

Get in the Zone?

An Editorial From The Committee

As we all settle into the fall semester, we at the Committee on LGBT (Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender) Concerns want to welcome all newcomers to campus, and introduce our efforts on everyone's behalf. Our hope is to create "safe zones" on campus to increase support, dialogue, and education about issues relevant to the civil rights and understanding of the LGBT community. This year you will be seeing the symbol of these hopes as we launch the "SAFE ZONE" campaign through the Unity Center. Anyone interested will have the chance to learn more about how you can become an ally or supporter of LGBT concerns. Are you up to the challenge?

This year has been an incredibly exciting and challenging time for the cause of same-sex marriage in this country. Whether you like marriage as an institution or not, the dialogue about same-sex marriage in the courts, churches, temples, schools, legislatures and the U.S. Congress have forced people to think about and confront equity issues with renewed passions. As never before, people have had to truly think about what it means to discriminate against a class of people, around a set of traditions and rights that most straight people take totally for granted. It warmed our hearts to hear straight, gay, and lesbian allies give passionate speeches of support and put their political careers on the lines in the Massachusetts constitutional convention process, advocating for the equality of gays and lesbians and their right to marry. On our campus, students joined the activism for same-sex marriage and went to work in Rhode Island. There is much more to do, but there is no turning back. We will not be silenced by those who would condemn LGBT people as second class citizens.

The dialogue on same-sex marriage has helped create more "safe zones" for LGBT people by giving us a focus and a cause to discuss. But here on our campus we need to take it one person, classroom, office, dining table, or dorm room at a time. Acceptance of the diversity of all people and promotion of everyone's civil rights is the sentiment of most LGBT activists on this campus. One step in getting to this ultimate vision is increased visibility and education about the specific concerns of LGBT'ers. The recently publicized racist incident on campus is an outrage to all people of justice and exemplifies the continued need

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Out On Campus Editorial Board:

Brian Baker, Mildred Bates, Wendy Becker, Ellen Bigler, Lesley Bogad, Paola Ferrario, Mike Gorman, Mary Ball Howkins, Diane Martell, Jan Park, Elizabeth Rowell, Daniel Scott

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Oh, the places I've been, the weddings I've seen...

Submitted by **Mary Ball Howkins**

In the months following the legalization of same-sex marriages in Massachusetts, several different, yet unique same-sex weddings came to mind over the summer. I attended each of them in the years before the legalization. As I recalled them, two struck me as traditional, at least by heterosexual standards, because of the settings, vows, clothes and accessories. The first happened back in the 1980's, when LGBT marriages were called "commitment ceremonies." At that time two men in their late 20's pledged their mutual commitment in a gathering of friends assembled in the large living room of an old-fashioned country house. Each man wore a formal dark suit, exchanged rings at the minister's signal, and at the end the pair was pronounced "husband and husband." Before the ceremony there had been some light-hearted discussion among the guests and the couple about just how to frame that pronouncement, since no dog-eared book of etiquette existed to propose a time-honored tradition. The minister clearly had had experience conducting such ceremonies but the rest of us teetered between awe and giggles, not having been present at such a solemn and unconventional occasion. Afterward we feasted on wonderful food prepared entirely by the couple, and brought by them to their friend's home.

The second, more recent, wedding that left a strong impression on me was one where two women vowed a new partnership. In an historic church north of Boston, they took vows during a traditional high-church service. Each wore a lace-edged wedding gown with train, one with veil, and both carried floral bouquets with only the most subtle color difference between them. Guests dressed formally and the mood was thoroughly solemn during the lengthy service. Outside the church afterward, the mood was more upbeat. Guests showered the couple with rice and applauded as the two drank champagne by a waiting limousine. Like most receptions (this one in a seaside restaurant with a sit-down meal), there was a combination of formality and impromptu fun. The couple followed all the typical conventions: music,

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OUT ON CAMPUS
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The Objectives of the RIC Safe Zone Program

Submitted by Aaron Bruce

- To create a campus culture that is more welcoming and affirming of LGBTQ students.
- To increase the visibility of LGBTQ students and their concerns.
- To increase campus awareness of the issues facing LGBTQ students.
- To provide safe havens for LGBTQ students.
- To demonstrate support for LGBTQ issues and students.
- To create a supportive network of allies.

This program is highly recommended and encouraged for:

- Personnel who staff a front office and regularly greet and interact with students.
- Campus Life/Student Affairs staff.
- College Deans, Directors, and Chairs.
- Housing and Residential Life Staff
- Campus Police Staff and Officers.

The proposed RIC Safe Zone process:

1. Interested Faculty, Staff, Administrators and RAs will be able to inquire about obtaining a sticker from the Unity Center.
2. The person will then receive a booklet explaining important vocabulary, resources and support contacts. It is important that each person reviews the material before obtaining a sticker
3. The person must then return to the Unity Center to briefly discuss the commitment related to being an ally. (confidentiality, support, social implications, etc.)



