

# Disabled community can learn much from lesbian and gay activism

I would like to express my support for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Alliance upon the conclusion of a week dedicated to the celebration of their identity. As a member of the disabled community at the University, I gladly count myself among their allies.

Recognizing that such celebrations can be valuable in raising awareness and cultivating understanding as to what it means to live in a society where (no matter how much certain members of Congress might wish otherwise) diversity is the rule and not the exception.

Having said that, and believing that dialogue fosters the truest sense of understanding, I would like to complicate the

## COMMENTARY

issue slightly by calling into question the assumption that visibility equals celebration and political clout.

As a member of a group of people for whom such visibility is neither a choice nor a right, but rather an unavoidable and occasionally exhausting fact, I can assure you that our conspicuousness is rarely met with celebration and certainly does not provide us with political clout. In fact, what is commonly celebrated about disability is not its existence, but rather the hope that it can eventually be "overcome;" one is said to have succeeded "in spite of," never

"because of" one's disability.

But it is at precisely this juncture that the LGTBTA provides us with inspiration, for in the not-so-distant past these very same platitudes were routinely leveled at those of differing sexual orientations.

The LGTB community rejected them and asserted their right to celebrate difference. Likewise, we find much to celebrate in the fact of disability, in living outside of what is erroneously perceived to be the norm.

As to the form such celebration ought to take, here, too, the LGTBTA serves to inspire us. This inspiration lies not in the idea of "becoming visible," which amounts to a deceptively neat and facile slogan. Indeed,

such sloganeering, while understandably tempting, can actually be quite dangerous — serving to cover and obscure the very complexities the LGTBTA is trying to bring to the forefront.

With its slate of speakers, rallies and panel discussions, the LGTBTA encouraged people to talk about issues. It is this dialogue that will help people to understand what it is like to be an LGTB individual.

So, building upon this example, I would like to invite fellow disabled, handicapped, crippled, differently abled, alter-abled students, faculty and staff to follow the lead of the LGTBTA and start actively talking (or signing) about what it is like to live with their individual differences.

We could also invite the participation of allies, welcoming the support of anyone who recognizes that the statement, "I don't even think of you as disabled," is far from being a compliment.

Rather, it is a denial of a crucial facet of our identity.

Colleen M. Broderick is a graduate student in English

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The Oregon Daily Emerald welcomes your opinions on this and other issues. You may submit a letter no longer than 250 words to the Emerald offices at Suite 300 in the EMU or send us your thoughts via e-mail at [ode@oregon.uoregon.edu](mailto:ode@oregon.uoregon.edu)

## LETTERS

### Thought control

A well-known religious leader recently staged a spectacle. Huge crowds attended. While many disagreed strongly with many of his stated beliefs, they nevertheless were forced — grudgingly — to concede that his overall goals were of good intent.

So, who am I writing about? Pope John Paul II or Louis Farrakhan? You'd know if I included one of the following statements: "He was lionized by the press as the greatest thing since sliced bread, despite the fact that most of his utterances were little more than hoary platitudes;" or, "Ignoring the theme of the event, the media insisted on concentrating on the admittedly many faults of both the man and his credo."

Bill Smeed  
University faculty

### Helmet heads

I had one of those near-death experiences a few weeks ago that compels me (and perhaps gives me the right) to preach to those of you who haven't been to the edge.

While commuting on my bike, I was hit by a car — the driver couldn't see the red light and broad-sided me at 30 mph. My

head and body smashed the driver's windshield before I was thrown to the pavement.

I came out with a broken clavicle, a sprained neck, and a very sore body, but no head injuries. Best of all, I remained alive to tick you off with my sermon about wearing a helmet.

While I was being driven around after the accident, I decided to do a little statistically valid sample of cyclists to see the percentage of riders wearing helmets. Guess what?

Eight out of 10 of you are riding around *without* helmets. Hey, you're invincible, so what's the difference? I decided there are at least two explanations for these results. One is that you've consciously decided you are fatalists — when it's your time, it's your time. The other is that this is the enactment of some classic Darwinian theory.

