

You asked about gay male sex in public places. Let's put it this way: When straight teen-agers do the same thing, it's call "lovers lane." When gay (and usually older) men do it, it's criminalized. And by the way, I am 50 and do not engage in such activity.

CHARLIE MEHLER
Manhattan, Kan.

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Normally I don't reply to editorials. However, this one has caused me to wonder why, in this day and age, you would make a generalization about gay men, or anyone for that matter. That is the reason so many people have been afraid to come out.

Sure, many gay men cruise parks and rest stops but, news flash, so do lesbians and heterosexuals. Apparently you missed Joe and Tina groping each other under the oak tree. But many gay men are content to meet that special person and have an intimate encounter in private.

Wouldn't more thought-provoking questions such as "What is the appeal of cruising parks or rest areas?" or "Sex in public: sexual freedom or deviance?" be a more inclusive, enlightened approach to the subject? Those topics actually would make for interesting nongender or sexually oriented conversation.

Then, I suppose because lesbians are narrow-minded, man-hating, hostile and sexually repressed people, you wouldn't think of that. (See, generalizations don't help, do they?)

D. JACKSON
Grants Pass

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How do lesbians explore their sexuality and relieve stress?

Frankly, I'm into love, not war.
You represent the gay community?

PATRICK
Beaverton

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I agree that cruising public parks, washrooms, MAX lines and other very public places for the sole purpose of engaging in sexual activity (gay or otherwise) cannot be justified by any reasonable person. There are ample opportunities to engage in sexual activity in places where that behavior is expected (bathhouses, video arcades, etc.).

It seems to me that those who insist upon engaging in explicit sexual activity in inappropriate places are doing so just for the shock value. Is that the part that is fun—shocking people?

I am a bisexual male. I enjoy sex in my home with my opposite-sex life partner and enjoy sucking off a stranger through a glory hole or in the back rows of a movie theater, but I wouldn't do it up on the stage, even in a place where it might be considered acceptable to do so.

Engaging in explicit sexual activity in places where that is not the expected normal behavior gives sex a bad name. If it is primarily gay men engaging in that behavior, then it is gay male sexual behavior that will come under criticism.

In an effort to gain acceptance of the gay community in the broader heterosexual community, why would anyone want to do something that is almost guaranteed to evoke criticism? It sounds pretty counterproductive to me.

RICHARD
Portland

CRUISE CONTROL

Just Out was inundated with e-mails from across the continent after the syndicated column "Quote Unquote" included this excerpt from Publisher Marty Davis' Feb. 21 commentary, "The Opposite Sex":

"Tell me, e-mail me, write me a letter, please, and explain to me how it can be justified in this day and age for any person to prowl around a public park, in the middle of

the day, for any and all to see, for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity with strangers. Just explain it to me. How is this behavior acceptable? It happens in rest areas, public bathrooms, parks, hallways, stores, culverts, gullies, crevices. My gosh, is there no place that men won't use for public sex? Why don't you just go to the nice bathhouse?"

Here are some excerpts from the responses. 

...

I am a gay man and have done the public sex thing before. It was something I did when I had yet to come out of the closet. I still go to adult bookstores, where my right to privacy is guaranteed and it is legal to cruise other men.

But I no longer troll public parks, washrooms, etc. This is illegal.

Just because it's fun doesn't make it right. Public spaces are for everyone.

I'm willing to listen to any well-reasoned argument why men (or women) should be allowed to have sex in public spaces. But so far I haven't heard one.

BILL
Portland

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It should be self-evident why men would want to meet and have sex outdoors in nature—read your Walt Whitman—and most of the gay cruising areas I am aware of are off the beaten path enough that mothers with strollers are not going to inadvertently stumble into a scene. So what exactly is your beef?

You say it bothers you that the "purpose" of these cruising men is on display "for any and all to see," and that makes me suspicious. If it's not just public sex acts that bother you but also public sexual intentions, that sounds a bit self-loathing to me.

ANDREW KELM
Toronto

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Where to meet a guy? Your suggestion—go to a bathhouse—is like saying why not go to the local gay strip bar. For some, going to either is not enjoyable. The park is free, and you only deal with guys you want to.

Granted, there are lot of place to meet Mr. Right Now, but they all have a negative or sleaze factor that make most people scared or unwilling to participate in. If you go to these places and do not score, it was a waste of your time.

