

letters

PFLAG Loves You

TO THE EDITOR:

Do you love Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays? There is a "kicker" tax refund coming in December. Consider donating a portion of your refund to help us for \$10, \$20, maybe more?

PFLAG Oregon State Council is working to develop chapter leaders and chapter representation all around the state. We are committed to bringing our LGBTQ support, education and advocacy mission to every Oregon family, across generations and cultures. This is a tall order! Your donation will help us make a significant difference as we serve Oregon communities.

Send checks to PFLAG Oregon, P.O. Box 8944, Portland, OR 97207-8944. PFLAG Oregon is a 501(c)3 all-volunteer nonprofit, and donations are eligible as tax-deductible.

PFLAG loves you!

PATRICIA KEENEY

PFLAG Oregon Outreach

Ironic or Clueless?

TO THE EDITOR:

I often read *The Oregonian* as much for irony as I do news. Now I find that *Just Out* offers the same treat.

Take the Nov. 2 issue. The cover story is about the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a concept that was original, creative and relevant 25 years ago ["Sisters of the Revolution"].

Turn the page and we see the pic of Pat Lanagan's NoPo Eagle sign trumpeting his perception of *JO*'s narrow portrayal of gay men. Next to it are Marty Davis' comments sharing her ongoing cluelessness ["Friends in Need"].

Turn the page and we find a letter from Jerry Stuart pointing out that *JO* failed to cover one of the larger gay events in Portland this year, a bear event ["Who's Afraid of Bears?"]. Rich. I can't wait for the next issue.

GREG SMOOTS

Portland

Our History

TO THE EDITOR:

I applaud Marty Davis' open attempts to explore her inner racist to vet out the feelings from the backlash of defensiveness ["What's in a Name?" Oct. 5].

Instead of trying to figure out if she's a racist or not (hint: We all have race-based bias and places of privilege, power and oppression from which we

operate), perhaps she could go even further with her analysis.

She feels disempowered and neglected. Flip it around and watch where your privilege takes you. We whites take for granted that people will listen to us, that what we say holds weight.

This is not, to me, about a street name at all. It's about whose stories we are telling. It's about who is entitled to write history...and who is not.

It's about how we interact in community.

SANDY BACHARACH

Portland

Who Was César Chávez?

TO THE EDITOR:

I am only an occasional reader of your paper (there are not a lot of places that carry your paper where I live), but I feel compelled to respond to the editorial in a recent issue concerning the renaming of Interstate Avenue as César Chávez Boulevard ["Learn Your Rights," Oct. 19].

This is not an issue about which I am particularly concerned, and I'm still not exactly sure why your editor has decided to write about it, since it does not seem to be of particular interest to the LGBTQ community.

Nonetheless, I found the editorial to be both offensive and indicative of a troubling ignorance among your staff (or perhaps just your editor). The letter that you printed from Molly Franks seemed like a step in the right direction. Even for someone outside of this particular debate, it was instructive to read. Then comes this sentence from the editor: "As the gay, lesbian, bi and trans community matures and become a seasoned and knowledgeable force, I see that it could now be our time to take the emerging Latino community under our wing and share with them lessons learned as they, too, fight for recognition and civil rights."

Is it possible that you are unaware that the Latino community is not emerging at all, but has been fighting for its rights in this country at least since the time of Columbus? Do you even know who César Chávez was? I am sorry, but to say that the LGBTQ community has anything to teach anyone about fighting for our rights is really absurd, considering how young we are as a movement. We still have a lot to learn (as the recent Employment Non-Discrimination Act debacle shows) about working together, creating solidarity and being inclusive.

I want to make it clear that this paper's stance does not speak for the entire LGBTQ community and to apologize to any Latinos who may have read

TRANSITIONS

Neil Johnsen, 1956-2007

Community organizer and activist Neil Johnsen died in the early hours of Oct. 30 after a long battle with cancer.

Johnsen, who identified as gay, was a leader in HIV/AIDS awareness projects in his hometown of Vancouver, Wash. He helped create resources for those living with HIV/AIDS, such as Martha's Pantry, a food and commodities bank, and LifeForce, a resource center that predated Cascade AIDS Project. He also helped organize some of the first Gay Pride events in Vancouver.

Johnsen served on the board of directors for the Southwest Washington Consortium on HIV and AIDS. He also worked with the volunteer center at the health district, encouraging volunteers to assist those with HIV/AIDS with everyday household chores and grocery shopping.

"There are so many things he has given to the community. He was amazing. He was the type of person that had his fingers in everything," said Johnsen's friend Greg Truluck.

Johnsen's daughter Sarah-Jean Johnsen added: "Nothing in this world mattered more to him than friends and family. He would have bent over backwards for any of us, and did on many occasions. He was a wonderful person and amazing father."

At Johnsen's request, there will be no funeral services in his honor. Memorial donations can be made to Martha's Pantry.

Johnsen's friends and family met Nov. 11 at Northbank Tavern to remember him. A fundraiser will be held in his honor in 2008. For more information contact Mike Audette at mike.audette@comcast.net.

this editorial and thought otherwise.

Please, *Just Out*, bone up on your history before you write something else that displays your blatant, privileged ignorance in a public forum. This is embarrassing for all of us.

NELLIE BOYD

Hillsboro

Outgrowing SMYRC

TO THE EDITOR:

This letter is in response to Dominique Davis' letter regarding the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center ["SMYRC Youth Underwhelmed," Nov. 2].

I'd like to start by pointing out that Davis is not the Lorax of SMYRC youth. I've been a SMYRC youth for four years now (maybe five, who knows), and when I read Davis' letter I was outraged by how ungrateful Davis sounded.

When I first started going to SMYRC in high school, it was the highlight of my week. The hour-long bus ride twice a week after school was well worth it. SMYRC helped me come out of my shell. I became more social, respectful and involved in my community. I don't think Davis recognizes how those workshops, letters and drag shows helped shape who we as queer youth are and in turn how we shape SMYRC.

SMYRC's foundation is its youth. There is a weekly open meeting called "steering committee" that constantly evaluates SMYRC and watches it evolve. At steering committee, if youth have an issue regarding SMYRC that they want to discuss, they are given the opportunity to. Sometimes these discussions result in a change in the rules at

SMYRC; sometimes it's to plan a fund-raiser, to organize a trip, etc.

If Davis has an issue with SMYRC, Davis should bring it up at steering committee rather than pretend to represent all queer youth in bashing SMYRC. If Davis has brought these issues up before and nothing came from it, maybe they are only issues according to Davis. Maybe other youth don't feel this alienation, because if they did then they know they have the power to change it.

SMYRC is a hate-free zone, so of course there are rules to enforce respect! Telling your friend, even jokingly, that you're going to "slap them" isn't respectful! SMYRC might seem strict to some, but it's for the safety of the youth and SMYRC. From my personal experiences, I believe SMYRC staff and volunteers do listen to everyone's "side of the story," and just because they don't agree doesn't mean they don't listen.

Personally, I've grown out of SMYRC. I go there once in a blue moon to see how it's changed. I've made countless friends from SMYRC; many of them still go to SMYRC for its resources, and many of them don't. But they all acknowledge SMYRC as a part of their growing-up process, and they respect SMYRC for what it's done for them.

It sounds like Davis has grown out of SMYRC, which is fine. But Davis should appreciate what Davis got out of SMYRC. SMYRC does a lot for its youth, and I think that if you went into SMYRC and asked the youth how they felt, you would hear a different story than what Davis has to say.

MARNI COHEN

Portland

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