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Anti-Discriminatory Language Controversy

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URI, Come see the Stars!

Grab some delicious buttery popcorn, a cool soft drink, and a mind that wants to be educated and entertained, and welcome yourself to the 2nd Annual Year of "Outfllicks."

A film series sponsored by the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Association and the Committee to Eliminate Homophobia and Heterosexism, "Outfllicks" is kicking off this Thursday with Before Stonewall, a film centered around the history of homosexual America.

Featuring interviews with persons such as Allen Ginsberg, the film should help "clear up the misconceptions that the gay, lesbian, and bisexual civil rights movement started before Stonewall," according to Gary Burkholder, president of the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Association.

"There's a lot of historical, political, and social events before Stonewall, that haven't been passed down," Burkholder said, "It's very important to understand our history."

After the film, Christine Nickerson, president of Rhode Island Alliance for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights, will speak on and encourage a discussion about the civil rights movement since Stonewall.

She said she will talk about her organization, what it does, and its recent project involving voter initiatives.

Nickerson said that the series, or anything on gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, is beneficial. This event in particular, she said, is good because the film talks about the beginning of the movement and she will talk about the events before Stonewall.

Film, speaker series offers alternative

To the Cigar:

I am writing to inform you of a unique opportunity happening on this campus, tonight, November 17 at 7:00 pm in White Hall Auditorium. Outfllicks, the lesbian-gay film and speaker series is presenting Homoteens, a video by 5 gay and lesbian teenagers about their experiences. After the film Wendy Becker, facilitator of The Way Out, a support group for gay, lesbian and questioning youth, will be the featured speaker. Accompanying her will be several current and former members of the group.

This particular presentation of Outfllicks is important in highlighting the unique issues associated with being a gay or lesbian young adult such as coming out at school and the impact this has on one's family. This evening offers a wonderful opportunity for educators and anyone who works with or plans to work with young people, to hear directly from young adults who experience these issues every day in their lives.

Everyone is invited to join in the dialogue. Understanding the experiences of gay and lesbian youth is important to everyone, regardless of sexual orientation.

Gary Burkholder
Graduate Student Council
Clarification on article about discriminatory language

To the Cigar:

I want to clarify the article on March 18 which reported on The Committee to Eliminate Heterosexism and Homophobia. In particular, the statement about non-discriminatory language was misconstrued and taken out of context. The committee is not suggesting that the terms “mother” and “father” are inherently discriminatory, nor that they should be abolished. The reporter was referring to one item (out of 12) from a draft of a paper which offers examples of what a non-homophobic/non-heterosexist campus would look like. It suggests that, in documents which refer generally to couples and families, language be used which is inclusive of different types of couples and families (including gay and lesbian ones).

While language is important, it is not the primary focus of the committee, which is working in various ways to help create a university community in which gays, lesbians and bisexuals (along with all members of the community) feel safe and respected and receive fair and equal treatment. Anyone is welcome to attend these meetings and share in these efforts.

-Diane J. Goodman, Member, Committee to Eliminate Heterosexism and Homophobia, and Coordinator, Human Relations Education
Members of the Committee to Eliminate Homophobia and Heterosexism meet to discuss the topic of discriminatory language in the university community. From left to right: Albert Lott, Gwenneth Rae, Diane Goodman and Angel Tritthardt.

Committee tries to promote anti-discriminatory language

by Jim Beardsworth
Assistant News Editor

At a recent meeting of the Committee to Eliminate Homophobia and Heterosexism, the group said that they think language — language in speech, language in letters and brochures — should be made non-discriminatory. Presently, the group is targeting language in announcements and other public documents that they think is discriminatory. For example, instead of referring to people in announcements as mothers and fathers, they would be referred to as parents or co-habitants.

especially among minority groups and language is a political tool which often gives negative connotation,” said Gwenneth Rae, committee member. She also went on to say that it was important for people with different sexual preferences to state for themselves where their sexual preferences lie rather than others labeling them because “the ability to name one’s self gives one power.”

The Committee to Eliminate Homophobia and Heterosexism state their intention is to make URI a safe and free place for all gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals. This committee was formed last November and consists of faculty, staff, and students regardless of their sexual preference.

Currently, the group is working to make the university view gays, lesbians, and bisexuals not as a segregated group, but rather as equals among all students, staff and faculty. One such attempt at this is that they are trying to make changes in how policy statements of the university are worded. Rather than having the people singled out, they would rather have sexual preference included in a non-discriminatory way. They are also trying to bring more gay comedians, speakers, and musicians to the campus.

In addition, President Carter policy on discrimination in which he states that those people with sexual differences “are important aspects of URI’s rich cultural diversity.”

Also, the group is working to adapt the contract of the American Association of University Professors so that homosexual couples that live together would be able to receive the same joint benefits as any married couple. This would include the acquisition of joint health care benefits and memberships into health clubs.

The group is also working to raise funds to bring two males to the university to lecture about how they are try-
Bush is a great magician because he does have the leadership abilities to get things done. But he hides them under a vacillating veneer that makes people distrust him. It is too bad that he does not have a truly strong opponent coming up in this election year.

**Give us something other than ‘politically correct’ terms**

To the Cigar:
I would like to spend a few moments commenting on the article describing the recent work of the Committee to Eliminate Homophobia and Heterosexism that appeared in the March 18 issue of the Cigar. What these well-intentioned people are doing reminds me of how language is perverted by the state in George Orwell’s book “1984.” Apparently, I am no longer a husband and father; I am instead a co-habit and parent. Well, with respect for what these people are trying to do, let me state that I did not get married and I became her husband (we continue to co-habit). Subsequently, we became parents. However, I am the father of my two daughters (may I use this term or will it too be judged discriminatory) in both the biological sense and the parenting sense. Further, I have friends who are gay. One of them is the father of a son. He was a husband, but he is not now.

These words are not discriminatory. They are descriptive of our relationships to others. Father refers to a male parent, biological or not. Mother refers to a female parent. Co-habitation indicates merely that people live in the same residence; it says nothing about the relationships of those social relationships between people. I do not believe that we need a committee (politically correct or otherwise) to help us to define our relationships with others. Perhaps the Committee to Eliminate Homophobia and Heterosexism could find more substantive matters to address in its laudable battle to fight discrimination. Alternatively, we could form the Committee to Eliminate Pompous Behavior by the Politically Correct.

In closing, remember: War is peace, freedom is slavery. Big Brother is watching.

—David R. Nelson
Associate Professor

‘Doubleplusungood’

To the Cigar:
I am so glad that the Committee to Eliminate Homophobia and Heterosexism has decided to eliminate pejorative words like “mother” and “father.” I always thought that those words were doubleplusungood.

—Winston Smith a.k.a.
Timothy Creegan

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*Doubleplusungood*