

letters

SMYRC Youth Underwhelmed

TO THE EDITOR:

For years I have read articles in *Just Out* about the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center. Yet, I never really gained the courage to submit an article based on the opinions of a SMYRC youth and how they feel about the services SMYRC provides.

I have been attending SMYRC for about six years. I have gone to countless workshops, groups and steering committees, disconnected downspouts for funding, helped teach workshops at the Oregon Queer Youth Conference two years in a row, gone to numerous drag events and written a letter to the Multnomah County commissioners in regards to funding for SMYRC, and yet nowadays it feels as if it means nothing.

Years ago, if asked, I would have praised the services/experiences I had as a youth, but today if you were to ask me how I honestly feel, I would tell you I am amazed at the direction SMYRC has gone.

Youth are only allowed to leave once and come back. If SMYRC staff feels as if you have been involved in drama, you will be asked to leave for the night, and then if it happens again you are gone for a month and so on and so forth. They kick you out for even playfully saying to your friend something like, "Don't make me slap you." If you try to tell them your side of a story, they don't seem to listen. They claim to provide counseling service, only to be told if you are in a state of extreme depression, "Here's a card—call the number and talk to them."

I've noticed that one group of people is valued and respected over others. It's like if you don't look or act a certain way, then you are a bad "queer." I have also noticed an increasing level of reverse phobia. It's not OK to say homophobic comments, but it's OK to say heterophobic comments. When brought up to certain staff, they don't really seem to value your concerns much.

Recently a really well-respected town official graced SMYRC with his presence and I heard how wonderful of a job certain people have done for SMYRC, including myself, only to feel as if it was just another way to let others see how well they are doing as an organization set up to help the LGBTQ youth population.

I know a lot of people are probably reading this going, "Why the hell would you attend a place like that for so long?" In all honesty, I have asked myself that same question. I figured everywhere you go in life, things and people will change and if you honestly care, then just go with it. Give back to the

new generation what the old one had. Only it hasn't seemed to have quite worked out that way.

DOMINIQUE DAVIS

Portland

Creative Slaves

TO THE EDITOR:

In an Oct. 9 editorial, *The New York Times* commented on the recent move of Altria Group, of which Philip Morris is a subsidiary. Altria is decentralizing by moving out of New York and spinning its international tobacco division elsewhere, to create new smokers outside the United States. This is so important because Altria is taking its arts funding away.

For four decades, Altria has funneled more than \$210 million into the New York creative culture. Nonprofits such as the American Dance Company, Whitney Museum and Alvin Ailey Dance Company have benefited from Altria's generous giving. Of course, Altria Group is not the only corporation that uses its profits to fund the arts.

We in the arts are conditioned to receive money and gifts from benefactors. We are passionate and deeply believe that our creative spirits would be crushed if we focused on our craft as a business instead of this wild passion. For the most part, we cannot balance our checkbooks, work up a business plan or talk to others outside our industry. We have become slaves to our society. We have actually come to believe that we must ask for donations to survive. We have not been educated to look at our craft as anything other than a creative endeavor that, if the gods look favorably on us, will allow us to continue—just one more month, season, performance.

With this mentality, we have limited ourselves. We have created a patron-slave mentality that has to stop because, as good as the funding is, it is really hurting us.

It is time to take up the MBA mentality and learn that we are, indeed, businesspeople. We have a vision, a mission and a product to sell. It is time for the art schools and universities to not only teach the various creative skills but to teach how to make money.

In Portland there are thousands of artists who do their art part time. Their "real job" is waiting tables, working as baristas or something else that pays the bills but takes them away from their passion—art. And we accept this.

Some individuals have taken the task of kick-

ing creatives in the butt and getting them to focus on art as business. Portlander Adrienne Fritze is focusing her efforts in a course called the Guerilla Exhibitor (www.workingartistsonline.com). During the course, she asks students to analyze what is holding them back and helps them go forward as working artists. They focus on marketing, finances and the legal aspects of our profession. I truthfully don't know of any program like this one.

Creatives need to think of their work as a business that makes money, not a passion waiting for a patron. And to become a business, one has to do what the big dogs do. It's that simple.

BARBARA HART

Vancouver, Wash.

Who's Afraid of Bears?

TO THE EDITOR:

How nice to see all the coverage of Coronation 2007 ["Crowing Achievement," Sept. 21]. I'm sure our new Emperor and Empress will do a fine job for the community.

I find it really strange, though, that there was no coverage at all of Beartown in June. The Oregon Bears is one of the largest bear clubs in the country, with a membership approaching 350, and Beartown is an event that is attended by people from all over the world. Mr. Oregon Bear and Mr. Oregon Cub are elected during the event, and hundreds attend and vote. Yet, no pictures, no mention in *Just Out* at all. Why is that? Is it because the guys are big and hairy? Or just because they are guys?

Anyway, nice to know we have new titleholders. I'll keep checking *Just Out*, Portland's newspaper for womyn, for all my lesbian event and Imperial Sovereign Rose Court information.

JERRY STUART

Milwaukee

Fat Is a Handicap

TO THE EDITOR:

Marty Davis' "note on the billboard" about the Kaiser Permanente Thrive outdoor advertisement with the headline, "I will not be part of Generation XXL" reminded me once again how lesbian-centric your rag is ["Learn Your Rights," Oct. 19].

Get a grip. Being overweight might be a right to you and yours, but to health professionals, it's a health issue because it affects quality of life and health and, eventually, death. Our bodies become overweight for two reasons: We eat too much, and we exercise too little.

My father-in-law, a physician, after meeting my very obese lesbian friend, asked, "How long has she been pathologically obese?" This question came from one of the most objective, caring and gay-friendly men I have ever known. It was the observation of a physician, a man of science.

It made me realize what a load of crap you lesbians try to push to justify your fat aesthetic. Yes, some people are genetically predisposed to put on weight. So what? I am genetically predisposed to bipolar disorder. I still have to control it in order to function successfully in society. Fat is a handicap, and anyone who disagrees does not live in the real world.

I'm sure you know how unfair society is to fat people. Allowances must be made to accommodate fat people. Wheelchairs are now made in super-sizes because so many fat people are so much fatter than ever before.

I find it symptomatic of your isolation in your lesbian world that you trash the most successful and admired health promotion campaign of all time.

Heart disease is the biggest killer we have. Being obese is the biggest risk factor if you have heart disease. If you don't have heart disease, obesity causes all kinds of other health complications. Please stop taking this ridiculous and dangerous position and urge your sisters to get their bodies into a healthy condition.

"You're not my frigging mother, back off. OK?"

Tell it to your therapist. Don't push your bad health ideas under a pretense of freedom.

JEFFREY SMITH

Portland

CORRECTION

In an Oct. 5 obituary, *Just Out* misidentified the college where Reese M. House instructed. He taught counseling at Western Oregon State College.

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