

JEFFERSON SMITH

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JO: Boston mayor Tom Menino states he will do all he can to oppose discriminatory businesses, such as Chick-fil-A, from operating in his city. What do you think of his actions, and what would your opinions be on Chick-fil-A operating in Portland?

JS: I am no longer eating at Chick-fil-A. I haven't eaten at Chick-fil-A in a long time. In fact, the last time I ate there was in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And, I will support just about any mayor or working so that the operations in their city reflect the values of their city.

My strong impression is that if there's any city that would spit out a tainted nugget, it is Portland. The best asset the City of Portland has in this is our socially conscious consumer base and activist base, alongside people with microphones who could be helpful in informing the public, so our socially conscious consumer and activist bases could play a role.

JO: You trust Portlanders to take advantage of the teachable moment, so to speak?

JS: Yes.

JO: Mayor Adams has gone to great effort to support transgender inclusion in Portland. Do you see work remaining to be done in how Portland works with transgender people?

JS: I think the city at large still has a way to go, as it relates to medical benefits. The Bus Project (a progressive activist organization founded by Jefferson Smith) last year gave its Policy Pioneer Award to that work. I would ask the transgender community to think of what the best next steps to be taken would be, and to advise the city.

JO: Portland Public Schools is likely to ask Portland homeowners for more tax dollars in the months ahead. Many, many LGBT people have children in public schools. But, far more do not. Historically, LGBT people have not only been discouraged from having and raising children, but have even been told by some to avoid children entirely. Given this particular aspect of anti-gay bigotry, what would you say to an LGBT person when asking them for hundreds more dollars each year to support other people's children?

JS: I would say "please" and "thank you." I would also say that it is in all of our interests to have an

educated community. If we want a community that is as tolerant and compassionate as our city is at its best, we want to invest in high-quality public education. If we want a socially conscious consumer base and activist base that will spit out tainted nuggets, we want strong public education.

Ultimately, our duty is not only to our children, but to our community. And there may be no more important element of that commitment than support for strong public education.

JO: What training do the Portland Police receive on LGBT culture and concerns? Do you see any needs in this area?

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Jefferson Smith

JS: It starts with having a strong commitment, from top to bottom, in a problem-solving, community-oriented police bureau. And that's from Police Chief appointments, to the criteria by which we elevate staff sergeants, to engaging police officers within the community, to community activities in neighborhoods, schools, coaching teams, all along with training.

We would also use the new training facility as an opportunity to update training practices. Police training is vital. And, that's not just with the LGBT communities but, for example, in the school district in which I live they speak 73 languages. So, clearly the training of a modern police force needs to reflect the reality of modern policing, which means being able to build relationships with a more and more diverse community.

JO: Many Portland minorities have neighborhoods historically associated with them. But, arguably Black and LGBT neighborhoods in Portland, such as Northeast Albina and Southwest Stark, have been largely eliminated by gentrification over the past decade. Do you see the city as having a role in addressing the impact of gentrification on minority cultures?

JS: Yes. I believe the city plays an important role. And, this city should work to make a commitment to seeing the whole picture of the city, and to recognizing economic diversity.

The city should be investing in improving neighborhoods. It's a good thing. And, it's a bad thing if we under-prioritize addressing displacement, which will always be hard.

I'll give you an example where we could have done better over the last 20 years in seeing the whole picture. Take three seemingly isolated decisions. Decision one: After annexing East Portland, pushing in a bunch of infill housing there in the 1990's. Decision two: Investing in improving inner North and Northeast Portland. Decision three: Failing to invest in basics like sidewalks, roads, and parks in East Portland.

Each of those decisions in isolation has an argument. As for decision one, housing needs to go somewhere, how about East Portland, it's cheaper there. As for number two, in inner North and Northeast Portland there are community advocates who want to get a reasonable share of Portland Development Commission investments, and want to get foot traffic. As for number three, well, investing in infrastructure is expensive. Where are you going to find the money?

Take all these decisions together, and you have 12,000 members of our minority communities moving from inner North and Northeast Portland to East Portland over the past 15 years, and commuting to North Portland to go to church, which impacts everybody. So, you can see we need to see the whole picture of Portland a little better.

Another thing is looking for Community Benefit Agreements. Making sure we have and preserve and set-aside for affordable housing in communities which are receiving public investment. Make sure there are places for people in a neighborhood to have a job in the neighborhood, and have a chance to live in the neighborhood. And, working with community partners in neighborhoods so that we're looking to support culturally relevant institutions and businesses that will strengthen instead of bleach out and homogenize diverse areas of our city.