

Students respond to page of letters from previous issue

Dear Editor,

I think there is a situation at hand that is totally unacceptable. Concerning the letter to the editor in last week's paper, where people were responding to the gay student who runs the blood drive and can't himself give blood, there is no excuse to only publish such vulgar hateful responses and no others.

I was told that the positive letters greatly outnumbered the negative ones and yet the larger stack was "misplaced." I find this highly unlikely and entirely either irresponsible or vile should it be intentional.

I don't feel like I should have to pull my punches; you allowed things but horribly close-minded and ignorant letters to be published. If people are allowed to express those kind of views, views that scream out "We are ignorant and proud of it!" then we certainly deserve that.

A place of learning should also, at best, be a place of tolerance. Our campus is a place where people come together from all over from all walks of life to learn. Is the lesson we want remembered the most to be intolerance? I hope not; that is a lesson taught too much anymore.

There were a number of people hurt and angered by the incredibly insensitive and ignorant letters that were published. That is surely uncalled for. I believe that the person in charge of that news act should have to apologize publicly and personally for their actions regarding this already sensitive situation.

I hope that the paper can keep up its usual level of balance and entertainment in the future. I was highly disappointed in the lack of professionalism shown last week. I hope that doesn't occur again; doesn't reflect well on *The Print* as a whole for that kind of a page to be published.

On one last aspect, not only is it the fault of the person who published the article, but the editor is also at fault for not catching the error and correcting it appropriately. I would be more understanding if it was to only go through one person, but for two people to knowingly put such hurtful material in is most definitely unacceptable.

Greg Stein

Dear Editor,

I've read the article on Mitch Knudsen and the letters printed last week, and I whole heartedly disagree with the majority of responses. The ignorance and malice shown in the letters were equal to those found on any internet forum, not what I would expect to read in a college paper.

HIV may have been a bigger problem for gay males in the past, but now it is common for heterosexual men and women as well. Everyone who is sexually active is at risk. The American Red Cross now tests all the blood it gives for HIV six times and refuses the blood if even one test is positive.

It seems to me that this is more about a silly fear of homosexuality being contagious than actually contracting HIV. That said, only two out of the 11 letters were remotely supportive of the gay community. I'm not at all convinced that those could be the only letters received, noting how ridiculous the FDA regulation is. It seemed completely one-sided and biased, and it makes me wonder what the staff of this publication is teaching inexperienced writers when only one side is presented and the other ignored.

Kathryn Parker

Unprinted letters to the Editor

Editor's Note: The letters below are six out of the 39 letters that were originally submitted after the article "Sexual orientation prevents male student from giving blood" was published. Because a disproportionate representation of the general sentiment was presented, *The Print* is providing a sample of the original, unprinted supportive responses.

Dear Editor,

To not be able to give blood because you are gay is unfair. To hold such a judgment on gay men is like still holding judgment on African Americans. Everyone should be treated equally no matter their sexual orientation.

I feel like the bias this country has on gays and lesbians is almost like black and white segregation. It's almost cruel in a way.

Straight people who find gays promiscuous, even though gays and straights are just the same as straight people, get to decide whether they can do certain things, like give blood and get married.

Just because you like someone of the same sex doesn't mean that you are a bad person or you should be treated differently. People cannot help who they like or how they feel about someone! No one should ever be told they can't give blood because of something that they can't help.

- Heather Asquith

Dear Editor:

In response to the article written, "Sexual orientation prevents male student from giving blood," it's such a wonderful thing that the male written about is able to coordinate and organize a blood drive. Yet, it does not seem right that he himself is unable to donate blood due to his sexuality.

He has been tested, claims he only has one partner, and there is blood testing now that picks up such things they would be looking for in blood. It is sad and almost unforgiving how someone puts so much time into organizing a blood drive but is unable to give blood because of MSM.

- Samantha Posvar

Dear Editor:

Upon reading your article, I couldn't help but feel disgusted - not because I have a prejudice about homosexuals but because people are so native and stereotypical.

I personally don't agree with homosexuality, but I'm not going to try to stop someone else from making his or her own choice.

