

# Discrimination on campus

Discrimination against homosexuals explored by "The Collegian's" Doreen Foutz

I don't understand. Why do some people have trouble accepting those who are different? Just because someone acts differently or likes members of their own sex is, by no means, grounds for name calling, harassment, or any of the other things that gays, lesbians, and bisexuals have to go through. Personally, I do not think they should be discriminated against.

Michael Yucha, first semester, Liberal Arts and Sciences has endured more teasing and name calling than I ever knew went on. "People here are very prejudiced and closed-minded," Michael said. "To me, being gay is only a small part of my life."

It is really immature to hang up "anti-fag" signs, carve the words "fag" and "Trigon" into doors, and make prank calls. Then, to top it off, at the mandatory floor meetings to address these issues, only seven people showed up. The people who were to be addressed didn't have the decency to go.

Discrimination has to stop. Michael defines prejudice as, "the simplest form of stupidity. Just because I am straight does not mean that everyone should conform to my standards. This is a free country. Everyone deserves respect despite their sexual orientation. "All gay people are not sexual perverts. We're not going to be staring at you in the showers," Michael told me.

"The faculty and staff have been very supportive, especially Linda Lombardi and Sue Daley, but I have not seen any administrative help. It's discrimination, that's what it is. It's horrid," Michael stated.

Sue Daley, the personal counselor at Behrend, is also upset about the discrimination against gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. "There have been some reports this semester about one student being verbally harassed. One was physically assaulted last semester. There is a lot of prejudice, but this campus is generally tolerant, not accepting, but tolerant...People need to get in touch with accepting the differences...Gay students are here to stay. We need to make it more friendly so they can 'come out.'"

I find it discouraging that those who associate with

gays, lesbians, and bisexuals are automatically labeled as being that way themselves. When I was interviewing Michael Yucha, for this article, a number of people walked by and gave me strange looks. Why? Michael is a normal person, too. Just because he is gay, he is no less of a person.

The discrimination that goes on is out of hand. Behrend has a policy against discrimination. Violation of this policy results in suspension.

"It's discouraging and disheartening because gay students

tear them down a lot," Sue Daley said.

Every other club and organization can hang up posters to advertise themselves, why can't Trigon? If fraternities can advertise rush, then why can't Trigon advertise that it exists? People need to know what is available to them on this campus. They don't need to know only about things that are considered proper or acceptable.

The gays, lesbians, and bisexuals on this campus have developed their own word Sue Daley said. "Homoprejudice...it means irrational fear about what homosexuality is about."

Michael Yucha stated, "I would rather have people ask me questions than make snide comments and say rude things behind my back...They think we don't know...When I walk into the Gorge everyone just stops and stares. It is really rude."

Rumors are spreading around campus like an epidemic, "...the rumors...I feel like I am in high school again," Michael said.

What really bothers me is that these people have no choice in their fate. Who they are is who they are, and no one can change that. "My hope is that people won't have to go through the struggle as they have in past years," Sue Daley said.

The list printed here includes just a few things you can do to minimize your homophobia or homoprejudice.

Please think of the people you are hurting before you say anything rude. They are real people too. The next person that "comes out" might just be someone close to you.

Things you can do:

- \*Don't assume everyone is heterosexual. Research shows that nearly 10 percent of the population is gay or lesbian.
- \*Avoid anti-gay jokes in conversation.
- \*Create an atmosphere of acceptance, and confront homophobic remarks and statements.
- \*Provide role models; make it clear that there is nothing wrong with gays or lesbians.
- \*Acquaint yourself with the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community.

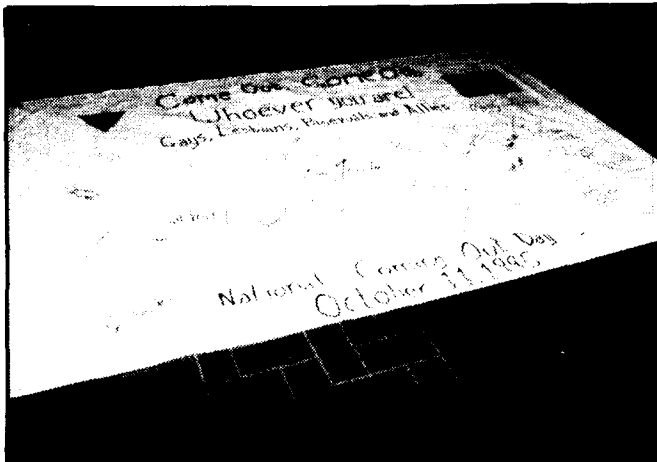


Photo by R. Carl Campbell III/Opinion Editor

National Coming Out Day: Trigon sponsored Coming Out Day at Behrend to support gay and lesbian students.

take the discrimination to heart," Sue Daley said.

The gays, lesbians, and bisexuals on campus have hung up posters just to make people aware. They are not forcing themselves on the students, they are just trying to make them aware of the fact that gays, lesbians, and bisexuals are normal, everyday people who just happen to like members of their own sex.

The posters they have hung up to make people aware have done no good. "People deface their posters, and they

