

letters

Bound by Gender

TO THE EDITOR:

I read the editorial "Say It Loud, Say It Proud" by Marty Davis, where gender identity is cited as one good reason for women to vote for Hillary Clinton [Feb. 15].

At the same time, I've been sorting through the reasons why Barack Obama appears to be capturing the white male vote. I believe white men are supporting Obama because men share a bond or kinship with other men, with racial identity being secondary. This has happened due to shared cultural histories of American black and white men. They are: 1) The black influence on American music that began with the jazz age and contributes to our culture to this day and 2) The significant black influence on white men that came about due to the integration of American professional and collegiate sports and athletic programs. Through music, culture and sports, black and white men have shared an increasingly common language, experience and commitment to teamwork that has resulted in mutual bonds of trust and respect. White men came to hold black athletic, jazz and R & B greats of the past century in high esteem, which was extended to our black teammates in school.

Today, I think men (including many gay men) naturally identify with other men in their chosen arenas, whether it be politics or another profession. Partly due to gender roles that limit the scope of men's interaction with women, I've come to conclude men are less likely to identify with the aspirations of women. Men may appreciate the hard-fighting qualities of Hillary, but there remains a gulf between men and women. This is because the two sexes don't typically share common experiences during our formative school years, such as sports, so that men have not developed a nonsexual common bond and kinship with women. It is these bonds and shared histories, between men and between women, that can translate into political support and social movements, seen in this case at election time.

JACK OSTERBERG
Portland

Boys Are Gross!

TO THE EDITOR:

I found the "Page 3" commentary by Marty

Davis to be both interesting and thought-provoking. I couldn't agree more! Since 1789 men have been running this country. As best as I can figure, we aren't any better off now than we, as a nation, were in 1789.

In many respects we are worse off. It's time for a change; men have had 219 years to prove that they are incapable of running this country. Obama may be cute and charismatic, but he is still a man. Yuck!

It's time to give a woman the opportunity. This is one woman who will, goddess forbid, cast her ballot for someone other than Hillary Clinton with great disdain.

RITA BEIGH
Hillsboro

P-G-M-C Spells Fun

TO THE EDITOR:

I think it's important that all of Portland take note of a wonderful asset of the Rose City, the Portland Gay Men's Choir.

I'd never been to see a performance until its holiday program. Wow, so impressive! Incredible performance, some drama, lots of laughs and a huge dose of holiday cheer. My boyfriend and I attended PGMC's *Movie Madness* program March 1; what a fun performance!

I used to think the chorus would be all dark robes, boring tunes and churchlike performances. Boy, was I wrong. Go see a PGMC performance; you won't be sorry!

JON AGEY
Portland

Ambassador for Equality

TO THE EDITOR:

I was thrilled to see an issue that devoted attention to my chosen residence, Astoria ["Coast with the Most," Feb. 1].

Astoria is a charming yet gritty town, a historical yet happening place. When making my decision to live there, I checked the votes of Clatsop County on all the measures that concerned gay people—anti-discrimination measures, the reversal of former Oregon Gov. Neil Goldschmidt's executive order, etc.—and it always voted the "right" way. And it's always felt like an authentic place, not just a tourist trap or a quaint place for people to come gawk.

Efforts to establish a gay presence in Asto-

ria have come and gone, just as they have in Portland and everywhere else. They're on the upswing now, as your article showed.

The article on Astoria also contained a sidebar that outlined the "gay" places in the area. Unfortunately, you omitted one—and it's a prominent one: T Paul's Urban Cafe, a very popular restaurant in the 1100 block of Commercial Street. It has been serving delicious meals and providing music on weekends for about eight years, and it is co-owned by an out gay man, Chadd Paul Flues.

About a year ago the local newspaper, *The Daily Astorian*, featured him and discussed both his sexual orientation and his HIV-positive status. He's heard nothing but compliments and sympathetic questions ever since. He grew up in Astoria and seems to know and be known by everyone.

He has championed the gay cause for years. A while ago, when there was no other venue for gay men, he opened his restaurant to a discussion/support group to fight the isolation that can accompany living on the coast. He participates in the "Bites for Rights" fund raising for Basic Rights Oregon. He keeps the Human Rights Campaign logo of an "equal" sign in the store's window, his staff is totally in the know about him, and lesbians and gay men are welcomed there.

