

letters

Poor Journalism and Cultural Oblivion

TO THE EDITOR:

I am offended on several levels by *Just Out's* article on the Balm in Gilead service held March 12 at Allen Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal Church ["Healing Service," March 17]. Given time, space and the fact that there is much to criticize, I will limit myself to two issues: poor journalism and cultural oblivion.

As an example of poor journalism: The author of the article contradicts herself. She writes, "The service aimed specifically at African Americans did not address sexual minorities directly nor did any of the speakers utter the words 'gay,' 'lesbian' or 'homosexual.'" In the next column she quotes LeRoy Haynes as using the word "homosexual" and quotes the Rev. Darryl Moch addressing the need to meet the health needs both spiritual and physical of sexual minorities in the African-American community. Perhaps she could not hear what she was not prepared to hear?

The author also wrote, "The service did not appear to draw in members of the queer community," and that same article quotes me, a member of this queer community for more than 30 years. There were others there, but perhaps the author did not know them. Does the definition of "queer community member" depend upon whom the author personally does/does not know? The Balm in Gilead service was for the African-American community, and while others were warmly welcomed, the focus was not Portland's white LGBT community.

Finally, I am most offended by the writer's characterization of the Rev. Matt Hennessee's presentation as a "keynote address" "verging on theatrics." His sermon was presented in a style that has a long history and is much loved by many in African-American communities. A more sophisticated and culturally aware writer might have asked about this presentation style and learned something. Instead, she has angered many of us by her attempt to characterize that of which she knows nothing.

I hope the author will take the time to educate herself. This will require her to attend events with which she is not familiar with her mind open to learning. This means she will need to resist any urges she may have to impose judgments upon the event or the people based on her very limited experience. How dare you allow such arrogance to

potentially divide the alliance that some of us have been working so hard to build. How dare you. You need to apologize.

KATHLEEN D. SAADAT
Portland

Ted Earned the Vote

TO THE EDITOR:

We have known Gov. Ted Kulongoski since 1975 when, as a freshman member of the Oregon House, he introduced legislation to protect gays and lesbians from discrimination. He has been at the forefront of our struggle ever since and was recently featured in a two-page article in *The Advocate* for all he has done and is doing for our community.

Ted showed his true colors on our issues in August 2003 when he broke boundaries and appointed Rives Kistler to the Oregon Supreme Court. Kistler was and still is the only openly gay person to serve as a Supreme Court justice anywhere in the country.

Ted is the only Democrat running for governor who has been endorsed by both the National Abortion Rights Action League and Planned Parenthood. He has long been a staunch advocate for a woman's right to choose and is often called the No. 1 governor in the country standing up for choice and women's reproductive health care.

We urge the GLBT community to stand behind Ted Kulongoski in his bid for re-election. He is moving Oregon in the right direction. Whether it is helping create 100,000 new jobs in his first term, standing by his plan to ensure every Oregon child has health coverage or working to end discrimination against gays and lesbians, Ted shares our priorities and has earned our support in his bid for re-election.

TERRY BEAN
DON POWELL
Portland

BRO Changed the Rules

TO THE EDITOR:

The brewing "perfect storm" in the gubernatorial primary presents a better-than-even chance of a Republican blowing into Mahonia Hall next fall. All the more reason why we need to redouble our efforts to ensure that our local governments remain committed to the cause of furthering

LGBTQ equality. This means we need to be informed—as informed as possible—about every candidate running in our local elections.

We're fortunate to have in our community dedicated and engaged organizations like *Just Out* to help us do this. I know I rely on your voter guide and the Basic Rights Oregon "green light" of a candidate as part of making my decision on who to vote for, at least with respect to LGBTQ issues.

In theory, BRO's green light is not the same as an endorsement. It is simply a pass/fail grade on how a candidate measures up on issues that directly affect the LGBTQ community—issues like whether a candidate supports gay rights, whether marriage equality or civil unions should be extended to lesbian and gay families, whether the candidate will work to help enact laws that speak to these issues and, equally important, whether the candidate has the ability to get elected and, if so, has the experience to be an effective leader once in office. If the candidate impresses BRO as a friend to the community, the candidate gets a green light. Multiple candidates for one office can and frequently do receive green lights from BRO.

But this election presents me with a quandary. BRO has chosen not to greenlight a highly qualified friend of the LGBTQ community in a bare-knuckles, old-school political hack maneuver

that frankly leaves me breathless in wonder at its lack of foresight. It's no secret that BRO is indebted—as is the whole gay community—to the four Multnomah County commissioners who voted to allow more than 3,000 couples to wed a few years back. The resulting backlash aside, BRO has made it clear that Diane Linn gets its unflinching endorsement and support for her role in that decision.

BRO's endorsement of Linn shouldn't preclude it from greenlighting Ted Wheeler. But BRO changed the rules. It created a situation that makes it virtually impossible for any candidate but Linn to receive a green light. As a result of this manipulation, some voters who care about gay rights and other issues confronting the county are deprived of the knowledge that there is a choice of candidates, both of whom demonstrate they care about issues important to our community.

So, if BRO won't stand up and do the right thing on behalf of the gay community, I will. I ask *Just Out* to join me and give Ted Wheeler a green light so that voters can feel comfortable that a vote for either candidate in the county election isn't a vote against gay rights, but a vote about the future viability of our community.

BRIAN R. WILSON
Portland

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