

Dialogue

continued from page 1

look at the truth around this stuff, no matter how uncomfortable it is.”

Perspectives on the event’s Facebook page varied with many QTPOC (queer/trans people of color) as well as many white queer people expressing frustration with some white respondent’s inability to see that blackface performances are racist. Some took offense to the framing of the event and called the Q Center’s credibility into question, noting it’s a relatively new organiza-

‘There were actually people in conversation saying gentrification has nothing to do with it, which says people coming into the conversation didn’t have enough education’

tion located in a gentrified, historically Black neighborhood.

According to Lynn, in 2002-03 then Commissioner Sam Adams released a survey on what was needed, what people were looking for in a community center or in general LGBT services, and where that center would be located. At the time, the center was located on South Water Avenue, but Lynn says they outgrew it. The location on Mississippi was seen as valuable because it was part of an “emerging neighborhood.”

“There were actually people in conversation saying gentrification has nothing to do with it, which says people coming into the

conversation didn’t have enough education,” says Aine.

She says the framing exemplified white privilege by equating the sentiments of Black women who felt harmed by the Eagle’s event to the hurt feelings of some white respondents who didn’t appreciate being called racist.

Aleksandr Peikrishvili, who works as a therapist, was one of the facilitators for the proposed event and says that the framing was meant to bring all sides of the debate to the table.

“The way I framed the event was to reflect what was happening in our community,” he says. “In my mind, there were 100 people that bought tickets to this performance. There must be a question in their mind of whether blackface is racist or not.”

While Facebook comments from both sides often strayed away from what is commonly perceived as politically correct, some particular racist comments brought calls for moderators to step in. Some respondents contended that if the comments in

question were going to be regulated then people mentioning white privilege should be regulated too, because they were engaging in bullying.

Aine finds it disheartening that instead of engaging with a discussion on white privilege, some white queer respondents simply dismissed use of the term as name calling.

“When you say, ‘We hear your concerns but could you say it in a way that doesn’t make me feel bad,’ are you really inviting them to the table?” she asks. “When the safety of white cisgendered men is considered as important — that we need to build structures around their safety — as queer

Coming Out as a Person of Faith

A multimedia exhibit premiering Thursday tells the stories of faith leaders and people of faith who support the freedom to marry, including the Edwards family, pictured. The exhibit, a project of the Basic Rights Oregon Education Fund, will travel to churches throughout Oregon. The event is Thursday, March 7, 5:30 - 7 p.m., at the Augustana Lutheran Church, 2710 N.E. 14th Ave. More information at www.basicrights.org.



women of color, both cis and Trans, there really is a lack of understanding of what racism is.”

The Q Center hasn’t announced a new date for the conversation yet. It released a statement on Feb. 28, laying out plans for an elder panel and opportunities for other community groups to come and educate people involved with the Q Center.

Despite these efforts, there are still reservations from those that don’t think the Q Center reached out enough to people of color, and Black queer women in particular.

Aine expresses frustration with the assumption of some that people of color

aren’t organizing. She points to organizations like Black Pflag and resources like Portland State University’s Queer Students of Color Conference as spaces where queer people of color can have their voices heard in a more authentic way.

“One of the egregious things about the Q Center event is many people posit it as either it happens at Q Center or not at all,” says Aine. “Somehow, if we don’t have white leadership or if white people aren’t involved, then the conversation isn’t happening.”

For the full version of this article, go to www.theSkanner.com.

Gambling

continued from page 1

away a billion dollars)?

RB: Signs of a gambling problem include betting more than planned; lying to people you care about regarding your gambling; borrowing money to gamble or to pay bills that you can’t pay due to gambling losses; gambling more to try to make up for your gambling losses; gambling to escape your problems or uncomfortable feelings; being preoccupied with gambling or with how to get money to gamble; finding you have to gamble more than before to get the same level of excitement or enjoyment. Another sign is involvement in illegal activity to pay for gambling, which is what the former mayor of San Diego has been accused of doing. She allegedly embezzled several million dollars from a foundation to pay for gambling.