Planning for the future

1. Design and order Safe Zone/ Ally Stickers (Fall 2004).
2. Unity Center and the Committee create a Safe Zone/ Ally guide booklet (Fall 2004).
3. Unity Center and the Safe Zone Steering Committee distribute stickers to existing allies (Fall 2004).
4. Unity Center and the Committee create a Safe Zone website (Fall 2004).
5. Unity Center and the Committee develop a Safe Zone training (Spring 2005).
6. Unity Center and the Committee uncover challenges of the Safe Zone Program (Fall 2005).
7. Unity Center and the Committee evaluate existing protocols for reporting hate crimes (Spring 2005).

The In's & Out's Of A "Safe Zone"

Adapted from <http://www.dso.iastate.edu/lgbtss/safezone/howto.html> by Mike Gorman

What May I Expect?

As a result of posting a Safe Zone sticker or window cling:

- ▼ You may find that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students, faculty, and staff censor their speech less, providing a more genuine exchange with you.
- ▼ You may find that students, faculty, and staff will be more at ease and will anticipate a non-judgmental atmosphere in your workplace.
- ▼ You may never notice a difference in the interactions you have with students, faculty, and staff, but you will make a difference.
- ▼ You will make a personal contribution to improving RIC's campus environment and the lives of its community members.

How To Be a "Safe Zone"

There are many things that you can do to make you and your workspace feel like a Safe Zone for LGBT students and colleagues.

Here are some of our suggestions:

- ▼ Believe that our campus is enriched and enlivened by the diversity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.
- ▼ Be aware of the presence of LGBT students, faculty, and staff and be willing to engage in genuine dialog and interaction.
- ▼ Be willing to discuss issues impacting LGBT people's lives in a non-judgmental manner.
- ▼ Know LGBT resources and be willing to refer students to support and information resources on campus and in the community.
- ▼ Comfortably use inclusive language, avoid stereotyping, and do not assume everyone is heterosexual.
- ▼ Maintain confidentiality.

What Else Can I Do

- ▼ Acquaint yourself with lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgenders. Learn more about LGBT culture by reading books, making friends, attending functions, and celebrating!
- ▼ Challenge homophobia and heterosexism (e.g. remarks, jokes, behaviors, cartoons, language, etc.)
- ▼ Continue to educate yourself about the "coming out" process.

“Weddings”, Continued from Pg.1

a first dance, toasts, a display of presents, and a tossing of bouquets.

The third ceremony was the most public and the most dramatically staged. The favored site was a grassy area beside the swan-boat pond in Boston Garden. The more conservatively dressed of the two men waited with the minister near the water's edge, while his partner walked in slow procession across a bridge and down stone steps to the pond level. Two white-garbed flower girls preceded him. The first scattered rose petals as she walked. The waiting partner, of Scottish descent, dressed in a dark blue suit. The processing partner dressed in a manner more in tune with his African-Brazilian heritage, and with Brazilian carnival. He wore a three-piece white brocade suit. The outer jacket, open in the front, descended down to his ankles and was crowned by a starched stand-up collar that reached well up beyond his ears. All edges of the jacket, vest and pants were plied with gold piping. On his shaved head he wore a rhinestone diadem. Tall, stately and thin, he made such an unusual visual spectacle that scores of Bostonians fell into line behind him and the girls, and followed them to witness the ceremony. In the end, the onlookers out-numbered the invited guests. A soloist sang in English and Portuguese while a limousine waited where the procession began. The upbeat reception offered a multi-tiered wedding cake ringed by perhaps 100 hand-dipped chocolates, a traditional Brazilian tribute to a couple.

All three of these couples were of necessity innovators in the realm of marriage tradition, yet they borrowed features that had served couples for decades, even centuries. The last of the three seemed the most deliberately staged to affirm a same-sex partnership as a public political statement, as well as a contrast of diverse cultural styles meticulously and artfully balanced. Legalization of same-sex marriage will, I image, inspire as much, or more, creativity in tradition as the years pass.

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to educate and confront small minded individuals within and outside our campus community, on all matters of diversity and respect. We hope you will consider conducting “safe zone” conversations in all your affairs. Ultimately no discrimination will be accepted and allies will continue to come forward around diversity struggles as they continue to emerge on campus. No one is safe until we all are safe. Let us take up the challenge of creating “safe zone” for all.

An Appropriate “Bushism”...

“We must reduce the role and scope of the federal government, returning it to the limited role our forefathers envisioned when they wrote the tenth amendment to the Constitution, giving the states all power not specifically granted to the federal government.” (As quoted in The Washington Post Magazine, September 19, 1999.)

Reality Check: On January 20, 2004, President Bush proposed a constitutional amendment to prevent states from legalizing gay marriage. Weisberg, J. (2004) Bushisms-The first term in his own special words. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Submitted to Out On Campus by the 16 year old son of
Elizabeth Rowell

What Can You Do to Support GLBTQQ* Young People.