The idea that all gay men have AIDS or some other STD is ridiculous. I know two people personally who are infected with HIV, and neither one of them is gay.

If the American Red Cross wants blood to save lives, it shouldn't matter what the donor's sexual orientation is as long as the blood can be used to save lives. Like mentioned in the article, "they check every unit of blood."

I think it's great Mitch Knudsen continues to help plan and be a part of the blood drive even though he is unable to donate.

- Heather Williams

Dear Editor:

It is my opinion that gay men who have had sex should be able to give blood. Their blood could help save lives. Restricting their ability to donate only hurts people - both those who wish to donate and those who need to donate.

With modern technology, not letting these men donate is bordering on extreme ignorance.

With the advances in technology in the last 30 years, these men should be able to donate blood. Every drop of blood is already tested. These men could also get tested before the drive and bring proof that they are HIV-free. Reform needs to happen in the Red Cross' blood donation restrictions.

- Tyler Dearborn

Dear Editor,

When I read this article, it made me feel angry due to the fact that the American Red Cross is supposed to help people by receiving as many donations as possible. Though some have the disease, the assumption that "all" gays have HIV is ridiculous.

If gays were allowed to donate, they could save so many more lives. Obviously, the more people who can be potential donors and can actually donate create a higher chance of saving lives.

I believe gay men should be allowed and be more accepted. It's pure reality now. They shouldn't be mistreated or disrespected by who they are.

Stereotypes are stereotypes, and I'm disappointed that the American Red Cross doesn't see anything but the "gay man who has HIV." What does that say about the American Red Cross, in a sense that they want to save as many lives as possible? They're contradicting their beliefs because they refuse gay men's donations.

- Brittany Kolb

Dear Editor,

After reading the headline "Sexual orientation prevents male students from giving blood," I was angry.

How can this affect the blood so much? I do not like how the Red Cross only discriminates against homosexual and not lesbians. Every person should be allowed to give blood no matter who they would sleep with. Everyone has the same chance as everyone else to get a STD or HIV, no matter his or her sex partner.

It makes me sick to think that the person who set up such a great cause cannot even give blood himself. His blood could save a life just as well as my blood or your blood - and that's the overall reason for a blood drive.

- Magen Pettitt

Editor in Chief responds in wake of errors in Opinion section

Megan Koler

Editor in Chief

Last week in the Opinion section, *The Print* published letters in response to the article entitled "Sexual orientation prevents male student from giving blood." Due to an error in the organization of the 39 letters received, the vast majority of those printed were of an anti-homosexual nature or in support of the Federal Drug Administration's ban on gay men giving blood. It was an absolutely unintended misrepresentation of the proportion of supportive letters to ones opposing the American Red Cross. Normally, *The Print* strives to show an even distribution of all submitted

sentiments. In this case, nearly 75 percent of the letters received were from students who were as outraged by the FDA ban as Mitch Knudsen and Carol Burnell. An example of the supportive letters is provided in this issue of the newspaper.

To anyone who has been hurt by the error: On behalf of the rest of *The Print* staff, I deeply apologize. However, it is our obligation to publish as many responses to our articles as possible. The editorial staff will never turn away a letter simply because we disagree with the views being expressed by the writer. It is our opinion that every individual has a right to be heard, even those who express beliefs that some people may consider "close-minded" or "ignorant."

In response to the claims that *The Print* was purposely showcasing only the negative letters as an

elaborate means to push some kind of anti-homosexual agenda, I can only say that those accusations are ridiculously absurd and offensive. I personally went to a lot of trouble to research and write my article about the fact that Knudsen was unable to contribute to the blood drive because the basic rights of all students, staff and faculty are of great concern to this newspaper and to me. Unfortunately, because we are only a weekly publication, there hasn't been an opportunity to explain this misunderstanding until today.

I still thank the students who sent in letters, and I encourage everyone to continue to write in should they feel so inclined. Even though *The Print's* intentions were misunderstood, seeing so many students come to the defense of members of their community is encouraging. Please never stop.