

An appreciation I expect our community to honor. Today, Portland disappointed me.

My boyfriend is Christian, a difficult area of our relationship we struggle with daily. He wanted to attend the new Mars Hill Church. I went with him because I strive to know a whole person, to understand differences in order to appreciate the strengths. So, I went.

The church was welcoming and non-presumptive. The primary message of the sermon was to *connect to* and *understand* the city, and to be good *community* members. Pastor Tim praised Mayor Adams for meeting with the church and honoring it as part of the Portland community. I was happy to see this; I was pleased the focus was on community and respect for one another.

When we left the church, there was a small group of protestors outside. They cursed as people exited and chanted "pro-choice, pro-queer, homophobes get outta here." They wore bandanas over their faces as they shouted at families. As they shouted and cursed at me.

I am pro-choice. I am pro-queer. I am not a homophobe. Some of my closest friends are lesbian. This summer I had the joy of witnessing two of them unite in marriage. My boyfriend attended their ceremony, too. We also attend events in support of Gay Pride.

Yet, here I was labeled and discriminated against for simply being inside of that church. For taking the time to understand a different perspective. There was nothing in the sermon

[that was] the slightest bit anti-gay or anti-Portland. It is a shame that none of the people protesting took the time to figure that out.

We cannot claim to be diverse, open-minded people, and then selectively discriminate. It is the greatest of hypocrisies. Portland should be a great community because people can safely and peacefully express their beliefs and lifestyles no matter what they might be.

There is an appropriate platform for debating conflicting beliefs. Shouting slurs at people to protest a different set of slurs is not that platform. It only stands to perpetuate the negativity that exists. To those who protested, you did more harm than good for your cause. You showed hate for another group of people. You treated others as you would not want to be treated. I shook my head as I walked out, because I knew that those actions would not help my gay friends in their mission to find equality in the world. I try to live by Gandhi's words, "Be the change you wish to see in this world." Condemning others will not free you from condemnation.

As we walked away, I overheard a mother talking to her son. He asked why people had to be angry. Her reply, "People should be nice to each other, no matter what they believe." If only everyone in our community would follow that edict.

Ellie Prpich
Portland

It's a Boy!



Just Out's art director, Aimee Genter-Gilmore (left) and her partner, Natalie Genter-Gilmore (right) are bursting with excitement to announce the birth of their son, Oscar Rocket Genter-Gilmore, born October 6. Welcome to the family, Oscar!



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