

speak out

just asking Televangelist Jimmy Swaggart said during a worship service that he'd kill any gay man who looked at him "and tell God he died." He apologized after getting complaints from several queer groups, saying the remark wasn't meant to harm anyone. Did the mainstream media do a thorough job covering these events, or were they downplayed?

Swaggart's remarks were so violent, and his audience's reaction was so scary. Obviously, something fishy is up with the media's lack of uproar. Several years ago, when the corporate media were already conservative but were pretty pro-tolerance, this would have gotten more negative press. Now, we have had years of Fox News' conservatives-are-the-only-victims schtick and its effect on pulling the rest of the media rightward.

The right-wing talking heads who dominate the media condemn anyone who criticizes homophobic statements, acting as if it is us, not them, who act as modern-day Joe McCarthys against those poor conservative Christians. They would have acted like conservative free speech was under attack if any mainstream media source made a big deal about Swaggart's comments. Fox and the conservative media constantly get away with lies and distortions, but the "liberal" media never hold them accountable. These same media tried to bring down CBS even after CBS apologized about those forged documents (which were probably planted by Karl Rove). This is how unbalanced things are in the media, as media outlets know they can't even get away with criticizing conservatives about things those conservatives have actually done, such as Bush's AWOL or Swaggart's hatemongering.

TOM SOPPE
Portland

Here is the perspective of one bisexual atheist. We can wish that the Rev. Swaggart

did not advocate the murder of homosexuals with the approval of Jesus Christ. But that is what he said; wishing otherwise doesn't change that. We can wish that the Bible did not advocate the murder of homosexuals (Leviticus 20:13) with the approval of Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:17-18). But that is what the Bible says; wishing otherwise doesn't change that.

Christianity has inescapable murderous intent toward homosexuals, and therefore Swaggart was only following his faith. The problem isn't a misrepresentation of Christianity that requires a sincere apology. The problem is Christianity itself; wishing otherwise doesn't change that.

TREVOR BLAKE
Portland

I hadn't heard about this but have found that when people are threatened or wrong about an issue, they fall back on that favorite childhood coping tool—anger. Many children when they get really angry or frightened will think of the worst thing they can say, and that is to kill something. I have had the experience of hearing many heterosexual grown men respond the same way to gays.

Considering that the mainstream media are also mostly heterosexual, this was probably downplayed. How about the fact that in any given day, Jimmy probably is waited on by a homosexual? How many times a day does he have contact with an unknown number of people besides homosexuals who don't agree with him? There are even Christians who don't agree with him. These evangelists and Christians

need to rethink their work here on earth and that the gays are working right alongside them and even talking to the same God! Think of the power Jimmy is bestowing on these gay men he is so afraid of; to scare such a man of God they must be really something.

ALICE LYNN
Portland

I think the mainstream media do not cover any hate or hate crime enough! It should be just as important a news story as any. In my thinking of "all people are good," if enough of the world heard of all the hate crimes, maybe more would be done. Enough people outraged could make a difference! Hate is hate, whether it is against an African American or a gay man. It doesn't matter.

EVA HOFFMAN
Milwaukee

next issue As Coronation 2004 approaches, the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court has one candidate for Emperor and no candidates for Empress. What's going on here? Does this signal the end of an era? (Please see related item on Page 45.) Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)

affected. They have children who will, not who might, suffer from the measure. That contrasts with those people who want to save society from itself.

MIKE HOLDEN
Portland

Measure 35 bad for seniors

TO THE EDITOR:

When you live long enough to be a senior citizen, you learn that insurance companies, health management organizations and pharmaceutical companies are more concerned about their own bottom line than the health and safety of Oregon patients.

In Ballot Measure 35, HMOs want to amend the Oregon Constitution to limit the power of juries. In cases where health care providers are negligent and reckless, juries would not be able to award more than \$500,000 in non-economic damages. Unfortunately, seniors are often the casualties of negligent and reckless health care. And for retired people who are no longer wage earners, non-economic damages are very important. Each case should be decided on its own merits, not with a one-size-fits-all limit.

Let me tell you about Alice Thomas. She was a piano teacher in Portland. Her HMO denied her surgery ordered by her doctor. Several months later, she lost the use of her right hand. She turned to the courts. A jury looked at the facts of her situation and determined the HMO was negligent by ignoring the pro-

fessional advice of her doctors. She could no longer use her right hand, which meant she could no longer teach piano.

For her loss, a jury awarded her a modest sum. This was a clear case where the HMO put profits ahead of health care. Were it not for a strong jury system, it would have been more difficult to hold the HMO accountable.

If Amendment 35 had been in effect, it could have been a very different story.

Right now, the Oregon civil justice system is the ultimate decision-maker. Fair-minded Oregonians sit on those juries—neighbors and friends, rich and poor, seniors and nonseniors. Unlike insurance companies, HMOs and pharmaceutical companies, jurors have no vested interest in the outcome of a case. This is how the people of Oregon can hold people accountable when they are negligent or reckless.

Supporters of the amendment say it would hold down insurance costs. But when I read the amendment, I can't find any language that describes how rates would go down. What's more, in states that have passed limits, like Texas and Florida, malpractice rates didn't go down. They went up at a faster rate than states without limits.

We can work on real reform and call for public hearings on how insurance companies conduct business. Insurance companies should open their books. Let's have hearings on rate increases the way the Public Utility Commission reviews rate hikes for utilities.

Seniors have learned about sleight of hand. And that's what this amendment is all about: a clever way to save money, disguised as a pub-

lic good. I'm not fooled, and I hope you're not, either.

GENIE UEBELACKER
Oregon Alliance for Retired Americans

Kiss and make up

TO THE EDITOR:

I feel compelled to write after reading Timothy Krause's review of *Kiss It!* in the Oct. 1 issue of *Just Out*. I saw the play on opening night and immediately went home and e-mailed all my Portland friends urging them to go see it.

OK, the ending was a bit long on opening night, but this is a world premiere, and the play is still in development. This new show by Amy Wheeler is delightful. I found it mesmerizing. No doubt they will continue tinkering with it, tightening it even further, but I couldn't take my eyes off it. I laughed, I thought deeply, I misted up a couple of times. There is not a weak link in the ensemble.

And as usual with Stark Raving Theatre, the sets, the lights, the music, everything works together so well that you can totally forget about it and focus on the play at hand. Brilliant.

As a playwright, it is in my best interest to support the only theater in town that ONLY does new plays. I realize that. But believe me, this play is worth your dough, your time and whatever effort is involved in putting yourself in that seat.

SANDRA DE HELEN
Portland

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