

STACY BIAS

Portland

Carry that weight

TO THE EDITOR:

As you open your commentary with talks of war and the possibility of people becoming numb to the issue, you end with misconceptions of obesity. The commentary makes no real connections to these issues, just your rambling thoughts, often confused as facts.

But there is an actual link between these two issues. As our weight-obsessed society looks at our bellies, will we remember to look up and react to the war in front of us? Are we so fixated on self-obsession, we forget about the world around us?

You talk of the disease of power, and in our society money is power. The diet industry is \$40 million strong.

You talk about the disease of control. There are few studies showing fat to be a direct link to health concerns but numerous studies showing lifestyle (diet and exercise), not fat, as a contributing factor.

Lifestyle and obesity become intertwined with people's misconceptions. The fear of fat and need for control leads to stereotypes, discrimination and ignorant commentaries such as your own. Yo-yo dieting, the practice of weight loss and gain from diet failures and successes, also has been shown to lead to health concerns—not the stability of one's weight, no matter their size.

Although you may recognize the war about to happen, you seem to forget the facts surrounding these issues you talk about. You've become another puppet for these diseases with your attitude that if you can do it, anyone can.

You personally attack me, telling me to go eat a steak. Besides the fact that it was a juvenile response to my food choices, you ignored my important message.

My point is I have no issues with my own body. My point is I am frustrated with society's lack of understanding and acceptance of fat people. My point is that I am healthy and fat and that this is possible. My point is I have nothing to gain from weight loss because I already have great energy, mobility, vitality and health.

I have the right fuel for my body and mind. Maybe with the stupid body wars behind us, we can concentrate on the evolving war.

And by the way, I never referred to myself as overweight. That only begs the question, over what weight? I referred to myself as fat.

CHELSEA LINCOLN

Portland

Choose life

TO THE EDITOR:

I picked up your publication for the first time the other day and was astounded to hear the comments of Marty Davis and her "helpful" and reprimanding advice to all the "overweight" gay men and lesbians in the community.

I was stunned and astonished to find such an editorial in a publication that is produced for the purpose of creating strength and acceptance in the community. Isn't this what we are fighting against?

How far are Davis' remarks of "She shouldn't say she can't lose weight—it's more that she chooses not to" from the remarks of people who said not long ago that gay people