

λ Lambda λ

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The Bisexuals, Gay Men, Lesbians and Allies for Diversity Monthly Newsletter

NCOD Schedule

Your Guide to THE DAY!!!

10-3 Visit B-GLAD's table in the Pit

12:00 Meet in the Pit for the NCOD MARCH!!!

12:15 March Begins!!

—After the march, there will be music, readings, etc. at the Open Mike (follow the crowd!)

8:30 Meet at CaffeTrio if you want to carpool to...

9:00 Mixer at BOXERS! Everyone's welcome!

National Coming Out Day for some is a kind of religious holiday

by Sam Beck

About 3 years ago, I walked through the Pit for the first time during C-Tops. Soon, I was walking by the Pit about every day on my trek to or from Hinton James. A doe-eyed out-of-stater, I witnessed the periodic bombardment of the Pit by campus groups, each promoting its own particular cause and representing its own particular subset of the university community. I began regarding these pseudo-demonstrations as intrusions because they excluded me for not being like them. I was not black or an environmental activist or a fraternity member or a confessor to God. These people seemed to be flaunting their ideas and differences from me in my face.

I disliked the way that members of B-GLAD seemed to wear their sexuality on their sleeve. I saw what I perceived to be a uniform group of people with whom I had little in common, except for possibly homosexuality. Basically, I was having a difficult time admitting that I was gay. I

thought that homosexuality was and should remain a non-issue, and I perceived gays' flaunting of their sexuality on National Coming Out Day or during Celebration Week as detrimental to acceptance of queers as equals.

Then, a most glorious thing happened. I came out for the first time to a close friend. It was the most liberating thing I've ever done; to feel totally honest with a person, especially having kept this important part of me hidden my whole life, was the most exhilarating feeling I've ever had. The hardest thing to say was "I'm gay," but when I finally could say it without shame or fear, I could joyfully reveal the part of me no one had ever seen.

And faster than you can say "jackrabbit," all of my friends knew that I was gay. And suddenly, I was very proud of being gay and would readily admit it. I became much more intolerant of homophobia and ignorance. I realized that what I had originally perceived to be a non-issue was in fact (duh!) a pretty big issue if it had taken me 19 years to realize and admit it (especially if I had to hide it from my parents out of fear of emotional and economic detachment).

Once I was able to be proud of being gay, I enjoyed seeing others be proud of being gay. And I appreciated how much courage it takes to stand in the Pit under I feel comfortable doing that. Coming out is a lifelong process—even if friends and family know, gays still have to decide whether to tell new acquaintances about their sexuality. It should be a non-issue, but it's not. This is why demonstrations in the Pit are necessary, though not just for gays. We have a responsibility to inform straights of the difference between being straight and being gay. Also, to those gays who aren't ready to come out or who have just come out, we have a responsibility to show them our lack of shame and fear.

National Coming Out Day is an extremely important day for gays because of the often difficult nature of coming out.

It is like a religious holiday, in a sense, because it is a rite of passage that every gay must experience in order to move forward in his understanding of himself. It marks a turning point in that person's life. The person shifts from being secretive about his sexuality to being proud of it. Coming out allows gays to have more meaningful relationships with other people.

Also, many straights may not know anyone gay or have not been exposed to the gay community. It is important for straights to understand and respect the difficulty of coming out and to be able to celebrate the coming out experience with us because in their lifetime, a big percentage of straights will probably have someone close, a family member or friend, come out to them.

Now, as I walk through the Pit to go to the library, I view it as a window to things I may be ignorant of. Whether it be Middle Eastern dancing or the pagan organization, I afford the group the respect it deserves and learn from its existence within the university community. Respect National Coming Out Day and what it represents to gays. Feel free to celebrate this joyous occasion with us. λ

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