

Homophobic ignorance comes from fear

COMMENTARY

Nicole Kristal

Two types of people exist in this world: those who are ignorant and those who are well-informed. Before I left the Bay Area, I had encountered mostly those who were well-informed. I suppose that goes along with my father's theory that Northern California is the socially advanced compared with the rest of the United States.

It is advanced because geographically, San Francisco, one of the most (if not the most) liberal cities in the world, is at its center. My father did not mention this to me in his theory, it's just something he believed.

When most people who don't live in the Bay Area think of San Francisco, they think: "Wait, isn't that the place where everyone is gay?" You get the word "gay" if you're lucky. The really ignorant ones refer to homosexuals as "homos" or "fags."

But homophobia exists everywhere, even in the Bay Area, and especially in Oregon.

The first time I experienced homophobia was in my senior high school's auto shop class in California where I was the only girl. Two incredibly ignorant juniors, resembling in many ways Beavis and Butthead, would start insulting each other.

"Fag! Ha. Ha. Ha."

"Yeah? Well, you're gay!"

"Hey Mr. Davis, he's gay. He wants you!"

The first time this happened I didn't say anything, though my blood was beginning to boil. Could people this stupid actually exist? The next day, these two fools performed the same act for the next three days. On the third day, I said something.

"Do you know what homophobia is?"

The two fools looked at each other, and I could immediately tell that they had no clue as to what the word meant.

"What? A homo? Yeah, I know what a homo is. Him!"

And Beavis pointed to Butthead and started insulting him in their usual derogatory fashion.

After that day, the two guys intentionally insulted me as soon as I would arrive in class. They knew their words were irritating me.

I guess they irritated my teacher as well because one day he hid their car keys. He also stopped calling them by their names and started using a new nickname he made up: "Weenie."

My teacher was the last person I would have expected to defend people's sexual orientation because he was a big guy who liked racing cars,

"Homophobia is a disease of the mind and a disease of ignorance that is as ugly as racism."

speaking gruffly and was from Nebraska.

From that day on, I learned that I couldn't stereotype people as far as their ignorance was concerned. They would have to prove it to me. Little did I know that once I reached Oregon, so many would.

There are some girls at the University who, through the course of conversation, have proved their homophobia to me. One of the girls referred to a number of lesbians in her Women's Studies class. She was afraid to be nice to one of the lesbians in her class because she was afraid that the woman was attracted to her.

In a state of shock, I asked her if there were any lesbians where she was from. She said she wasn't exposed to that sort of thing in her town. Another said that the idea of two men she knew having sex was "scary."

What could be scary about two people loving each other and having sex?

Homophobia is a disease of the mind and a disease of ignorance that is as ugly as racism. But, your average homophobic individual will not see these two diseases as equally evil, unless he or she is also racist and sees both of the attitudes as just.

Nonetheless, the average inexperienced, ignorant homophobic will assume the following about gay, lesbian and bisexual people: They have no taste and will screw anything that walks; they have chosen to sexually stray from the norm to inconvenience the straight community and should not have the right to be who they really are because it is socially undesirable.

What the homophobic does not realize is that being judgmental, fearful and unaccepting of another's lifestyle is unbelievably undesirable. It can make a beautiful person ugly. It can make an intelligent person stupid.

The other thing one should remember about homophobics is that their actions are usually performed out of fear and out of their lack of security in their own sexuality. After all, the last one you would suspect to be gay would be the one with the biggest problem with it, right? Wrong.

Nicole Kristal is a journalism major at the University.

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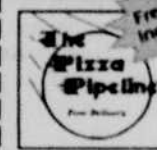
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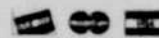
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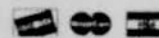
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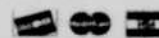
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