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Panel discusses minority gays

By Daniel West
Oregon Daily Emerald

Panelists in a program sponsored by the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Alliance this week shared their experiences with homosexuality in minority communities.

The panel, titled "Color Me Queer," was part of Pride Week, which concludes today. Participants spoke about how their individual communities react to homosexuality.

An Asian woman said Korean gays were beaten and killed in the streets to demonstrate that homosexuality was not tolerated. On the other hand, a panelist from Hawaii said homosexuals were completely ignored there, although everyone knew they existed.

Panelists also discussed the double discrimination they face as minorities and homosexuals. A Latino man said he confronts intolerance from several groups. First, he encounters racism as a Latino in a predominately white community. Second, he must deal with being a gay in the Latino community. Third, he faces racism within the predominately white gay community.

Latinos are more accepting of drag queens because they are viewed as a form of entertainment — they serve a purpose. But homosexuality may be looked down upon because it is viewed as having no purpose.

"There may be more racism within these communities because there's a greater need for minorities to stick together in this community," said Erika Armsbury, ASUO multicultural advocate.

Panel members emphasized that the gay community itself does not deal with racism. Many white gay males believe that all black men have large penises and are good in bed, they said. Within the gay community black men are often reduced

to the size of their penises, one panelist said.

The white gay community also calls on other minority gays only when they are needed, panelists said. Minority gays are ignored the rest of the time.

Women are in a vulnerable position because they are physically attacked more often than men are, panelists said, and they may be attacked for being a woman. The attacker may suspect that the woman is a lesbian.

Some women also are attacked because of their ethnicity, panelists said. Some of the panelists who were in interracial relationships said they received stares and looks from white gays and lesbians.

A major concern for all the panelists was the lack of support their individual communities give them. Many minority gays do not receive emotional support from their communities and are dependent upon the gay community, panelists said.

The Latino man said the local Latino community does not support him and there is no way for him to be a part of it. The gay community is the only place where he can get support, he said.

However, some panelists believe they have developed strong support groups in both gay and straight communities.

"When I first came out, I told the friends that I could trust," Armsbury said. "I was building up a support group. In Eugene, I don't have to hide because I feel safe here. Many people don't have a problem with my sexuality."

"When I go home, I'm known there. People know my family and we've lived there for years. I'm more aware of my surroundings. I'm really aware of holding hands with females friends," Armsbury said.

BALZER

Continued from Page 1

President Myles Brand, such as creating a job like Balzer's. The task force also recommended training be provided for student services in order to make employees aware of gay, lesbian and bisexual concerns.

The special task force turned into a University standing committee that currently advises Balzer. The committee consists of students, staff and faculty who deal with gay, lesbian and bisexual concerns.

Currently working out of the dean of students office, Balzer serves as a resource for anyone dealing with gay, lesbian and bisexual issues.

"A lot of ignorance about issues often times leads to fear," Balzer said. "If people can sit down and ask questions they can move beyond being afraid."

Balzer said things are better

than in the past.

"I believe that students are more sensitive to different people on campus, including gays, lesbians and bisexuals. I think we still have a long way to go, though," Balzer said.

Balzer said there is a diverse acceptance of gays, lesbians and bisexuals on campus. However, as more people come out they are more vulnerable, Balzer said.

"There's a rise now of gay, lesbian and bisexual pride," she said. "There is a rise in acceptance and at the same time there is a backlash of intolerance."

Balzer and several of the students who work for her claim that some campus organizations are getting better at dealing with gays, lesbians and bisexuals while others are not. It is a difficult situation, Balzer said.

"You're at a college that promotes acceptance. Harassment and intolerance are not tolerated

'It's the subtle homophobia that we hear a lot about on campus.'

— Jackie Balzer
coordinator of educational and support services

but freedom of thought is accepted," she said.

Overt discrimination is not as common, she said.

"On campus it is certainly becoming less appropriate to beat someone up because they're gay, lesbian or bisexual, but I think it still happens," Balzer said.

Right now there is a core group of people who organize gay, lesbian and bisexual events and a lot of people who support them, Balzer said.

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