



LAMBDA

Carolina Gay And Lesbian Association Newsletter

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Racism In The Gay Community

Picture this: Friday or Saturday night at the Power Company, the only gay bar serving the Durham-Chapel Hill area. You're a black person, waiting in line with three or four black friends, ready to dance and have a festive evening.

Upon arriving at the check-in desk with money in hand, the attendant asks for a membership card. No one in your party has one.

So the attendant turns you away. You notice, on your way out, a group of white people coming in. The group pays, gets stamped, and enters the bar. You wonder if they showed a membership card. You know the attendant didn't ask for one, and you wonder why. Could it be because they're white and you're black?

One would think that nothing like this goes on here, but in the back of your mind you can't shake the feeling that you have just been discriminated against because of your race.

I can honestly say that incidents such as this do happen, and rather frequently. I'm a black person and have experienced a situation such as the one described above.

Since most of my college friends are white, I typically go to the bar with them, and in these cases we are very rarely asked to show a membership card. In these cases, no one in our group had a membership card, nor were we asked for one.

Many have told me stories of how groups of black people are turned away from the bar because of no membership card, so I know this is not just one person's perception.

It is very difficult to deal with racial discrimination in the heterosexual community. To encounter it in the gay community, where I also have minority status, is doubly burdensome.

Since The Power Company is the only bar for lesbians and gays in this area, it would be extremely generous for this bar to make an extra effort not to appear discriminatory.

Surely, one could make the argument that all we need to do is buy a membership card. However, that misses the point. It is not economically sensible for those who go to the bar infrequently to purchase a card.

The problem is the verification process. Either the bar should check everybody's membership or admit those they know do not have one.

- Greg Johnson

