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The Bisexuals, Gay Men, Lesbians and Allies for Diversity Journal

Believe Me, I'm Not Really Checking You Out

by Andrea Main

When I started writing these columns, my sister cautioned me not to intentionally offend anyone. So far, I've managed to do a relatively respectable job of holding my tongue. Just ask any pot smoker.

However, the other day, I heard a conversation so inane I could not let it pass without comment. The discussion took place late one night on my hall. It went something like this:

Freshman #1: Why are there so many B-GLAD signs up this week?

Junior: Because of the national gay "Celebration Week."

Freshman #2: Ewww. I heard about that. My friends told me to stay out of the Pit this week because the lesbians will try to convert you

Freshman # 1: Really?

The junior eventually convinced the freshmen that no one was going to approach them (and, if someone did, they could simply say "no, thanks" just like they would with a guy).

Nonetheless, their conversation amazes me. Do Freshman #2's friends really alter their daily path to avoid a fictitious encounter? And is this lesbian-conversion myth so convincing that Freshman #1 believes it?

I suppose the conversation itself was not of immense importance, but it still serves as a fine example of the homophobia and ignorance on this "liberal zoo" of a campus. And sadly, it is definitely not the only example of gay-bashing at UNC.

Another illustration of UNC's "open-mindedness" occurs when homosexuals are harassed by drunken students.

Yes, this actually has happened. And to more than one person on

more than one occasion. For example, one gay resident of Spencer Hall was awakened one night by her roommate's drunken sorority sisters pounding on the door and yelling homophobic obscenities. Since when has gay-bashing become North Campus' new alarm clock?

Greek organizations may protest that they are gay-friendly. But really, how many of them — and I mean the ones around Fraternity Court — have openly gay members? Or would admit a homosexual without blinking an eye? Or cracking a joke?

My guess? None.

What about the Carolina Review? How much would it appreciate (or publish) a homo-friendly review? Judging from some of their past articles, not at all.

I suppose this blatant homophobia is not too bad — after all, everyone is entitled to his or her opinion.

What really scares me is the subtle queer bashing. I cannot tell you the number of times my friends have made "harmless" remarks about gays. The type where the speaker, when pressed to explain his remark, usually replies "Oh, well I didn't mean it that way."

At one of my jobs in Chapel Hill, somebody posted a story which uses "homosexual" as its punch line. My former co-workers claimed the story was all in good spirit and should not bother anyone. But if they had to go out of their way to justify it, shouldn't they have realized that it probably would offend someone?

Or, better still, why did one of my hallmates suddenly stop speaking to a girl who wore a rainbow sticker on National Coming Out Day? And just think, the girl who wore the sticker isn't gay.

Imagine what this hallmate will do when she discovers that I am. Personally, I'm scared.

Perhaps I am being overly

paranoid when I tell friends that I am going on a date with "someone" instead of "some girl." But it's hard not to be when every week I hear some derogatory remark — intentional or unintentional — about homosexuals. Oftentimes, it's a variation of "I saw some dyke today. I just know that she was checking out my legs."

The people making these comments are not being mean or malicious. They are simply making an insensitive statement which lets me know that they wouldn't appreciate the latest installment of my love life.

My point? Simple. People need to be more aware of the impact of their words. Honestly, I find such off-the-cuff remarks to be more intimidating than any number of malicious taunts.

Everyone — including gays — should be more aware of the messages we convey. After all, stereotypes of homosexuals are just that: stereotypes. Think of the times when you have heard sentences like "All homosexuals (oh, how about, recycle?)" or "Anyone who listens to Ani DiFranco is bisexual" or "I hate it when faggots check me out" or (my personal favorite) "I know he's a cocksucker because he wears pink vests."

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