Those individuals with brains wear helmets and thus preserve their existence. Those without brains have no need of helmets. As they die out, they improve the genetic pool for the helmet wearers. The world becomes a better place.

What can I say? No one can make you wear a helmet. The point is, you're spending good money and the better part of your day trying to fill your head with ideas and potential. Why

let it spill out on the pavement in a pool of gray matter because wearing a helmet doesn't look cool or seems like a pain to lug around?

While I was making my observations, I noticed that the practice of riding the wrong way on a one-way street (on or off the sidewalk) belonged almost fearlessly or cluelessly — you make the call.

End of sermon. I'm alive because I was wearing a helmet. Unfortunately, I can't ride a bike for the time being. Luckily, I can drive my 3,500 pound car, so if you're riding a bike, watch out!

Bill Welch  
Eugene

### War on unborn

The recent 50th anniversaries of the atomic bombings prompted debates about the ethics of warfare. Meanwhile, America's war on prenatal children raged on unabated, routinely trashing every ethical principle.

It has consisted exclusively of literal surgical-fist strikes against the innocent and helpless, intended to preempt the recognition and protections normally accorded at birth. Rather than honor the immunity of non-combatants, it has deliberately targeted them. It has

employed poisonous weapons, refusal of quarters and live dismemberment of the unarmed target population, even subjecting it to experimentation, in contravention of the laws of war and all international standards for the treatment of prisoners.

Yet the war planners continue to resist providing even the most basic safeguards — such as information about human development — rightly fearful that piercing their veil of ignorance will render their proxies unwilling to continue the carnage.

Alfred Lemmo  
Dearborn, Mich.

### GTF union

The recent story (ODE, Sept. 28) about a new tentative agreement between the Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation (GTF) and the University should raise more questions than it answers for GTFs who value union democracy, the continued existence and continued success of their union, and fair treatment for employees of their union.

Former president Bob Roberts notes that a mail-ballot ratification election is set for mid-October. Since Roberts makes no mention of a meeting and, as of this writing, no meeting notice has been sent to GTFs, are we to

assume that voting will go on without the usual pre-ratification discussion meeting?

Opportunity for GTFs to discuss proposed contract changes with their elected leaders is essential to union democracy and must not be abandoned. GTFs have a right to meet with and question those responsible for negotiations.

Finally, we have questions about recent changes in the GTF office.

The office is now staffed by people who can't answer simple questions. Where are regular staff members Diane Rau and Larry Williams? Who is the GTF president? Why are GTF members being kept in the dark? We are aware that contract negotiations have reached an impasse, and we are concerned that the continuity and expertise that Diane and Larry have provided for several years (and through several negotiations with the University) may be lost.

The GTF Executive Board must act now to schedule a meeting where these important issues can receive the attention of the voting membership.

Yvonne Rauch  
Ernest Stromberg  
graduate students  
and 17 co-signers

## THE ASUO WOMEN'S CENTER PRESENTS...

### WOMEN'S HEALTH SYMPOSIUM

#### Today's Events —

11:00 A.M.—12:00 P.M.

Cedar A:  
Lesbian health concerns

Cedar B:  
Women of color health issues

12:30 P.M.—1:30 P.M.

Cedar B:  
Middle Eastern belly dancing

1:00 P.M.—2:00 P.M.

Cedar A:  
Menstrual empowerment  
through ritual and herbs

Cedar D:  
Midwifery: Post-partum

2:00 P.M.—3:00 P.M.

Cedar C:  
Introduction to yoga and  
relaxation

Cedar F:  
Pesticides and women's health

3:00 P.M.—4:00 P.M.

Cedar D: Safe sex in 1995

4:30 P.M.—5:30 P.M.

219 Gerlinger  
Dance and body therapies

## LOTS OF BANG, LITTLE BUCKS.

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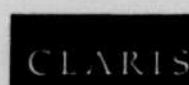


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