

letters

No Coincidence

TO THE EDITOR:

I read with interest Marty Davis' editorial concerning the Human Rights Campaign Coming Out Project spokesperson ["Slam Dunk," Feb. 16].

As you are aware, the current spokesperson is John Amaechi, a former player for the National Basketball Association. You suggest in your editorial that his position as spokesperson is more than coincidental with the recent publication of his book, *Man in the Middle*.

Unfortunately, your editorial ignores the great work that HRC is doing for our community and chooses only to criticize HRC for selecting Coming Out Project spokespersons who have some kind of celebrity status.

I suspect you haven't had the pleasure of meeting John Amaechi and hearing him speak. I have. He is eloquent, engaging and entertaining. Because of his history of playing professional basketball and because he is a gifted speaker, he is able to reach segments of our population that are traditionally more difficult to reach. Before you rush to mobilize criticism of Amaechi and HRC, perhaps you should listen to a spokesperson who has a message worth hearing.

The coming-out process is difficult for us all. To criticize Amaechi for sharing his coming-out experiences simultaneously in written and spoken words shows a monumental lack of empathy for people who have yet to come out and for those of us who already have.

Finally, your representation of HRC as an organization that does not recognize grassroots activists and community leaders is entirely inaccurate. Every year at HRC dinners across the country, including the national dinner in Washington, D.C., such activists and leaders are recognized for their dedication to moving our cause forward. I fail to understand how your continued criticism of HRC for the selection of John Amaechi advances our cause at all.

TODD CANON

Portland HRC Steering Committee

Free to Be

TO THE EDITOR:

First of all, I want to thank *Just Out* and West Duncan for the great article "Building a History" in the March 2 edition. With your help in getting the word out to our community, we had a successful conference with meaningful discussion between attendees and panelists.

I would, though, like to clear up one part of the article. I have not transitioned in the work force,

nor am I full-time M to F. My family is supportive or tolerant, and I enjoy being transgender.

Thank you again for the support of *Just Out*. Knowing that you are there to publicly address the needs of our communities has always been important to me.

LINDA BROWN

HRC Diversity Committee, Northwest Gender Alliance

Falling for the Big Lie

TO THE EDITOR:

Imagine my sadness: I returned home from a strategic meeting with Bonnie Tinker about her desire to mobilize people of faith around marriage equality, only to discover the *Just Out* editorial "Basic Rights" [March 16].

In that essay, Marty Davis states flatly: "What became clearer and clearer as the evening drew on was that there are two camps in this battle: Christians and everyone else. Christians fear that they are now the target...."

I was immediately reminded of the notion of the "big lie" in Adolf Hitler's autobiography. He said the general public "more readily fall victims to the big lie than the small lie, since they themselves often tell small lies in little matters but would be ashamed to resort to large-scale falsehoods."

You will, of course, suppose that I am referring to the foolish things these so-called "Christians" are saying to defeat civil unions. No. Sorry. The big lie that interests me far more is the one the media perpetuate: that there are two camps in this battle, Christians and everyone else. Despite the incessant hammering on this theme in the mainstream media, the reality is that people of faith—including but not limited to real Christians—are some of the greatest allies of equality, justice and human dignity.

I refuse to believe *Just Out* is as much a victim of the neocon big lie as the mainstream media outlets, but it's sometimes hard to defend my belief. For instance, your editorial views Tinker through the narrow perspective of a longtime lesbian avenger, as if one could toss the spiritual basis of her ministry into the garbage can. Likewise, during my year on the board of the Community of Welcoming Congregations, we routinely waited for *Just Out* to take a serious look at the role that CWC was playing in organizing people of faith across Oregon to embrace gay believers, to counter hate and to promote just legislation. An expression of interest by *Just Out* simply never happened.

For the record, people of faith have been defenders of our right to love for two centuries.

TRANSITIONS

Dawn Louise Wicca, 1953-2007



A Quaker memorial service was held March 31 at Trinity Episcopal Church in Portland for Dawn Louise Wicca, who died of complications from breast cancer March 17. She was 53.

Dawn Smith was born Sept. 20, 1953, in Ravenna, Ohio. She moved from Tallahassee, Fla., to Portland. In 1977 she married her first husband, Tom Brenholz. In 1993 she married Kirby Urner.

Wicca, a bookkeeper, was active in feminist, lesbian and nonprofit organizations dating back to the 1970s. She was actively involved with A Women's Place Bookstore in Portland and the Feminist Women's Health Centers in Tallahassee and Portland, was a part of the Lesbian Feminist Study Group from 1981 to 1983 and started a support group through the Lesbian Community Project called Lesbians Married to Men. She was also a bookkeeper for the Oregon Federal Feminist Credit Union.

Survivors include her husband; daughters, Alexia Davis and Tara Urner; brother, Sam Smith; and sister, Carla Lovetere.

Brian Gregory, 1961-2007

Portland resident Brian Gregory died of heart failure March 24. He was 46.

Born in Reno, Nev., Gregory moved to Portland in the early 1990s and worked at Pendleton Woolen Mills for the past 13 years.

In England, philosopher Jeremy Bentham wrote reams of suppressed manuscripts that constituted a legal defense of same-sex love. He hoped his liberal theological tract, *Not Paul but Jesus* (1823), could be expanded to make our case from the perspective of faith. Unfortunately, he could not publish these views.

At the same time in France, socialist Charles Fourier—using some trappings of Christian theology—argued that it was demonstrably harmful to suppress lesbian and gay love. The numerous Fourierist communes that sprang up across America in the 1840s and 1850s were looked upon as hotbeds of "abomination," according to Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *Blithedale Romance*.

Simultaneously in America, the Quaker religion was shaken by a culture war over sexual freedom. Radical theologian Elias Hicks argued that *all* human passions were created by God, in order to lead humanity to a knowledge of God's love. Hicks taught that human conscience has access to an inner light from God that trumped the "thou shall nots" of the Bible and the church—and, as a result, that no believer has the right to impose a kind of moral slavery over his brothers and sisters. The same light illu-

minates a work by Hicks' most ardent follower, Walt Whitman. For all the subsequent generations, while our people struggled in darkness, *Leaves of Grass* (1855) survived as a spiritual touchstone.

Look up the biography of a great gay lib leader, the late Jack Nichols, and you'll see what I mean in his frequent references to Whitman. During the past 10 years, I've also articulated this position several times during various hearings for our rights.

I have been saying it and I will keep saying it until gay and straight people alike finally get it: Bullies believe that they must oppose love between two men or love between two women because that love leads away from God. The true Christian, on the other hand, understands that our loving relationships are our most powerful experience of God's love, and therefore interference with same-sex relationships is an interference with the sacred and the holy.

To the bullies, we say: You will not interfere with our freedom of religion for very much longer. In the words of Susan B. Anthony (another lesbian Quaker), "Failure is impossible."

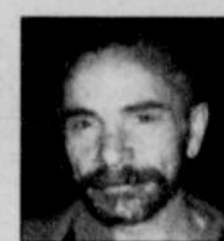
Remembrances can be made to the Friends of People with AIDS Foundation, P.O. Box 4014, Portland, OR 97208.

A memorial page has been set up on the Oregon Bears Web site, www.oregonbears.org. Friends are encouraged to visit and write an entry.

A celebration of life will be held 2 p.m. April 15 at Gail's Dirty Duck, 439 N.W. Third Ave. A private family memorial will be held April 21 at his home.

Remembrances can be made to the Friends of People with AIDS Foundation, P.O. Box 4014, Portland, OR 97208.

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