

Speak Out

eyes, you see a vomiting woman on the grass and decide, "She's not one of us, avoid her." Or if you see a brown-skinned sister and decide, "Ella no habla español, es una 'sellout.'"

Given my experiences, I have found it more self-motivating to identify as "human" rather than try to align myself with any particular group and thus be forced to meet expectations such as those that have been imposed on Moore and Gulotta. As a proud member of the human race, I want to develop empathy for someone who loves her heritage and wants to be welcomed by those who may be more in touch with it.

As a member of the human race, I would like to have a hard time passing by a person who is lying on the grass without seeing if he or she is getting some help. I'm not a perfect human being yet, but checking all the boxes off on the "human race membership list" is enough for me to work on in this lifetime!

JEAN-MARIE ZUBIA
Portland

Open communication

TO THE EDITOR:

I think Mitra Rahnama's letter about what the word "racist" means, or should mean or who it applies to, is well written ["White Guilt," June 20]. I don't agree with some of her points.

I don't think *Just Out* is trying to take "empowerment away in order to make it easier" to deal with the word. I've never found *Just Out* to be particularly selective or excluding of anyone or any group, save maybe Jerry Falwell. (Smile.)

It is about "the word." When the "R-word" is brought up, by anyone of any group, it is the equivalent of a man or a woman in a social gathering "breaking wind" with an ear-shattering, long and oily eruption. Everything sort of stops. All talking and all communication just grind to a halt. People sort of step away.

Just Out is not denying the concept nor the effects past and, to some extent, present of racism, only that the word itself is like the "N-word." And even among African Americans, using the "N-word" is probably not in the best of taste. For anyone but an African American to use the "N-word" around African Americans, he or she damn well better have a loaded gun and be ready to use it instantly, for with 100 percent certainty, a serious attempt will be made on his or her life.

Finally, I would like to point out to Ms. Rahnama that if she thinks that various types of "isms" are not going on within the nonstraight world, then she is very much in denial, and just so she does not miss the point, that includes the world of lesbians of color.

Racists for the most part know they are racists, and they may or may not feel bad about it. But screaming at them, "getting in their face" or haranguing them is not a whole lot different from Caucasians doing the same thing at all those who are not male and white. If there is to be change, there has to be open communication, and neither side can demand that it is "their way or the highway" and expect any improvement.

As a separate aside, people who are seemingly pissed off all the time, like Ms. Rahnama, also miss a lot of the little good things that happen in life. Being permanently angry can become a 24/7 lifestyle, until people do not remember when they were not angry all the time.

P.S. If Ms. Rahnama thinks being an African American lesbian is hard, she should talk to some full-time transvestites or transsexuals in this society, and then she would find out what

Just asking

What do you predict will be the aftermath of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Lawrence vs. Texas*? Should homophobes start waving their white flags, or is this only the first of many battles in Justice Antonin Scalia's so-called "cultural war"?

In 1896 the Supreme Court, in *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, ruled that "separate but equal" accommodations for African Americans were legal. It only took the court 58 years, via *Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education*, to realize how wrong that decision was.

Did that mean the segregationists just rolled over and played dead? Not bloody likely. People like Orval Faubus, George Wallace, Bull Connor, Lester Maddox and Strom Thurmond kept the banner high and resisted the end of Jim Crow for as long as they could.

While I am thrilled that it only took the court 18 years to realize that the *Bowers vs. Hardwick* case was just as wrong, you can bet the farm that the homophobes are going to be just as tenacious as the segregationists were. We have our Antonin Scalias, Bill Frist, Rick Santorum, Pat Robertsons and Lon Mabons to contend with, and you know they're not going to exit quietly.

Lawrence vs. Texas, like *Brown vs. Topeka*, is a historic first step nationally. The war still rages, let's not forget that. Those who forget history are doomed to repeat it.

PAT KERWIN
Portland

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The fun is just starting. The *Lawrence* decision should be the beginning of the end for legislation that aims to discriminate against gay men and lesbians, but I think it'll be a long, tough battle.

Homophobes, particularly those who justify their bigotry by reliance on their religious beliefs, will not wave the white flag anytime soon. The most intolerant person in the world is the one who believes he has the only right

"hard" really is like. Even better, talk with some full-time black transvestites or transsexuals.

JOHN BOYNTON
Vancouver, Wash.

Looking forward

TO THE EDITOR:

We live in a unique time with the positive changes and endless opportunities happening at a rapid pace all around us. The recent Supreme Court ruling is yet another step forward, but it is still not enough.

There is much more work to be done within the queer community to ensure that we continue to move forward. I am encouraged by the many community groups, big and small, young and young at heart, who are committed to a common goal: basic human rights for everyone.

U.S. Sen. Bill Frist, R-Tenn, wants a constitutional amendment to make it a law that marriage is between a man and a woman. He needs to define to me what love is before he decides who should have the right to bond their love with marriage. I would be interested if he, or any of his narrow-minded followers, can tell me what I feel is not love.

Despite the Supreme Court ruling, without a legal document, a simple piece of paper, I am still able to look into the eyes of the man who has captured my heart and say with complete, faithful confidence how much I love him. This is my right as a human being and has nothing to do with my gender.

answer, and the religious right wing fits that description perfectly.

I think in time, logic and objectivity may prevail, but that won't happen soon or easily. In the meantime, we must be patient and persistent and celebrate each victory, no matter how small, as a step forward.

The *Lawrence* decision was a step forward of historic proportions and one that we should value particularly highly. The Supreme Court does not easily reverse its own decisions, and for it to reverse a relatively recent decision such as *Bowers* is remarkable, perhaps even unprecedented. There's hope that maybe we'll learn what our history should have taught us long ago: There's no room in civilized society for bigotry and discrimination of any kind.

PATRICIA HANSEN
Portland

next issue *Bravo's reality television show Boy Meets Boy, premiering July 29, is like The Bachelor but with a twist: Some of the contestants are straight! Is this an interesting and playful social experiment or an insulting practical joke played on gays? (Please see related item on Page 43.) Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)*

There is still so much more work ahead of us to achieve some of the basic rights so many others take for granted. I am encouraged about what the future holds, and I hope we can all come together—queer, straight, questionable—hand in hand to move forward.

Because it affects all of us sooner or later, let your voice be heard and follow it through with some action. One voice can make a difference.

RIC BERRONG
Portland

Equality before the law

TO THE EDITOR:

The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the principle of freedom of association June 26 when it struck down a Texas law that criminalized private, consensual sexual behavior between homosexuals. At its heart, this is similar to a Supreme Court ruling three years ago that limited New Jersey's abilities to interfere with the Boy Scouts' private decisions. Both cases should be applauded by all who believe our U.S. Constitution is a charter of liberty.

Although both cases embrace the same constitutional values, many of those who cheered the first decision will revile the second, and vice versa. That one's position on freedom of association depends on one's position on homosexuality demonstrates how ideologically polarized—and divorced from

Continued on Page 7

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