

Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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Coming out

Day should be used to show intolerance won't be tolerated

There are some brave people in this state, and they will be on display today.

They're not brave because they have dangerous professions or put themselves at risk for the well-being of others.

They are brave because they have the ability to be themselves in spite of heavy opposition.

National Coming Out Day is today, and many gay Nebraskans will turn out to take pride in their identity.

They've decided not to hide their true selves.

In this state, their courage could easily be seen as ignorance.

Who would tell the truth about themselves in a state like this – a state where gay people are openly discriminated against?

Not only are gay people not entitled to the same benefits as heterosexual people, but a certain sect in this state has banned together to put an initiative on the ballot aimed at making sure gays don't feel welcome here.

The answer is clear to anyone who claims to be progressive. Discriminating against people for any reason – race, gender, sexual orientation – is wrong. But as loud as the voice of Nebraska's gay community may be, it is still a minority.

Those people want to make it blatantly clear that tolerance is not high on this state's priority list.

They've closed their minds to even trying to understand gay people.

Their minds are clouded with common tradition, and they let it be known that this state is not progressive; it is stagnant.

Nonetheless, gay people will come out today and take pride in their lifestyle, which is condemned by the majority of the state.

Is that courage or stupidity?

Well, was Martin Luther King Jr. courageous or stupid?

How about Susan B. Anthony?

Is hope something that should be rewarded or laughed at?

The answer is clear to anyone who claims to be progressive. Discriminating against people for any reason – race, gender, sexual orientation – is wrong.

But as loud as the voice of Nebraska's gay community may be, it is still a minority.

So progressive, open-minded people – both gay and straight – should not let this chance to make a difference go by.

They should get out and show support for Nebraska's gay community.

They should show that it is immoral to force a certain group of people to be ashamed of who they are.

They should show that intolerance and discrimination is not going to be part of Nebraska's tradition any longer.

Even though they might not be gay, people can still fight the single largest form of discrimination still prevalent in our society.

And their actions might just reverberate into early November.

Editorial Board

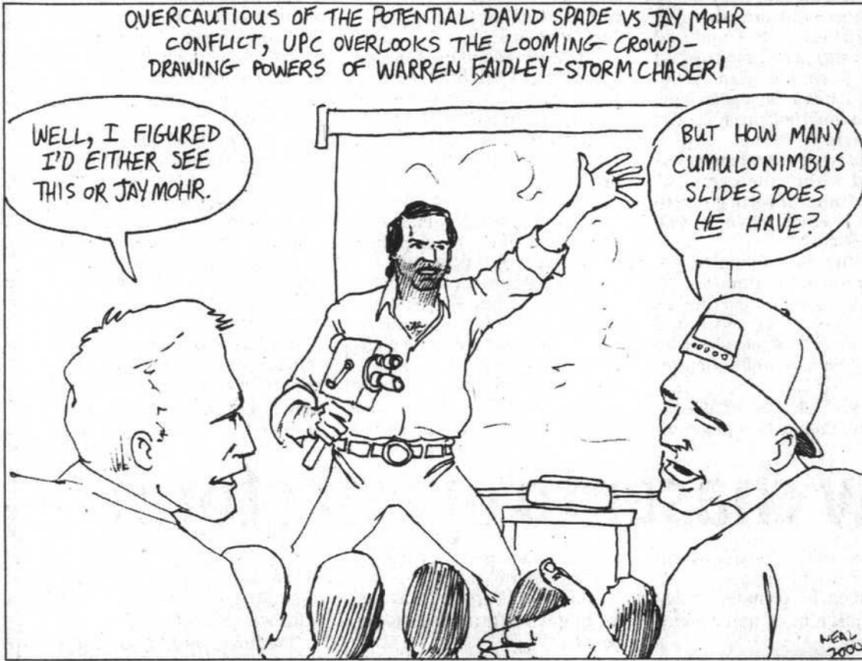
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Letters to the editor

Quality students?

Just today I received an e-mail from a professor about a concerned student who had problems with other students who said the class was too easy and spent their time in class talking about things besides the topic in class.

The professor for this class also went on to announce his resignation at semester.

I find this all very disheartening. Even though I am only a sophomore, I have noticed that the Computer Science and Engineering department seems to have a hard time holding onto professors.

I had always assumed it had been due to work in the industry paying better than the University, and this offered some comfort. Now I wonder if it's not the quality of the pay, but the quality of the students. This is a thought I find very disturbing.

Maybe if every student stopped and thought about how they have acted in class and tried to improve their attitudes, the university would be a better place.

