

Speak Out

An open letter to Gordon Smith

TO THE EDITOR:

Thank you for sponsoring the hate crimes amendment! You state on your Web site: "The first duty of government is to protect and defend its citizens" and "As hearts in America have changed, so have minds, and our nation is ready for a hate crimes bill to help our government do its duty.... Let's put our government behind potential victims of hate crimes."

You go on to state: "Hate crimes legislation sends a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable. When someone is targeted because of who they are, it is an attack on their entire community and the values of tolerance that we, as a nation, hold dear." These words are a great comfort to me, as I am under attack right now by the federal government and the Bush administration.

Don't you see the correlation between hate crimes and the intense "call to arms" against gay marriages as a violence against my person? What possible harm can my marriage to my wife of 12 years, and the resulting benefits I deserve but am currently denied, have? What harm can this right to marry do to the country, other citizens or children I may have? Can you imagine how it feels to be vilified for the desire to exchange rings; state vows before our God, friends and family; and enjoy the right to community property, health insurance and death benefits? And how can we as a country tolerate a bigoted and selfish amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would deny some citizens the rights enjoyed by others?

The Constitution has ALWAYS been amended to expand civil rights: to slaves, to women, to the disabled. How can we as a free country justify the hateful precedent that would be set by the passage of the Federal Marriage Amendment? And I ask you to please imagine how I may have felt to hear my president declare WAR on me and my wife in his State of the Union address and how that may incite some people to do violence against me. Sticks and stones will break my bones, but denying me basic civil rights will eventually break my spirit. Is this not violence?

Please, vote against the FMA. Thank you for your service to our great state, and please continue to vote for the truths that I believe you know in your heart.

DAHE L. GOOD
Yamhill

Reagan's true legacy

TO THE EDITOR:

Before we allow the media to nominate the late Ronald Reagan for sainthood, let us remember that an entire generation of men and women lost their lives because this man couldn't say the word "gay" or "AIDS." That he chose to ignore a plague when it was still containable. That men, women and children still suffer and die today because of his inaction. THIS is his true legacy, one that can never be ignored or forgiven.

DONALD FINCH
Portland

Different strokes

TO THE EDITOR:

You know, I do respect someone's right to dislike something. However, there are times when I thoroughly disagree with someone's opinion, and this is one of those times.

I am writing in response to a review of Lori L. Lake's book *Different Dress* that was written

by Kathy Belge and posted in your publication [May 21]. A friend from your area sent me the review, as they knew me to be a fan of Ms. Lake's work and thought I might find this interesting. I did.

I especially found this statement interesting. I quote: "What Lake needs is to remember what lesbian romance is really for and to get a good editor who can cut the story in half." Ms. Belge's comment sounded like she was looking for what they commonly refer to as a "PWP—Plot, What Plot?"—a girl-meets-girl, girl-bonks-girl, girls-never-get-out-of-bed sort of story—with sex as the mainstay and an actual plot being in the background.

While I'm sure Ms. Belge has her own definition of what she defines lesbian romance to be—and is certainly entitled to such, as we each are—there are other definitions. While I am interested in the aspect of lesbian romance—the whole "will they or won't they and when"—I do like to have a plotline evolving around the characters.

There are writers out there who focus on the romance involving a little plot into the mix, and then there are writers who focus on a plot and involve a little romance in the mix. As they say, to each their own.

I found *Different Dress* to be an extremely entertaining, decidedly well-written story by a most definitely talented writer with endearing characters who just happened to be lesbians. With such detailed descriptions taking place during each scene, I felt like I was there, going through each emotion, each action, each thought, each feeling as the characters themselves experienced them. I, as the reader, could easily form a mental picture of what was taking place as each part unfolded. I could picture them as they traveled down the road of life, experiencing love, heartbreak and drama in the behind-the-scenes action of the world of country music.

JOYCE MCNEIL
Metairie, La.

Rocking the boat

TO THE EDITOR:

Amazon Dragons Paddling Club would like to thank the community for their support. For 13 seasons the club has been paddling the Rose Festival dragon boat races as Portland's "out and proud" lesbian team. We could never have gone this far without the support of our sponsors: West Coast Bank-Clackamas, Three Square Grill and Barbara J. Pallari Consulting. The club also wants to acknowledge *Just Out*, the Lesbian Community Project and all the wonderful folks who come to watch us race.

Although the Amazons did not trophy this year, we raced well and strong, finishing fifth out of 22 women's teams. We're a competitive force and proud to be a solid part of the lesbian community and the paddling community. In the past the club could boast being Portland's only out and proud team; however, this year we're pleased to welcome the Silent Dragons, a mixed division team made of deaf and hearing signing, queer folks and queer allies, who also raced in the Rose Festival this year.

If you missed the Amazons at the Rose Festival, there are more opportunities to watch us compete. Our next races are July 17 in Kent, Wash., and Sept. 11 at Vancouver Lake in Vancouver, Wash. Please check out our Web site at www.amazondragons.org for more information on our race schedule and practice times.

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