

Breeding Love in the Bathroom

A simple restroom kiss is historically accurate but dangerous for Mayor Adams

Aha! So I'm not the only gay man getting busy with hot dudes in public restrooms. Turns out Sam Adams is doing it, too.

As the entire free world probably knows by now, Portland Mayor Sam Adams—whose name these days is most usually preceded by the word “embattled”—has admitted to lying about having sexual relations with an 18-year-old legislative intern named Beau Breedlove, coaching him to lie publicly about it, then covering it up by claiming their relationship was strictly a “mentoring” one, which Adams also now admits was a fabrication.

Reaction on all sides was boiling hot, but after a few days of brutal media mayhem, Adams decided to return to work Jan. 26. That's the old news. But then, in a recent *Oregonian* interview with Breedlove, came a *shocking* new development in the story.

There was smooching between Adams and Breedlove. In the second floor City Hall restroom. When Breedlove was 17. A *minute-long smooching session between two gay men in a public restroom!* The mind reels.

It's a titillating new bit of detail (especially because Adams' lawyer, Robert Weaver, claims the kiss was *absolutely not sexual!*) to add to the frame, but also a potentially devastating one. Because Adams, in his little bathroom kiss with Breedlove,

however innocent or slight, might have helped drag ancient gay male stereotypes and skeletons back from the graves of the 1950s and '60s and thrown them back into full, shining view.

You know the stereotypes I'm talking about, and Adams does too, because he worked so hard initially to defy and denounce them: the lecherous older gay man who pries on younger men; the gay politician who seduces younger interns (shades of Mark Foley and the teenage congressional pages); the bathroom-trolling queen hungry for some old-school tearoom trade.

To be clear, none of those stereotypes fit Adams. But his simple action in that City Hall restroom brings up just these type of uncomfortable resonances for many people, including a reader over at *The Oregonian's* Web site who identified herself as “thelunchlady” and offered this poignant remark:

“Gay or straight, a man of that age should not be making out with an underage kid! I think of myself as very progressive, but the idea of a 42-year-old making out with a 17-year-old in a men's room is disgusting!”

“Disgusting” is open to interpretation, but at least the Adams/Breedlove kiss was, in some way, historically accurate. The public restroom has long been a place of covert sexual activity for gay men, for as long as restrooms have been public, it seems. They've been a place for scandal (remember dis-

graced former U.S. Sen. Larry Craig?) and, now anyway, for history.

And for me, it was a place of my first sexual encounter with another man. I was 14 or 15, already openly gay in school. He was 18 or 19. We were in a community theater production of some Gilbert and Sullivan schlock, and he took a shine to me during the rehearsal process, and I to him. A few fervent phone calls and one long, anxious car ride with my mom later, I was lip-locked with this gorgeous guy in a little bathroom at some community college corner nook. Did that bathroom smooching transform me forever after as a gay person finally coming into my own? You bet, and for the better, I would say. From Breedlove's account, his City Hall kiss with Adams was just as wanted and valuable.

But there's something else, very painful for many gay men, that Adams' actions have evoked in some circles: the question of older man-younger man relations. Take this comment, from “gbdavey,” posted to a local Web site:

“Defending a man-boy love predator mayor just



Corner View
BY STEPHEN MARC BEAUDOIN

because he's gay is absolutely senseless, and will dilute support for accepting the gay lifestyle as a legitimate, ‘normal’ one we should all accept. Portland's gay community seems to be bordering on defense of the North American Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) by de-

fending Mayor Sam's poor choices.”

Now that's one hell of a damning statement, and sadly, “gbdavey” isn't alone in raising the specter of man-boy love in his condemnation of Adams, who has earned an unfortunate new moniker online, “SAMBLA,” from this whole ordeal.

However you feel about Adams and his ability to move forward as Portland's mayor after the drama of these past few weeks, I think this image might stick around to haunt him for some time: that furtive and fateful bathroom kiss with the 17-year-old. **10**

News Editor STEPHEN MARC BEAUDOIN writes about Portland arts and queer culture at fromeverycorner.blogspot.com. He welcomes feedback at stephen@justout.com.

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