

Happy Anniversary

A plethora of hilarity for The Gays

This is Living Out's seventh anniversary. Yes, dear reader, seven years ago my jovial take on existence outside the hetero-imperative first came to a news rack near you. Since the autumn of 1999, this paper has graciously hosted a monthly forum for me to share my queer experience and serve up slices of life from the lesbian side.

Wow.

Who'd have thunk there'd be anything left to write about? I mean, now that everything's all hunky-dory in QueerVille. Oh, sure I'm still not permitted to marry my own spouse, get insurance under her company plan or have my civil rights protected by state law, but hell, you can't have it all.

Besides, Eugene is different. Lesbian, gay, bi, trans, intersex, two-spirit, queer and questioning people have it pretty good around here. We've got a mayor and a human rights commission and a slew of organizations who'll stick up for us when we celebrate ourselves and when we get bashed. How lucky is that?

Gay life made us laugh even back in the day. Seven years ago, the first Living Out column shared my adventures as a lucky recipient of a death threat from a local queer-basher. Ha ha, what a hoot.

Nostalgia isn't required, though. Even when Eugene's anti-gay murder incitement tapers off, not to worry. Our town has a performance hall that's happy to import it. Freedom of speech, friends! Forget about yelling fire in a crowded theater. Ya gotta love folks who'll bust their buttons to bring us a singer who tells fans to shoot, burn, and pour acid on gay people. Hard to come by entertainment like that.

Granted, said performer wrote his queer-bashing song years ago. Do we care that he performed it just last month in L.A., or am I too hung up on details?

In reggae's island homeland, gay sex is illegal, so you gotta cut some slack. Besides, America's different. It's been 39 whole months since the U.S. abolished sodomy laws. For old times' sake, though, I'm hanging on to my "Not Tonight Dear, It's a Felony" button. Ah, yesteryear.

Wake up; things are pretty good for us LGBTQ people these days. Naturally, if you're in the military because you want to serve your country, afford an education or even just get out of Dodge, you could be discharged, locked up or beaten to death if someone asks and you tell. But hey, how often does that happen?

It's the good life, now, baby. OK, so local school kids are harassed if they're queer or someone thinks they might be – but only 38 times a day, on average. Big deal if 25-40 percent of homeless youth live on the streets because parents found out their kid is queer. What about freedom of choice, folks? Nobody should suffer a deviant in the family if they don't want to. That's so gay!

We LGBTQ people and our supporters are probably just over-reacting. It's been four long years since trans teen Gwen Araujo's fatal beating, and come on, Oregon is hundreds of miles from where Matthew Shepard was left to die on that fence, or where Brandon Teena was raped and murdered or where Billy Jack Gaither was dragged to his death behind a pickup – all by American queer haters. Why hold a grudge?

Things are different in Oregon. Who even remembers that Roxanne Ellis and Michelle Abdill were duct-taped and shot execution style just down the road in Medford or that Hattie Mae Cohen and Brian Mock were burned alive in their apartment only 45 minutes away in Salem?

It does make ya wonder what incited those killings, though. Dancehall bookers are brave to risk having that on their heads. Anyway, "Murder Music" started more than a dozen years ago. Get over it.

Oh, listen to me go on and on. I shouldn't complain. It's my column's seventh anniversary and hey-hey, ho-ho, I still have something to write about.

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