

northwest

Sex Scandal Shocks Queer Portland

Mayor Sam Adams' career hangs in balance after admitting to cover-up

by Stephen Marc Beaudoin and Jaymee R. Cuti

Portland's queer community was turned on its ear when the much-revered openly gay Mayor Sam Adams admitted to lying about having consensual sex with 18-year-old Beau Breedlove in 2005 and coercing him to lie when confronted with rumors circulated in September 2007 by openly gay

chance to celebrate Adams' victory and give him a royal sendoff to his new office. It was unknown by press time whether Adams would attend.

For folks willing to shout out opinions on the scandal without having to pick up a \$75 ticket to that black-tie event, *Just Out's* blog has served as a sounding board, with citizens seeming alternately hopeful and disappointed, shocked and stunned. Gay Portlander Geoff Watland, one of many Adams supporters on the site, wrote: "Consensual sex acts are no one's business, and he never should have been asked about them in the first place. He's admitted wrongdoing, and he's apologized. We need to move on and show a little compassion."

Lesbian blogger Frances Miller's reaction was just the opposite. "What gets me is not just that Sam lied, but the elaborate concoction of that lie," she wrote in an e-mail to *Just Out*. "He wrote a letter to the city saying he was a target of a smear. He said he was a mentor. He said he was innocent of an attack against his character and his

sexuality. How dare he use his orientation as a tool of deceit."

Adams' round of apologies, beginning in a

statement Jan. 19, was triggered by a *Willamette Week* story indicating he had lied to the public when he categorized his rapport with Breedlove as a mentorship.

Breedlove, a 17-year-old legislative intern when they met in 2005, told *Just Out* in September 2007: "My problem at the time is I was struggling with the general stereotypes about being a gay man. Sam was the role model that wasn't the typical gay man. That's what I gained from our relationship."

Adams admitted at a Jan. 20 press conference that he lied about the relationship to get elected. "I encouraged Beau to lie because I didn't think people would believe that rumors that I'd broken the law and had sexual relations with a minor [were untrue]," he said.

Adams maintains that they waited until after Breedlove's 18th birthday to have sex.

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In his Jan. 20 press conference, Sam Adams sounded conciliatory about his actions, saying, "I want to apologize to the gay community for embarrassing them."



Sam Adams' primary night election win on May 20, 2008, was historic, as he became the first elected openly gay mayor of a major U.S. city.

developer Bob Ball. Adams' admission was first revealed to *Willamette Week* newspaper Jan. 19.

The Portland Police Association and four newspapers already have called for Adams' resignation. Members of the queer community seem conflicted, and reaction on blogs, in bars and along Stark Street ranged from unwavering support of Adams to wide-eyed astonishment at the turn of events.

Adams is a long-standing and iconic member of Portland's gay community. In fact, several prominent queer and allied Portlanders have planned a rally in support of Adams at 5:30 p.m. Jan. 23 outside City Hall, 1221 S.W. Fourth Ave.

The mayor may have a chance to face both his supporters and critics as soon as Jan. 31 at the renamed Winter Gala, a benefit for QCenter, the nonprofit queer community center he helped found. The gala, which will take place at The Nines Hotel, was originally envisioned as the city's

Readers React

Anonymous comments from the *Just Out* blog

"Sam Adams lied. He has embarrassed the gay community by his holier-than-thou attitude. Out with the scum."

—Jen

"I don't defend him because he's gay; I defend him because he's human. Who wouldn't be tempted to lie in the face of such prurient prudery?"

—pdxatheist

"I think a backlash is waiting to happen against the gay community because of Mayor Adams' failure to be honest."

—Faithful Queer

"It's disappointing that he lied, but also understandable; he's the right mayor for Portland whether or not he made a very human error in his personal life."

—Devan

"Adams just set equal treatment for gays and lesbians back two decades."

—John Thomas

"Sam, if you're reading this? You idiot. You, more than most, should know that politics is about appearances. There's plenty of less ambiguously young tail to chase after in the world."

—Alan

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