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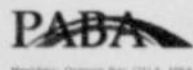
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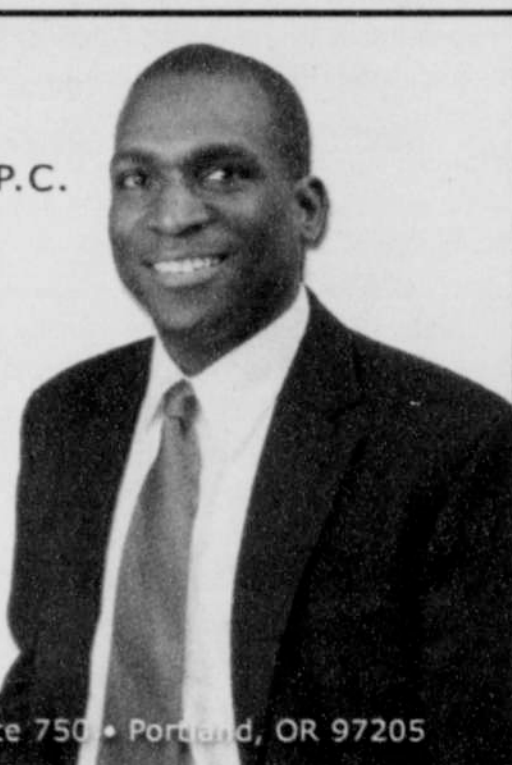
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culture

The Bear in the Square

Mr. Oregon State Leather 2007 speaks about integrity, masculinity and spanking

by Wayne Bund

The rushing whistle of espresso being prepared is only white static compared to the crashing cacophony of sounds that is the hustle and bustle of the Pioneer Courthouse Square Starbucks. I am taking a seat in a quiet corner of this maelstrom of activity with Ben Brown Jr., aka Mr. Oregon State Leather 2007.

With a thin, black beard that graces his faces, he shows up all dressed in black. He is adorned with his favorite piece of leather, a vest that Mr. Oregon State Leather 2005 Jeff Landis gave him as a gift. An invested member of the leather community, a practitioner of B/D/S/M activities and a board member of the Oregon Bears, Brown does more than just wear leather, he emotes leather. He waxes leather poetic.

Here he is in his natural environment. A proud employee of this Starbucks for more than three years, he says customers refer to him as "the bear in the square." On the recent Friday morning I interviewed Brown, it had been 96 days since his Aug. 4 appointment as a titleholder. Despite his busy life preparing for a holiday show, he took the time to talk with me over some Starbucks beverages.

Wayne Bund: In your acceptance speech you said, "Integrity is a word that is often bandied about as a noble goal, yet too often, it is overused and abused to the point where people stop caring or listening."

Ben Brown Jr.: And that's absolutely true. A lot of people take integrity to only mean one thing, and I take integrity to mean to mean a great many things. One thing is self-respect and respect for others, regardless of your viewpoints. I don't think there's enough of that in the community—that people just step back and stop thinking about themselves. Doug Watson, former president of the Oregon Bears...said it's never about the titleholder, it's about the community. I really want people to find their own sense of that word.

WB: How do you serve the community with integrity?

BB: By being honest. By volunteering for things in the community I know I am overcommitted for. By reaching out to others, by looking for similarities and not differences. By admitting when you're wrong.

WB: On your MySpace page, you talk very proudly about your bear triad with Travis and Patrick. How would you describe that?

BB: I recently got a tattoo, and my tattoo artist said, "It sounds like 1 1/2 times the work." I said, "No, it's about 3 1/2 times the work." It's wonderful, absolutely wonderful. Patrick came into our lives only just this last year. I've known my old man



Ben Brown Jr. would like to see the Oregon Bears recognized for all of the positive things they do.

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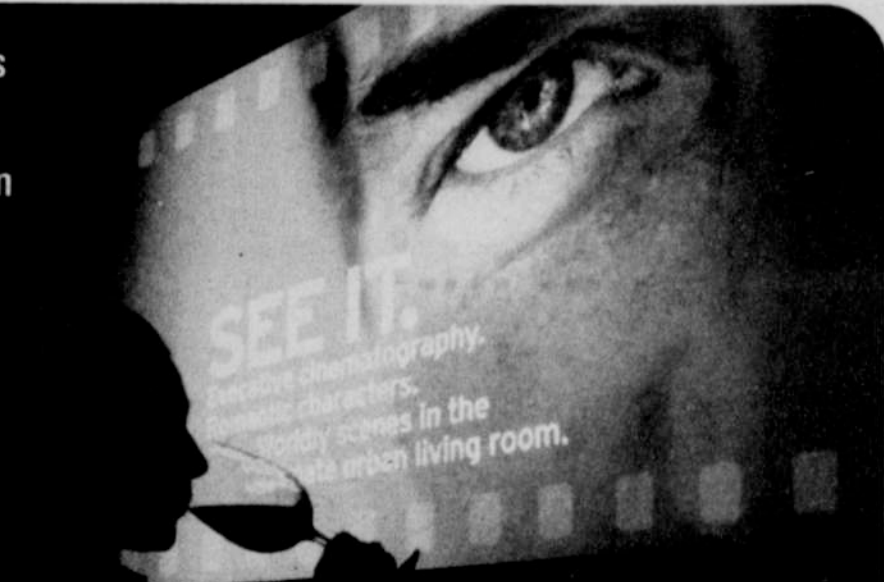
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