

Should we be providing the best care possible for our children whether their parents can afford it or not? You bet! Should we be doing things to encourage less use of tobacco products? You bet!

But raising taxes on cigarette smokers to pay for our children's health care seems almost irrational to me. It also seems unjust and unfairly punitive. I can't think of one smoker I know who wouldn't have already quit if he or she could. Why should they bear this burden? Health care for our children is something for which we are all responsible.

Yes! Let's provide health care for our children! If we really wanted to, we could find a way to fund and pursue these programs. However, let's not pay for it on the backs of fellow citizens who have had the misfortune of giving in to the stronghold of tobacco addictions. Doing it this way seems as wrong to me as not providing health care at all.

KELLY MCFARLAND
Portland

Fight for Your Right to Be Here, Queer

TO THE EDITOR:

I recently returned home after the anti-fascist rally.

It was fantastic! I would estimate the crowd at 200 or more concerned people, which was great, considering that most of the people I talked to about the event had no idea it was happening. Thank you, *Just Out*, for your blog post; you were one of few media outlets to publicize, and it was very helpful.

There we were in the cold park, getting riled up at the prospect of (once again) facing the neo-Nazis and taking them down. Great, right? Well, mostly. I had two issues, and I feel the need to share them with all of you.

First, as an organizer, I can't help but wonder why more progressive groups weren't there with literature. We had so much righteous anger. Why was no one there to direct us into meaningful projects? I saw representatives of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the YWCA and Radical Women, but none of the three was recruiting. At the finale of the rally, we were encouraged to disperse quickly and in groups. Where was our time to discuss all that we had heard? To talk about what actions we could take? I'm sure all of the activists reading this will agree and also shake their heads at the wasted moment.

More importantly, the crowd was overwhelmingly young and white. Go young white folks, and welcome to the delightfully racially diverse town of Portland. Where was everyone else? *Just Out's* readership is primarily older than 35, right? Where were all of you? Why was the crowd largely anarchists, punks and the like? Is fascism no longer relevant to "normal" people older than 35? The white middle class? I'll give ya the benefit of the doubt that the advertising wasn't splendid, but we all knew about it, and I knew about it from this very publication. Those of you who were in Portland, even Oregon, 15 years ago saw what happens when our city is overrun by skin-heads. We are not safe if they come back in any force and are allowed to gain confidence. Not the GLBT, not the self-identified queer, not people of color, not Jews, not any of us. They don't tell you who they are, and our city is already teeming

with them, maybe next door? At work? At the gym?

The young, anarchists, punks and freaks aren't going to be able to hold them back alone, and we all have the responsibility to be proactive. Times are likely going to get worse before they get better, and the fascists are an indicator of that. We all need to get involved. Devote your funds, and be great philanthropists. Talk to your friends, shake your heads, but more importantly, come to the rallies, volunteer at Q Center, show these bastards that you aren't afraid and that you are capable of joining the community and fighting for your rights to be here and be queer!

HEATHER WILKINSON
Portland

Downright Poetic

TO THE EDITOR:

Just a quick note to express my thanks for your frank sharing of your thoughts on race, racism and all the work we, all of us, still have to do ["What's in a Name?" Oct. 5].

Regarding the street name, when my husband and I moved to San Francisco in '97, the only apartment we could find happened to be on César Chávez Street. It was not always called that. It used to be called Army Street. In fact, we arrived shortly after the name change, after all the street signs had been changed but before the Thomas Guide and freeway off-ramp signs were. I had to know to get off at the Army Street exit to get to César Chávez and home.

From what I could gather, the name change and the discussion that surrounded the name change were contentious and painful. Having recently arrived, I did not hear that discussion, but I could sort of feel the aftermath and the lingering resentment. Being a newcomer, I did not feel any kind of ownership of any particular name, so I had no bias upon arrival.

