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Speak Out

The big picture

TO THE EDITOR:

I'd like to add another perspective on Matt Foreman's commentary in the last issue of *Just Out* ["Promise and Peril," Aug. 15].

As he states, "There's never been a time of greater promise and greater peril for our community." I would add that we must see the big picture here. This is about more than our rights. It is about the future of our country.

The Bush administration will use this decision to make a useful political tool of us. Though George W. Bush, Dick Cheney and Karl Rove will never admit it, they love this decision because it is a great way to anger and politicize their conservative Christian support base.

More importantly, the aftermath of the Lawrence decision provides a distraction from the issues the Bush administration would rather not have us talk about. We should be shouting about the administration's catastrophic mishandling of the economy and its attacks on the working class. We should be drawing attention to the administration's efforts to undermine civil liberties and the ongoing attacks on reproductive rights. We should be asking pointed questions about the utter failure to stabilize Iraq and the weapons of mass destruction lies used as evidence to invade Iraq in the first place.

We, the LGBT community, must not let ourselves be distracted. George W. Bush will throw us to the wolves if it will benefit him politically. No matter what he may say, he has no love for us.

We need to band together to protect our rights and those of all Americans. We need to do our part to make sure Bush is not re-elected in 2004.

ROGER NORTON
Portland

Seeing is believing

TO THE EDITOR:

I have just read an article in the Aug. 15 issue that has disturbed me and upset me greatly ["Commissioners to Address Clackamas County at Anti-Gay Church"].

I would like to know one thing: How can any true minister of our Lord and Savior stand up behind the sacred pulpit and tell people they have to deny their sexuality in order to be a Christian? Or to tell parents to disown their sons or daughters?

In my Bible in John 15:9, Christ said, "As the Father hath loved me, so I hath loved you, continue ye in my love."

To me, this means we love each other. We preach love, not hate. When they are telling parents to disown their children, that is hate. That is Satanism.

Wake up. Don't let the blind lead the blind. My Lord called me into the ministry 33 years ago. He knew me before I was born. I did not come out of the closet until I was 54 years old. That was after hours and hours of agonizing prayer.

Just because I came out of a straight marriage and accepted I was gay does not mean that I love my Lord any less or that he loves me any less.

I am not welcome in any church that I used to attend. How I miss that. But I have not preached hate against these people. I did say people. It is people who are the church, not the building.

Parents, stand up for your children. I have a son who told me he was gay before I faced who I really was. I did not love him any less, maybe more. It takes nerve for young people to tell their parents they are gay.

I have four children by birth. None of them turned their back on me. I have grandchildren and great-grandchildren. I thank my

Lord he gave me sense to teach them to love as Christ loves.

I don't know if you will put this in your publication. I hope so. It is time we unite not just as gays and lesbians but as fellow believers. Christ told us to believe in him. Let all true born-again Christians who believe in the love of God take a stand.

THE REV. BONNIE JAMES
Lincoln City

From a distance

TO THE EDITOR:

My family and I would like to thank Don Duncan of Westside Florist for his thoughtful gesture in sending floral bouquets to the residents of Our House of Portland on July 16 ["Flower Power," Aug. 1].

My partner, Lee, is in the photograph just below the article. It is certainly true that these residents (like most people who are institutionalized) are forgotten by most of the rest of us.

The worst part of it all for Lee is not just that health circumstances require him to live at Our House but that the majority of the people who love and treasure him live near Pendleton, 200 miles to the east of Portland! This distance is a terrible burden for family members as well as Lee.

Simple gestures of kindness and concern such as that performed by Mr. Duncan can cause hearts to soar like an eagle, and that is what Lee described to me on the phone the day he received his floral bouquet. The flowers have faded, but the cup with the smiley face is a constant reminder of one human's gentle random act.

Thank you as well from Lee's Pendleton family. We also thank the Creator for the caring and dedicated staff and volunteers at Our House of Portland. We know they do the best they can for their residents, including our bright young star: "Mr. Lee!"

MICHAEL L. MINTHORN
Pendleton

Age appropriate

TO THE EDITOR:

This letter is in response to the "Act Your Age" letter in the July 4 edition of *Just Out*.

The letter was a complaint about the representation of sexual minority youth on the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center's Pride float.

Although we understand that some people may be uncomfortable with some of the actions of SMYRC participants, many of the youth at SMYRC were upset by the criticisms.

Firstly, we do not feel that anyone should feel sorry for us. The youth on the Pride float were not put on "sexual display," as the letter stated. SMYRC youth dress how we feel most comfortable and empowered.

Secondly, SMYRC youth are at a point in life where we need to make our own decisions. This is part of the purpose of SMYRC, to empower LGBTQ youth to make healthy decisions for themselves.

SMYRC is co-run by youth and adults, and any activities that do not follow our guidelines or that we feel are inappropriate are prohibited. We are working hard to sustain SMYRC so that all queer youth who need a safe space can find refuge at SMYRC.

We do agree that youth do need to be protected from sexual predators. At Pride we feel very safe and supported to be who we are, and it's empowering to us to have this freedom.

REPRESENTATIVES OF SMYRC'S YOUTH
STEERING COMMITTEE, STAFF AND CASCADIA
BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE
Portland

Free Bernard Baran

TO THE EDITOR:

I was a reader of *The Nation* in February 2000 when Katha Pollitt first wrote about the case of Bernard Baran. I was horrified to learn that he, as an openly gay teen-ager, had been targeted by the day care abuse hysteria of the '80s and was still sitting behind bars. Vowing to do what I could to help him, I've sent some donations to his committee and have tried to get my friends interested in his case.

Today Bernard Baran is still behind bars, and Pollitt wrote an update about his case in a July edition of *The Nation*. Her comment in her last paragraph is quite telling: "Gay groups won't touch the case—the stigma of pedophilia is too great. All he has is his family and a small band of supporters."

One of the things that makes me proudest in being an Oregonian is our independence and our determination to make up our own minds. I am writing in the hopes that you would want your readers to know about this case so that they could make up their own minds about supporting Bernard Baran in his quest for freedom.

For more information about the case, please

just asking Do you feel the appointment of the first openly gay Episcopal bishop, the Rev. V. Gene Robinson, will cause a schism in the church? Why or why not?

I do not feel that Gene Robinson's sexual orientation will cause any problems whatsoever. He is what I personally believe to be a man of God, and although there have been problems in the past with clergy, I do not get that feeling from this man. I think this is another bold move we are finally making in truly having gay rights!

SHANE DISQUE
Portland

...

I don't believe that this will cause a schism. The love that most Episcopalians have for their church transcends the occasional discomfort of God's call to a life of inclusion and justice. Sure, there will be a number of members and parishes that choose to bail when they don't get their way, but the church, like a

cared-for garden, can only be expected to flourish after a good weeding!

DAVID NELSEN
Milwaukie

next issue Now that U.S. Rep.

Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., has decided to run for re-election, do you feel Sam Adams, Vera Katz's former chief of staff, should throw his hat into the mayoral race? Is Portland ready for an openly gay mayor?

(Please see related item on Page 7.) Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)