



staff editorial

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Our job is to report

Running an LGBT community newspaper, or any minority community newspaper for that matter, is no easy task. *qnotes*, like other minority press, operates in a sometimes uncomfortable middle ground between objective media and an instrument to build and empower community. Both missions are important and essential. On one hand, the newspaper acts to showcase our community's strength, diversity and positive attributes to a wider and sometimes more general audience. On the other, we act, as all news agencies do, to report the news, good or bad.

We report on the good things, those news items that make all of us smile — the concerts, community service, fundraisers, parties, political and legal successes and many more topics that instill in each of us a sense of pride and achievement.

Yet, good news sometimes comes with a mix of bad news. We have an equally important obligation to report the maybe-not-so-great actions and statements of individuals in our community, our community's leaders and its non-profit organizations. We've reported on crimes committed by community members. We've reported on mismanagement, alleged embezzlement and federal investigations. We've documented organization leadership gone awry. It's not always pleasant. Sometimes it's downright ugly and both physically and emotionally exhausting. But, we do it because it is our job.

And, it seems, whenever we must undertake reporting that seeks to hold community leaders or organizations accountable — to the law, to their constituents or to their own voluntary actions and statements — the newspaper receives charges that we are "unfair," that we are "attacking," that we are "bullying" or have a "personal beef" with whomever or whichever person or organization happens to be the subject of one of our reports.

We take our mission to empower very seriously; indeed, we immensely enjoy it. But, we can never turn our backs on our doubly-important mission to report the news — fairly, accurately and objectively. As members of the LGBT community, we wish it the best success on its continued endeavors for social, religious and legal equality.

Even so, we must be as abundantly clear today as we have many times in the past: We are a newspaper. We are not a propaganda machine for community leaders or our community organizations. We are not campaign surrogates. It sometimes becomes easy to forget this because our reporting does, indeed, come from a decidedly pro-LGBT stance. Sometimes, it's a bit advocacy-like in its nature. Nonetheless, if we are to remain true to our obligations, our staff must vigilantly guard against becoming an uncritical cheerleader for our community.

Such has been the case with some of our recent reporting. That elected officials, including the city's first and only openly LGBT official, would decline or refuse to go on-record with a condemnation of hatred which targets Jews, LGBT people or any other group, is newsworthy. That the city's first and only openly LGBT official would continue to decline requests for comment is newsworthy. That the same official would mislead about how much time she spent speaking to a reporter and then accuse that reporter of misrepresentation when no misrepresentation occurred is also newsworthy.

Unfortunately, none of this news is positive. It doesn't make anyone, including anyone at this newspaper, feel good. It doesn't cast our community in the brightest or best light. But, it is news. And, we've reported it.

Charlotte Mayor Anthony Foxx and several city council and Mecklenburg County commissioners have responded with on-the-record statements to a simple question that any tolerant person can answer.

"I condemn hate in any form," Mayor Foxx told *qnotes*. Six short and simple words spoken plainly and on the record.

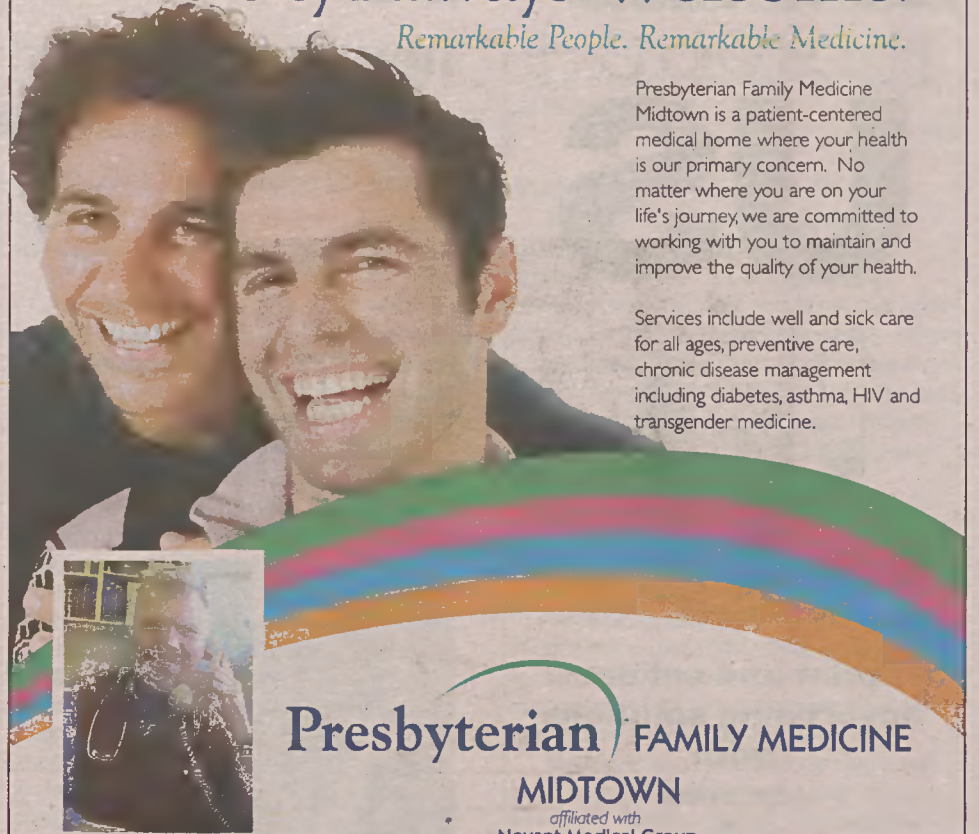
When bad news is reported, it is often easier to blame the messenger than to examine the messenger's source or its larger picture. We hate being the bearer of bad news. We'd like nothing better than to only ever report good news, but that doesn't hinge on us. We can only report what people tell us or what they don't.

As this print edition hits the streets, a neo-Nazi group and a North Carolina chapter of the Ku Klux Klan gather in Uptown Charlotte. They do so against the backdrop of a city and a local political culture which is too often unable to take strong and public stands on behalf of people who need protecting — a city where elected leaders have yet to hold an affirmative and transparent public vote on any single matter of LGBT inclusion, a city where elected leaders and local community groups and foundations speak softly rather than candidly or forcefully on simple matters of right and wrong, a city where the dire concerns and needs of ethnic, racial, religious and sexual minorities and impoverished neighborhoods are glanced over while more well-to-do parts of town continue to grow, a city where simply drawing attention to decades-old problems in need of modern-day solutions is likened to radical and militant activism, a city where constituents can find themselves quickly silenced or ostracized when they speak up and offer fair criticisms of their leaders' actions or statements.

Those are facts — easily observable truths of life in Charlotte. If they bother you, work to change them. Blaming the messenger and ignoring the problems will solve nothing. ::

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qpoll It's holiday time! In this print edition, we unveil part one of our holiday shopping guide (page 10). How early do you usually begin shopping and crossing items off your gift-giving list? See the options and vote: goqnotes.com/to/qpoll