Stephanie Bader
Sophomore
Computer Engineering

Representation without what?

What is with ASUN lately? Isn't it supposed rep-

resent the student body as a whole?

I don't ever remember being asked or having voted for changing any holiday names or about being against DOMA. What about the students who are for DOMA anyway? No, but last I knew we were students, too. Last I heard, ASUN was supposed to represent the whole student body. Did anyone ever ask me about changing holiday names or if ASUN could take sides on political topics? I surely don't remember it. Maybe someday I can find out if I will ever be represented in ASUN because, so far, everything it is doing does not representing me at all as a student.

I think it is unfair to the students who are for DOMA not to have any representation in the supposed "student government." I don't care so much about it changing holiday names, but I do think it was stupid. What really ticks me off is that the student government is supposed to be neutral or at the least, represent both sides equally.

Maybe it should ask the student body before it makes decisions such as this. Better yet, maybe we should impeach ASUN and get new people in there who can represent everyone equally.

Lizz Bench
Junior
Vet Tech

Chemicals don't clear anger

The journey starts in the pit of my stomach, or maybe in my small or large intestine; I don't know biology.

As Mike and I walk into the living room, a small figure is bent over rapidly scrubbing the floor. Mike shoots me a weird glance, making his way toward his soft recliner.

Mike's brother, Scott, a pudgy, older real estate agent who gets his kicks from the Husker football team and the L.A. Lakers, is bent over the small figure like a foreman over a child laborer.

"Mike, we're trying to get your stain out," Scott says, pointing to the floor where the small figure keeps digging away with a cloth. "This here is my new best friend, uh, what's your name?"

The small figure exposes a high voice, curly hair and loads of acne as he lifts his head.

"Shane." He has some sort of strange accent. The fact he is a male surprises me because I honestly didn't know.

Mike just gives him a wry smile and turns on ESPN. I look at the television and just see colors flipping about. My eyes turn back to Shane.

"There's no ammonia or dyes, so you can just use it as a spray and wash," Shane says. He sprays more yellow liquid from the bottle onto a towel.

Scott's leery eyes peer out from his fat face and balding head.

"Can I see the brochure again?" he says, sticking his hand out in disgust. "I can't believe you don't have copies of these things. You should tell your boss it only costs a couple of cents to make copies."

Scott, you see, is a business aficionado, and he has no problem spewing such advice whenever the situation arises.

This deep burning eats away at my insides. My heart is not immune from the fire.

It slowly creeps up inside, and as it does, it pries open my mouth, and a scream begins to brew from deep within.

The veins begin to snap. It's not a beat; it's a crisp snap.

The burn starts working its way up into the lungs, and every breath carries a sharp, hot sensation, much like a kidney stone punctures the urinary tract.

I breathe deep to keep it at bay, but the deeper I breathe, the hotter it burns.

It makes my neck stiff to know I can't control this feeling. I try to stretch it out. But I don't gain any control; it keeps moving upward.

"You can get a quart of it for \$35, but that includes shipping and handling," Shane says, eagerly awaiting Scott's answer.

"Shipping and handling?" Scott's voice rises as his ruddy face turns red. "You're in the same room. How can there be shipping and handling?"

"Oh, we ship it in from California," Shane says, flaunting plastic confidence. "They don't make stuff this potent in the Midwest."

"Where is it now?" Scott says.

Shane informs him it is in a truck, circling the neighborhood, and it will arrive at exactly five minutes before 8 p.m. It is currently 7:10 p.m.

Mike turns his eyes from the commercial featur-

ing some weight loss program, where you pay only \$7 plus the cost of food to lose 10 pounds a week.

He looks at his watch and tries not to laugh at Shane. There's a tint of anger and annoyance in Mike's disposition.

I just look back blankly at Shane. He is wearing a gray shirt with printed letters that read: "I'm out of sick days, so I've decided to call in dead."

His curly, red hair flows out the bottom of his hat, and his face is covered in different sizes of red bumps. He looks no older than 16.

It's not going away; it's just burning hotter. I hate this feeling so bad. It just takes over and won't let go. It's like a determined demon taking hold of my body and, even worse, my mind.

I want to scream at it to let go, but what good would that do?

It's oozing up my throat. Every centimeter it rises, my mouth widens, ready to let lose the terror.

"How'd you get into this?" Scott asks as he begins writing in his checkbook.

"Well, it's about the only job I can get," Shane says. His fake salesman attitude has worn off. He's just honest and vulnerable now. "It's not that bad. I get to travel around and meet people."

Shane slides a receipt toward Scott and asks him to write his address, phone number and other information.