Both the Urban Cafe and the Astoria Coffeehouse, a relatively new eatery, are where gay locals and visitors will most likely be found, as well as at the Blue Scorcher, an even newer, collectively run cafe.

I'd encourage you to amend the report on Astoria sometime in the future and shine a spotlight on this remarkable, down-to-earth, eminently likable man and his cafe and explain that, in many ways, he is the face of gay people to Astorians. He's a great ambassador for equality and integration of gay people into the fabric of our society.

DAVID BENNETT
Astoria

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commitment announcements, transitions
or list your events online at
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TRANSITIONS

Stephen Blair, 1974-2008

The irony is crushing. Suicide ultimately brought arts writer Stephen Michael Blair into the very fellowship he longed for, the "wild artists and intellectuals" with whom he told me he felt most at home. Like Vincent Van Gogh and Virginia Woolf, whose brilliant creative temperaments were coupled with severe manic-depressive disorder, Stephen wrestled for years to subdue his demons in service of his gifts.

I first got to know Stephen over plates of pumpkin curry at a Portland Thai restaurant. At the time, he was writing for *The Portland Tribune* and I was the public relations manager for Portland Arts & Lectures. Our talk quickly veered from business into dishing about literary media whores. I was instantly charmed by his quick wit, unbridled intensity and hip thrift-store fashion. That lunch led to seven years of inspired, devoted friendship.

Stephen showered his friends with his trademark irreverent humor. Whether attending a party as Amy Sedaris' alter ego, Jerri Blank, or showing up for a babysitting gig with "Nanny McPhee" written on duct tape across his chest, his humor and humanity were pitch perfect.

So, too, was his writing. Fortunately, Stephen left us a record of his unique voice on his blog, www.blairfruit.com. I'd encourage any budding arts writer as well as old pros to turn to his work for a tutorial on how to combine summary and critique in whip-smart, engaging prose.

Stephen was born Feb. 5, 1974, and grew up in Vernon, Conn. He graduated from Rockville High School in 1992 and graduated magna cum laude from Bowdoin College in 1996. He died Feb. 28. He is survived by his longtime partner, Drew McWilliams; parents, Michael and Susan Blair; sister and brother-in-law, Patricia and William Lennox, and their son, Eli; and numerous aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

Gifts can be made to the Stephen Blair Memorial Staff Appreciation Fund, Morrison Child and Family Services, Development Office, 1500 N.E. Irving St. Suite 250, Portland, OR 97232.

As for the questions "Why?" and "Why now?"—which many of us close to Stephen are asking—answers may always elude us. That bipolar disorder seemed to seize the reins in the end is little comfort. My heart is with Drew, as we who survive Stephen continue that most essential creative act: the art of living.

—Meg Daly



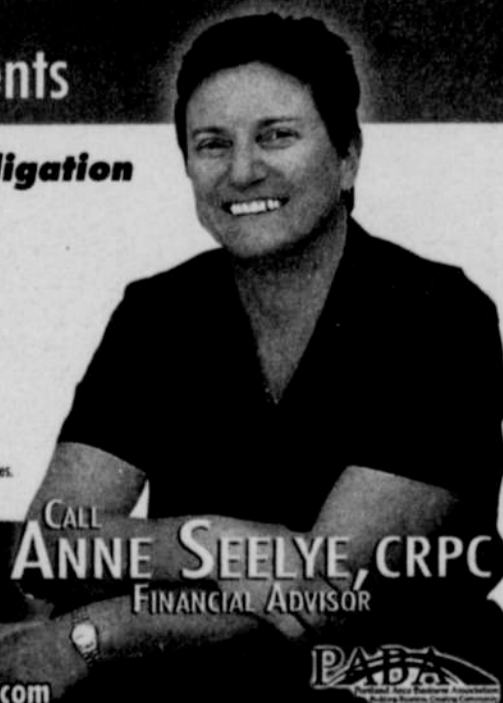
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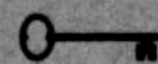
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Squeeze that tube!

Before you throw it out, check to see if your toothpaste tube is still loaded. Most people toss products like toothpaste, shampoo and lotion before the containers are really empty. On average, more than 20% of all toothpaste and shampoo purchased never gets used. Imagine the smaller landfills—and the savings in your budget—if you used every bit, cleaned and recycled the containers.

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ELISE CAMPBELL
Principal Broker
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503-307-1353
Elise@EliseCampbell.com
www.EliseCampbell.com
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