If you do not score at the park, you spent the time walking, getting exercise and enjoying the ambiance. If you do score, it always make the walk that much better.

LEON JENNINGS
Eugene

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I can tell you why. BECAUSE IT'S FUN. You also obviously forget that you live in a country where sodomy is against the law in one-third of all your states.

But what would you know or care about that? You are a woman. (I can only presume lesbian.)

I do not usually hear gay men publicly commenting on the erotic lives of women. So, until you want to take the time to enlighten yourself more about the complex life of a gay man and his erotic desires, I wish you would keep your opinions to yourself, instead of feeding into the hysteria in our culture caused around gay male sex. As an editor of a newspaper that is supposed to serve the gay community, I feel it is the least you could do.

COLIN BROWNLEE
Squirt.org Editor

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Just keep your trap shut about things you don't understand.

Do you suppose I would understand what you do in your sex life? Hell, no! Would I write comments about your sexual behaviors in a paper that is for homosexuals? No.

Get some judgment, or leave the paper.

BASHED
Portland

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You want to know why "in this day and age" men seek other men in parks and not "in the nice bathhouse."

First, I would ask why does it have to be justified to you? Who anointed you goddess of all things gay? And why are you so worked up in a dither about it?

My answer is: "It doesn't bother me. I don't have a hang-up about people showing affection in public. Seems to me the world would be better if there were more demonstrations of adoration instead of enduring rude sales clerks, people flipping each other off and road rage."

You clearly have never been to "the nice bathhouse." You think "prowling around a public park" is worse than "prowling" in some dark, skanky, lice-infested firetrap? I would rather risk getting poison ivy on my scrotum than god-knows-what in the scum pits that you call bathhouses in Portland and many other cities.

Give me Rooster Rock or Sauvie Island any day. At least I can see what I'm getting in the daylight, go for a hike, get exercise, breathe fresh air, get a tan, swim and watch a beautiful sunset. There is freedom and joy and bonding in nature, not in some dark hellhole where sex is made to be furtive and disgusting.

MIKE
Denver

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You should be ashamed at feeling justified to go on bashing without knowing what the hell you are talking about. You just LOST MY SUPPORT 100 PERCENT!

You should look at yourself in the mirror and apologize to yourself first for hurting your own kind. People are supposed to love and respect EVERYONE, BECAUSE EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT, RIGHT?

You lost an advertiser, a reader and all my respect for your paper—unless I hear of a written apology to the gay community. People like you destroy all the work our community has built—wake up before it's too late!

ANONYMOUS
Hood River

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You ask the same question that Catholic leaders ask of bad Catholics: Why do you use birth control and view sex as a recreational pastime when we tell you it is inappropriate? You ask the same question that homophobes have asked of gays and lesbians: Why can't you just have sex the way we think it should be?

In myriad ways, society tries to tell us that appropriate sexuality happens only under certain conditions. That others know who should have sex and where and what time and with whom and how.

Traditional Christians say sex only should happen between a married husband and wife, in the bedroom, in missionary position, with the lights out to stay modest and for the purposes of reproduction. Lesbians and gays have questioned this dictate, arguing that we must be allowed to lust and love those whom we desire.

But within the gay and lesbian sexual minority, there are other sexual minorities: those into B/D/S/M, park pigs, T-room aficionados and so on. Their lust and love expresses itself in a way different from the way your lust and love expresses itself. But theirs is not inferior to yours; you are not a better lesbian or a better person, because you don't have sex in a park.

GARETH KIRKBY
Vancouver, British Columbia

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So long as they are not visible to uninterested passersby, and so long as they don't damage or litter the environment, why shouldn't men have sex in private spaces in public locations? Does it really matter if they are having more fun than you like, so long as you aren't inconvenienced by it?

Virtually all men pee outside, in public places, when the need and the opportunity is upon them. But they usually seek out privacy first. So whether it's urine or semen, does it really matter what flows from their dicks? If you can't see it, and you can't smell it, and it isn't wrecking the place, then why should anyone care?

SPIKE
Toronto

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Go, Marty, go! I support your comments about public sex 1 million percent. What is it about gay men that so many of us just can't keep it in our pants when we should? Talk about dysfunctional!

LARRY KRAMER
New York City