Scott jots down the information and pulls his copy free. "Wow, you haven't sold very many of these, have you?"

Shane looks down. "You're my second sale of the day."

Scott shows no remorse. "Well, you've got a lot of work to do."

Shane tells Scott he reminds him of his boss, a nice guy but someone who can get annoying.

Mike changes the channel to a baseball game.

Shane perks up toward us. "Who's playing," he says in an ultra-friendly voice. He doesn't know we're too poor to buy stain remover, no matter how amazing it is.

"The Dodgers and somebody else," I say. Mike is too cold to respond.

Shane just stands there. He's feeling Mike's cold radiation.

"Where are you from?" I ask. I feel sorry for him. I can't hide it.

"North Dakota," he says with a slight cynical smile.

I nod, looking for something profound to say, but as I dig deep, I only find the burn.

Shane takes his receipt book back from Scott.

"Thanks a lot, man. I'll be back at five 'til 8."

With that he turns and lumbers toward the door. His heavy sneakers take away any grace he may have been blessed with. He lets himself out and slips into another door.

As he passes me, I'm torn and frozen.

The fire is unbearable now. It's almost to the point of no return.

As the air parts for the passing figure, it moves toward me as I'm frozen by anger, ignorance and pity.

My mouth begins to open. I try to speak words that will change the world and send things to their right place, but my body goes rigid.

But the fire does not die.

Come out for a new future

They're all around you.

Take Jim, the architecture major that lives down the hall in your dorm, who plays his music too loud at night. Or Sheila, the girl that pointed out a couple of your mistakes on your calculus assignment. Or Dan, the guy you totally crushed on last year, except he didn't seem interested in you at all.

Take your boss or your employee. Your sister or your brother. That old single guy that lives down the street from you who would always yell at you when you were young for getting snow on his sidewalk. Just look around. They're all around you.

They might be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered. But one thing's for sure: They're not straight. And most of the time, you wouldn't know. Unless they come out to you. That's what today is all about.

Oct. 11 is National Coming Out Day. It is a day to commemorate the act of coming out – which is a unique and scary experience, take it from one who has done it dozens of times – and it is also a day to "do it," to face the truth and to reveal to those close (and maybe to those not so close) something important about one's self.

Contrary to stereotype, GLBT people don't just stick out of the crowd, especially not in Nebraska. You may look at the population and think for lack of seeing stereotypically gay people, that there are no gay people here. But rest assured, they are here, and they are far more common than you might think.

Homosexuality, after all, is a part of humanity. It shows up in some form in almost every known culture, both in those present and in those that we know about from the past, and in a majority of them, homosexuality plays a functional and socially accepted role.

It is our society, which marginalizes and oppresses the natural expression of homosexual affections (both platonic and sexual), that is abnormal.

The reasons homosexuality has always been with us, and always will be, remain open to debate, but there is something about it that we can't shake. You don't have to have divorced parents or a tough childhood. It is as normal as heterosexuality; it's just not as prominent.

Since it is so against the nature of humanity to condemn homosexuality, GLBT persons now are trying to push forward and change our abnormal culture. They are attempting to change the moral values of society so that homosexual acts can be seen as morally acceptable.

Conservatives rail against this movement as immoral. But the alternative is no better. Homosexuality will exist in some form; it cannot be eliminated entirely. Even in societies that condemn it, homosexuality continues to exist. It just takes on a darker, more insidious form, which further fuels the moral sanction against it.

Homosexuality in this country, for example, before the '60s, was by necessity secretive. Secrecy leads to brevity, so for many gays, "being homosexual" meant making dangerous arrangements using code words and signals. There was no such thing as a "homosexual relationship" for these people because there wasn't enough air or time for one to exist. The act was purely sexual, purely secret – and thus it was easy to call it evil.

But now there is some air, and conservatives are trying to take that air away, to keep homosexuality evil.

What they don't realize is that as homosexuality takes a more natural position in society, the "acts" themselves will no longer be so necessarily evil. Gays will still sleep around, but gays will also be able to form stable, long term relationships with people they love because then they won't have to be so secretive any more. There won't be as much to hate; not as much "evil."

Coming out is the best way to create the space GLBT people need to thrive. By being visible, by showing that, yes, it is possible to be a normal person and gay, the cultural norm will change, and it will be impossible to keep calling queer love "evil."

So it is our obligation, we being GLBT people, to come out to those that we live with. Homophobia does run rampant, and I won't pretend that there aren't consequences. But it is something we must do to make things better for GLBT of the next generation, in the same way that those before us have made even this column possible. So think about it.

Come out.



Jake Glazeski