Mailbox

Wake Up, Little Suzie

December 1, 1997 By Staff

Wake Up, Little Suzie

What is with your recent cover story ("Not Working is a Full-Time Job," September 1997)? Susan Rodriguez quit her job. Not fired. Not harassed. She quit. Consequently, she lost her health benefits, her life insurance and her salary. What was she thinking? Certainly not of her children. She now has a state-paid free ride, and *I* am the one (an out gay and HIV positive employee) working to pay the taxes to support people like Susan.

I work because I am capable of it, and because it is the responsible thing to do. I have never taken a government penny nor any handout from AIDS organizations, so please don't compare her not working with working. Try smiling at your coworkers when you're nauseous, or running like a madman to the nearest bathroom with a case of diarrhea during work.

--Martin E. Hollick
Somerville, Massachusetts

Mercy for Michelangelo

Micahel Warner makes some excellent points in his article ("Shocked Therapy," September 1997). What I appreciate about Michelangelo Signorile is his insistence on looking deeper into a culture that reflects some of the worst of what has oppressed women forever: "Beauty knows no pain."

Negative men who are, as Warner says, "burned out on condoms," need more than that same old "eating our own" dialogue in the gay and lesbian press. I wonder why there are no substantive dialogues about our relationships with one another, but volumes written on sex, speed, barebacking, steroids and gay marriage. There is so much for us to talk about.

--Marcy A. Fraser, RN
AIDS Office
San Francisco, California

After reading the Signorile article that Michael Warner refers to, I did not find that it suggested we become "shocked and horrified" and simply "give up." I did find that it called us to responsibility. Called us, as a community, to say bareback sex is wrong. An unpopular stand but, I believe, a brave and correct one. I understand your belief that the use of a condom should be decided in a

“one-on-one discussion” leading to a personal decision. But I also find that belief naïve and irresponsible.

--Dr. Reece Manley
Dallas, Texas

I’m flattered by Michael Warner’s current obsession with me. But I’m highly troubled by his penchant for both distorting people’s work and polarizing discussion. Referring to a column I wrote in *Out* about bareback sex among HIV negative men, Warner claims that I state that barebackers are “endangering” the rest of us. What I actually wrote was that they are “rebelling against” the rest of us. In another instance, he writes that “Signorile recommends” that people throw their hands in the air in disgust. What I actually expressed was my fear and concern that people would do so. I hardly recommend it, then or now.

Warner seems to believe that by merely focusing on this problem I was “blaming others.” In actuality, I was reporting on an alarming phenomenon and asking some though questions about what it means for us – epidemiologically, politically and culturally. Someone has to ask these questions. Certainly Warner hasn’t raised them. He’s too busy offering up cheesy pop psychology that too often serves to coddle many gay men – further enabling many to continue in troubling behaviors – when we could be creatively challenging their complacency and sense of male privilege and entitlement.

For a fellow who claims to disdain “moralizing,” Warner certainly knows how to redeploy himself, attempting to shame into submission anyone who deviates from his narrow doctrines. Well, to quote from the subhead of his essay, no amount of “finger-pointing and shame-throwing” will silence the great many of us – positive and negative – who are speaking up.

--Michelangelo Signorile
New York City

She’s Come Undone

That’s it. I’ve had it. Even Sean Strub suggests it is more important for gay men to be able to express their gay identity by being conscienceless sluts than it is to save lives (S.O.S., September 1997).

You’re right, Sean. The demon is not desire. It is a total selfishness that demands complete self-gratification with total disregard for the well-being of others.

--Micki Seigel, RN
West Hatfield,
Massachusetts

His Phil of TV

I would offer a different appraisal of the recent made-for-television film *In the Gloaming* than Phil Geoffrey Bond does. (*POZ*Picks, September 1997). Bond likes the “breathtaking views,” but director Christopher Reeve was not shooting a travelogue. Reeve’s film is basically a rehash of *An*

Early Frost, the first AIDS film to air on American television, in 1985. A quick comparison of the two films suggests that American television has made little progress in the way it portrays the epidemic.

--Kevin J. Harty
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mad for Ads

I agree with Mr. Woods' letter (To the Editor, September 1997). I cannot believe the amount of ads that appear in your magazine. Just to get to the table of contents, I had to flip four pages, another four to get to S.O.S., and another three to get to To the Editor. Aren't you overdoing it?

--Jorge Luis Rodriguez
Corona-Elmhurst, New York

The information in your magazine – even the ads that some people complain about – has helped me speak to my HIV positive partner intelligently and openly. Thank you.

--Nathan Birch
Cleveland, Ohio

Talk to Me

Thanks for touching on women's HIV issues (August 1997). Finally, I felt as though an issue of *POZ* was written for me.

--Edith Santana
Winthrop, Arizona

Expo Angst

I was at the *POZ* Life Expo here in Houston (S.O.S, July 1997) and was appalled at the lack of consideration from the management of the George R. Brown Convention Center. Many people worked very hard to make the Expo a success, only to be greeted by harassment. I did not appreciate being heckled during lunch.

I was glad you published your article. I faxed copies of it to the convention center. I wanted them to see how disheartening it was to be publicly exiled.

--Tom Anthony
Houston, Texas

Ride 'Em Cowboy!

I'm an HIV positive musician in search of country-music stardom. Having the virus doesn't stop Mr. Sexy Stevens (Checking In, August 1997) from pursuing his dream. I won't let it stop me, either.

--Lance Bark
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Note

The article "Love Your Doc?" (October 1997) referred to a list of docs nominated by POZ *readers, available on the* POZ *website at www.poz.com. It can also be obtained by writing to* POZ *at* POZ*, One Little West 12th St., 6th Floor, New York City, New York 10014.*

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