

# Eater's Rights Now!

What's with smokers' sense of entitlement?

**A**s often happens, this new year starts with unfamiliar rules and regulations coming into enforcement. These changes are frequently accompanied by wailing protests coming from the masses. 2007 starts as no exception. The most vocal pissing and moaning seems to come from those being highly offended by the new smoking ban in Portland's Pioneer Square. With great indignation, smokers are protesting that their rights are being taken from them.

Tough shit.

This smoking ban in an outdoor public place is not only appropriate, it also warrants immediate and further expansion. It should extend to all the farmers markets and any and all outdoor events where people are closely gathered together. Specifically, I encourage organizers of Portland Saturday Market to ban smoking when they reopen in March. Why? Because Christmas shopping at this normally delightful venue turned into an adventure into hazardous waste management as shoppers found themselves forced to duck, stand back, fend off flames and gasp from the noxious fumes. Woe to those unfortunate enough to become trapped in the narrow, crowded aisles behind someone who felt the need to light up as he or she slowly ambled through the vendors, leaving behind a trail of wretched smoke and ash. Worse yet, because many smokers seem to not even want the nasty things near their own bodies, they hold the pungent burning objects away from themselves—and directly into the faces, hair and clothing of anyone who happened to be nearby. Dogs, babies, any and all are at risk.

Stepping indoors for a minute, what's with dancing and smoking? Why on earth do people need a cigarette in their hand as they flail and writhe on a crowded dance floor? Good grief, didn't your mother ever tell you that you'd put out someone's eye with that thing?

In addition to the hazards of secondhand smoke, why on earth is it acceptable for smokers to fling their cigarettes onto the ground or out the window when they are finished? What's with the sense of entitlement that compels smokers to believe that someone will always come along and clean up after them? The doorways around my office building are littered with smokers' debris. Smoke it, fling it. It's all a pile of crap.

As a nonsmoker, I'm more than aware that I have my own bad habits and addictions also. I'm fat. I eat too much. But I don't go around spewing food into people's faces, and I don't leave a trail of litter behind me. Trust me, though, I'm sorely tempted on occasion. In fact, I'm thinking of carrying a snack bar in my pocket at all times and responding to the next barrage of foul smoke in my face with a hastily chewed granola bar right back at the offending smokers. As the fantasy continues, I set the wrapper on fire and wave it in the smokers' faces as they glare, push off the smoke and attempt to flee.

I'll pretend not to notice. Eater's rights.


If smokers are concerned about losing their rights, it's because public smoking is rude, messy and inconsiderate. Through inconsideration, smokers have abdicated their rights, not lost them.

**S**everal *Just Out* staff members, myself included, attended opening night of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. It was a fairly enjoyable evening of largely bland and harmless humor and song. It's not as good as some, not as bad as many. In discussions afterward, one staffer expressed dismay over the handling of the "two dads" characters. As portrayed on stage, the gay dads were just as competitive and flawed as the other parents and displayed equally exaggerated bad behavior.

Yup, there were gays acting badly on stage. Quick, someone call GLAAD. This would never happen in real life. In real life, of course, all gay people are perfect. Perfect parents, perfect partners, perfect neighbors, perfect employees. And all with perfect haircuts. Perfect, perfect, perfect. As such, it is only fitting that we always be cast in such a light in movies, TV and theater.

Reality check, folks. In real life, we gays are no better, no worse, no more special than the nongays, other than the fact that we demand to be treated as such. So congratulations to *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* for setting aside concerns of political correctness and putting gays right where they belong—center stage, as flawed and human as the rest of the characters.

**C**ongratulations to Rebekah Orr, who will be leaving Basic Rights Oregon to take a position with the Oregon House Democrats. Details of her new position are available on Page 8 of this issue. Rebekah has been a standout leader at BRO. Her departure is going to widen the gap of leadership at this organization. The executive director position has been vacant for half a year now. What's up with this? BRO looks to our community for funding and support. Our community looks to BRO for leadership. Is it there?

**J**an. 15 will mark the first anniversary of *Just Out's* Gay Skate Night at Oaks Park. This monthly event has been very successful, and the proceeds have been a great contribution toward the success of the *Just Out* Scholarship Fund. Pretty cool, huh? You get an evening of fun and good exercise and in doing so are helping fund the college education of others. The canned and nonperishable food items that you bring benefit Esther's Pantry, assisting families living with HIV/AIDS. Join us Jan. 15 for birthday cake and lots of door prizes. It's a birthday party! If you joined us anytime last year, we hope to see you back. If you've not come before, we hope to see you start off the new year with us. For directions to Oaks Park, visit [www.justout.com](http://www.justout.com). 



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## reflections

15 Years Ago in *Just Out...* volume 9 number 3, january 1992

- The National Association of Black and White Men Together has issued a manual to help the gay and lesbian community explore the issue of racism. It is available at most gay and lesbian bookstores.

- In the first encounter of its kind in the nation's capital, representatives of the gay and lesbian leather and S/M community met with top National Endowment of the Arts officials to discuss attacks on freedom of expression.

- The U.S. military's ban on gays is proper because gays get AIDS and because gay and lesbian soldiers would view straight soldiers as "sexual objects," a federal judge ruled Dec. 9. The odd ruling came in the widely publicized case of Midshipman Joseph Steffan, who was forced to resign from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1987 after he acknowledged that he is gay.

- Oregonians for Human Dignity, the statewide coalition formed to defeat the statewide petition and possible ballot measure filed by the Oregon Citizens Alliance, has changed its name. The committee is now titled Campaign for a Hate Free Oregon.

- Queer Nation members held a Dec. 15 protest during Sunday morning services at Portland's Foursquare Church. Nearly 20 demonstrators wore

### just out



**Voices within speak out**

**L**ongtime lesbian activist reflects on her rich life. The author, a prominent figure in the community, shares her experiences and insights over the years. Her reflections provide a unique perspective on the challenges and triumphs of the LGBTQ+ movement.

pink gags around their mouths and donned pro-gay and anti-Oregon Citizens Alliance stickers as they sat in the front rows during the worship services. They were protesting the church's connections to the OCA.

- Lesbian and gay rights activists are considering legal action following their unsuccessful efforts to obtain marriage licenses during a recent protest at the Multnomah County Marriage License Bureau.

- Tonko Laaksonen, known as homoerotic artist Tom of Finland, died of an emphysema-induced stroke Nov. 7, 1991, in Helsinki. In the course of his career, he saw his artwork go from being unpublished in the world to receiving worldwide recognition. In recent years, Tom of

Finland drawings have been collected by celebrities such as Andy Warhol, Keith Haring and Robert Mapplethorpe.

- Following last May's sold-out, critically acclaimed appearance in Portland, gay performance artist Tim Miller returns to Echo Theatre in *Stretch Mark*, a weird journey through war, the AIDS crisis, growing up, love and trying to make sense of the world.