

# Comic Consciousness

Queer is the new normal

Remember when “queer” was an insult? I guess you can still use it if you’re feeling particularly retro, but in general most people are kinda over it. All those years of outing ourselves and parading through town chanting “We’re here, we’re queer, get used to it!” pretty much worked.

Oh sure, rabid homophobes are still out there committing hate crimes. But let’s not dwell on the backward thinkers who continue to rail against equality. For just a few minutes, could we please ignore the bigotry-denying power-suited patriots who condone as “hijinks” brutal assaults on gay kids? Other than our potential president and those other persistent pockets of prejudice, most folks have moved on.

Thanks to the legions of brave souls who’ve risked it all to reveal who they are, when someone you know (or idolize) comes out queer it isn’t all that shocking any more. Queer is the new normal.

Well, not exactly normal. Not under the law, at least, for one teensy weensy example. But the wheels turning toward full equality are in motion. We’re getting there. Meanwhile, queerness is everywhere and getting more normal every day.

Look around. LGBTQ people are participating in every normal institution – the media, the military, education, religion and, despite all-out bans in 31 of our 50 not-quite-United States, marriage. Queer couples are getting married all the time, even though our marriages have yet to be federally recognized. But with the recent Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that The Defense of Marriage Act, aka *marriage discrimination*, is unconstitutional, even those walls are a’tumbling down.

We are moving forward fast. Latest news is queers are now officially normal enough to be represented in mainstream comic books. Yes, folks, when we say “We are everywhere,” we do mean everywhere. Everywhere, I am thrilled but not surprised to learn, now includes *Archie* comics, bastion of normal American life. Yep, now we’re here, queer and used to it in good old Riverdale, home to those über-wholesome archetypes: Archie, Jughead, Betty and Veronica. Can you get more normal than that?

In *Life with Archie*, issue #16, the popular and out gay character, Kevin Keller, marries his boyfriend Clay. Their interracial military wedding is a gaga gay gala presented as, you guessed it, utterly – if not fabulously – normal.

Looks like the doomsday America’s gay-fearing zealots have been warning us about has arrived. Chicken Little’s sky has fallen. Children are learning that, horror of horrors, queer people are a normal part of our communities – real-life or illustrated. Naturally, the anti-gay One Million Moms group has called for a boycott, but that only makes *Archie* readers clamor for more. No sooner was the boycott announced than Kevin and Clay’s wedding issue sold out.

“Kevin will always be a major part of Riverdale, and we’re overjoyed, honored and humbled by the response to this issue,” says Jon Goldwater, co-CEO of *Archie* comics. “Our fans have come out full force to support Kevin. He is, without a doubt, the most important new character in *Archie* history. He’s here to stay.”

We can’t be stopped now.

*Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow has been here, queer and getting Eugene Weekly readers used to it since 1999.*



## REPAIR MAKES SENSE

We moved to Eugene in November of 2007 because of its arts, culture and outdoors. We also liked the philosophy of “reduce, reuse, recycle.”

I read with interest Mark Gillem’s article [7/19] on 4J school consolidations. It seems that not only does it make sense to refurbish existing schools instead of demolishing (sending to the landfill) and starting all over, but it is actually \$100 million cheaper. HELLO.

As we searched for a home here in Eugene, it struck me that there was a lot of “deferred maintenance” throughout the city. Indeed, the house we ended up buying turned out to be one of these “opportunities” — so it doesn’t surprise me that the schools face the same situation.

The Eugene Chamber held one of its Business After Hours events at the Northwest Youth Corp building last year. Architects were there to show us around and explain the before and after of the building. It was extremely well done — beautiful and functional.

It makes sense to refurbish these schools, adding “repair” to the popular moniker above.

Kim Kelly  
Eugene

## WASTE NOT

If any of your readers usually has just one garbage pick-up monthly, they may be interested in this: If their neighborhood has a choice between Sanipac, Lane Apex and/or Royal Refuse, then this may be their order of preference. For close to a decade we’ve used Sanipac. I can’t remember ever having a problem, so good job, noble waste workers!

However, our neighborhood (City View area) can choose among any of those three haulers, so I gave everyone a call about price.

It turns out only Sanipac is willing to pick up our garbage on a once-a-month basis. (If we have any extra garbage that month, we can call them.) Lane Apex minimum is every other week. Royal requires paying for weekly pick-up. So if you have a small household that lowers your waste stream enough, the price differences can be more than triple.

Let’s go deeper on recycling. As everyone should know, you can’t commingle certain things (e.g., bottle caps). But Master Recycler Dale Kegley escorted me to the Glenwood Receiving Station to show me where to put flotsam and jetsam. It’s a neat place to visit. For example, a diabetic family member has to dispose needles, and the friendly folks there showed us which free laundry soap containers work perfectly for that medical waste.

Thanks to everyone who understands that environmental devastation mandates an unprecedented response.

David W. Oaks  
Eugene

## FEAR OF THE HOMELESS

I attended the July 24 public meeting at Cesar Chavez School on the Opportunity Village Eugene (OVE) proposed for the empty field north of 14th near the school. I

thought the OVE presenters were extremely patient and thoughtful, the crowd not so much. There was an appalling amount of fear of the homeless, and prejudice against them, expressed at the meeting. People were often rude and belligerent, interrupting and heckling speakers. I wondered if this is now considered acceptable public meeting behavior among the middle class.

I also wondered why they think homeless people are dangerous, and if they have any idea how scary it is to be homeless, especially for women, families, the old and disabled. Recently I talked to a middle-aged homeless man, disabled with the use of only one arm and leg. Last month he was attacked on the street by men who took all of his belongings, including his wheelchair.

Housing is a human right, and Eugene has to provide it to the homeless. If every neighborhood in Eugene says “not in my backyard,” there will be no place to put OVE. That’s not acceptable.

Lynn Porter  
Eugene

## COAL TRAIN HYPE

All the hype about coal trains passing through Eugene is a distraction from more important issues and has become a bandwagon cause. I really like the photo (twice-used) of the UO Climate Justice League-kids standing by the Autzen footbridge on Union Pacific’s tracks wearing capes, with their hands on their hips like they’re Superman about to stop a speeding train.

What the young students have failed to realize is that no coal will be rolling anywhere near campus because coal comes from Wyoming, not California or Arizona, and so will be coming via the Columbia River Gorge and Portland, not from Oakridge, Springfield and the east side of Eugene. Coal trains will enter Eugene’s train yard (known as a toxic place already) along the Northwest Expressway, take a sharp curve on the way before even crossing underneath Chambers, and roll west from there through an already heavily industrialized west Eugene, never stalling cars for hours in the Whiteaker like everyone thinks, or making all the kids on campus cover their faces whenever the wind blows and fear the very solidity of the ground they walk on.

The new route to Coos Bay could actually have some short-term positive effects, like help to upgrade those tracks and therefore stimulate the local economy around here and in Florence and Coos Bay (Amtrak to the Coast anyone?). Perhaps a better angle of attack for the No Coal!-trendsters would be the dredging of Coos Bay and how that will affect the ecosystem, or how the water quality at Fern Ridge may be impacted. But in light of everything else already out there happening, this whole coal thing is just a drop in the bucket; personally, I can’t wait for the coal train to arrive.

Aaron Dactyl  
Eugene

## DON'T CONFINE GOATS

I’m all for the local food movement, having been a small part of the local farming community for the last 12 years.

The kids, groceries, potting soil...

Take it all with you.



Yuba Mundo, Xtracycle, Surly Big Dummy  
Child seats, cargo bags, electric assist.

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