I must say, however, that I began to like living on César Chávez Street. It is so much better, from my political perspective, than Army Street. Every time I wrote César Chávez Street on the return address corner of an envelope, I was glad I was reminded of—and was reminding others of—the proud history of resistance to oppression that Chávez represents. He is a great hero to working people, to working families, to "brown" immigrants who toil for the American dream (I am descended of such) and specifically to Latino communities who are part of our communities. I would hope that our Latino brothers and sisters would support naming a street after a queer hero or heroine in celebration not only of brave leadership but also of ideals of fairness and equality. I, for one, am very willing to celebrate the bravery and decency of a man like Chávez, a symbol of goodness and hope for my own community.

"Interstate" is a nice enough name for a street, but "César Chávez" is downright poetic. To label our thoroughfares "Martin Luther King" and "César Chávez" is to live with daily reminders of our highest hopes and dreams for our society. These names signify our willingness to stay open to growth and change, to embrace our differences, to remember others' oppression and to remember that their fight is our own.

PAUL FUKUI
Portland

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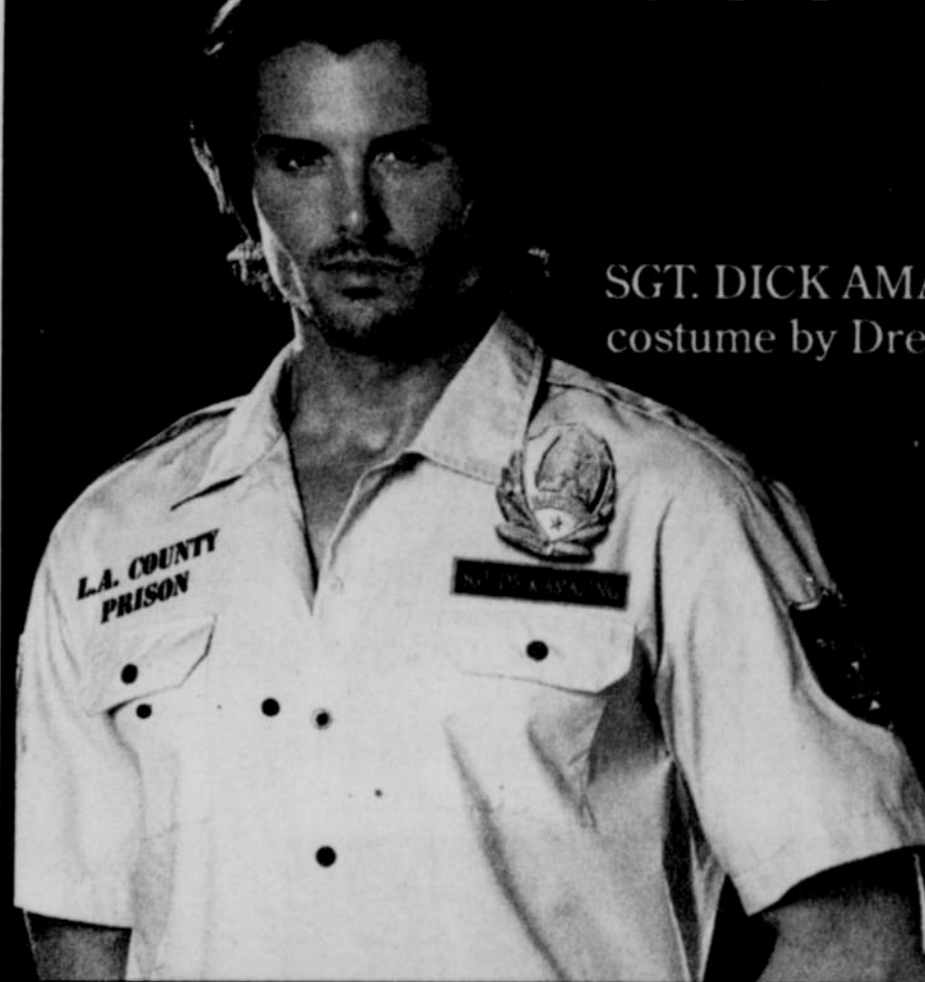
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