TSN: How does the issue disproportionately impact specifically the African American community?

RB: A 2011 national study of more than 32,000 people found that rates of problem gambling are twice as high among African Americans as whites. About a third of the white problem gamblers were women, but half of the African American problem gamblers were women. So it’s a significant problem for both women and men in the African American community. This study and other studies suggest that, compared to problem gamblers in other communities, problem gamblers in the African American community are more likely to also suffer from depression, substance abuse or other mental health problems.

TSN: How do you respond to people who say that gambling addicts just have to “man-up” and stop?

RB: If it was that easy we wouldn’t be

having this conversation. Scientific research has shown that people who are addicted to gambling have many of the same changes to their brains that occur in addictions to cocaine, tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. For these people the cravings to gamble are incredibly strong. Another factor that makes gambling so hard to stop, when people are addicted, is that they usually have big financial debts. Yet they see the very thing that is destroying their lives — gambling — as a possible quick and easy fix to solve all their

If you call 1-877-My-Limit or go online to www.1877mylimit.org/ you can find excellent free, professional, and confidential counseling services

long-term problems, looking for the big win. Their addiction impairs their ability to think logically. People addicted to heroin or cocaine see their next hit as a way to avoid their problems for a few hours, not as a way to pay the rent that’s overdue, turn the lights back on, or avoid bankruptcy. But many people addicted to gambling see the last dollar in their pocket as a possible ticket out of crisis and try to convince themselves they’ll stop gambling if they get a big win.

TSN: What are some of the triggers for people who are dealing with a gambling addiction?

RB: The biggest trigger for most people is easy access to money. Most people find that at the beginning of their recovery they need to turn control of their finances over to

someone they trust — usually a family member. That can be a tough decision to make. As their recovery gets stronger, they can often resume financial control. Other common triggers are being in or near places where they used to gamble. For many people uncomfortable feelings are a trigger — depression, anxiety, anger, loneliness, guilt. An important part of treatment and recovery is learning to tolerate difficult feelings without doing something self-destructive, like gambling, as a distraction.

TSN: What can family members do to support someone who is trying to break away from problem gambling?

RB: That’s a great question. The first thing family members need to do is take care of themselves, which includes assuring safety in the family, especially financial safety. It’s important for family members to learn more about problem gambling so that they can better understand the difference between helping the person and helping the problem. Family members can do this by going to counseling sessions, which are free, with or without the person who has a gambling problem. They can also attend Gam-Anon, which is a support group for family members.

TSN: What does your program involve?

And how much does it cost?

RB: We are one of several problem gambling programs in the Portland area. At all of these programs, counseling is free for Oregon residents and for Washington residents who do a majority of their gambling with Oregon Lottery products, like Keno or video poker at Oregon retailers. Counseling is free not just for the problem gambler, but also for family members, friends or anyone else who cares about them. If you call 1-877-My-Limit or go online to www.1877mylimit.org/ you can find excellent free, professional, and confidential counseling services that are convenient for you. Each program has its own special features.

Our new program, Lewis & Clark Problem Gambling Services, has five unique features: (1) We are open for services on Saturdays and Sundays; (2) We are centrally located on Barbur Boulevard near downtown Portland with eight bus lines that stop at our door; (3) We have the advantage of being part of an academic institution that brings the latest research findings into our work; (4) We have a strong focus on the family and combine the specialties of addictions counseling with marriage, couples and family therapy in our services; (5) We have a commitment to social justice and to cultural competency in counseling; for example, currently providing services in English, Spanish and Korean.

TSN: Is treatment effective?

RB: Yes. Eight out of ten people who receive problem gambling services in Oregon report they either stopped gambling or that it was greatly reduced. Nine out of ten people report being satisfied with the services they received.