Submitted by Wendy Becker

- 1. Make no assumptions about a person's sexuality.** People will not discuss issues of sexual identity if you have already assumed they are heterosexual. Try not to be gender specific or heterosexist in conversation. For instance, use neutral language like “Are you seeing anyone” instead of “Do you have a boyfriend.”
- 2. Visibility is key.** Walk with a gay-affirming button or sticker. Post a lesbian-focused poster or flyer. Have a brochure, book, or other sign of support available in your office or room. This will identify you as a nonjudgmental person to talk to and will hopefully allow a glbtqq young person to break his/her silence with you.
- 3. Support and validate feelings about sexual orientation without judgment.** Let a person know that you support him or her, can talk about the issue, and are glad he or she told you. Also let the person know that you know many other people who share these feelings and experiences.
- 4. Do not impose a label.** If a person comes to you and tells you she has a girlfriend, do not refer to her as a lesbian. You may be labeling in a way that is too scary or simply not correct. Reflect back with their words. People might identify with other words (bisexual, queer or gay) or may not want a label at all.
- 5. Challenge homophobia.** The more visible the response is to negative language or behavior, the safer the environment becomes. Respond to homophobic comments of friends, coworkers, and classmates sincerely and immediately. Work to change homophobic and heterosexist environments.
- 6. Coming out is an individual process without a definite path.** Help people assess their own environment, support system, and possible outcomes. The decision when, whether, and to what degree people come out is theirs. You should neither try to push them out or keep them closeted.
- 7. Learn about and refer to community organizations who specifically work with the glbt population.** Familiarize yourself with resources for individuals and families. Call them in advance of referral to ensure they are ongoing.
- 8. Come learn more about the challenges LGBTQQ students face in the schools,** and how educators can work to improve the school environment. On Saturday, November 6, RIC will hold its annual Promising Practices Conference for educators and RIC students. The keynote speaker will be Paula Rothenberg, presenting “And Justice for All: Social Justice Teaching and a Curriculum of Inclusion.” Rhode Island's own Youth Pride, which advocates for LGBTQQ youth, will present a workshop entitled “‘That's So Gay’: Creating Safe Learning Environments for Academic Achievement of LGBTQQ Students.” For more information go online at <http://www.ric.edu/uap/promisingpractices.html>, or call co-chairs Mustafa Ozcan (456-8654) or EJ Min (456-8646).

*Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning

Straight Talk From Mz. Direction

Mz. Direction is the loving child of a dancing queen and a well known television personality. Her advice is by no means the final word on a topic in any other world but her own. She speaks from her heart and recently collagened lips. Holding a degree from the school of hard knocks, Mz. Direction will do her best to answer your "queries."



Dear Mz. Direction,

I have noticed that several of my colleagues are very interested in these "Safe Zone" stickers rumored to be appearing on campus soon. I consider myself a supporter of the LGBT community but I am not sure that I am best prepared to serve as a safe resource for some of the issues LGBT students may face. I have already overheard people saying that everyone in my office better get one of the stickers or else. So maybe I should just get one. I am very confused. My question is two-fold. What should I do? And what does "or else" even mean?

Yours truly,
Stuck on the Sticker

My dear Stuck,

When Mz. Direction receives a two-fold question, she always gives a two-fold answer, so here is yours. You ask what you "should" do but I think you know the answer to that question already. If you feel hesitant at all about posting the sticker, you should not hang it up. Presenting yourself as a "safe zone" implies much more than just basic support of the LGBT community. It implies that you are ready to keep your mind open about any potential discussion topics that may arise, that you are relatively knowledgeable about related resources in your area, and that you are not going to spit your chocolate milk out when a person brings a concern to you. You do not have to know all the necessary facts a person may need but you should have an awareness of how best to refer the person and a noticeable level of comfort discussing LGBT concerns.

Now as for "Or else" and what it means, pardon my harsh response, but pressure of that kind seems very "high school" and immature. So you have two options, ask you co-workers to meet me outside by the lockers after gym class so we can "rumble" or politely pull aside someone you trust and express your concerns. A person who truly understands the goals and responsibilities of a Safe Zone program will be glad that you are cognizant of your limits and that you respect the program enough to know you cannot fully participate.

Dear Mz. Direction,
Who should I vote for Bush or Kerry?

Electorally yours,
Hanging Chad

My dear friend Chad,

I would love to give you a witty response full of colorful language and broadly painted metaphors but instead I find myself too stunned to use my words so I will use the words from my hot new election year button I got from my friends at the Human Rights Campaign: "George W. Bush: You're Fired!" Interpret as you will.

**Welcome
To
Gaymerica?**

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force unveiled a controversial new e-marketing voter education campaign satirizing the hateful and divisive rhetoric being used by anti-gay forces to incite irrational fears in the American people. The "Welcome to the United States of Gaymerica" campaign illustrates the absurdity of these divisive, fear-mongering, and false assertions by way of an "over-the-top" view at what America would look like if their assertions were carried to their expected conclusions. The three part Internet film begins with an introductory black screen message, followed by the satirical Gaymerica Web page, and concludes with a get-out-the-vote message and resources

See the video here: <http://www.gaymerica.org>

Learn more here: <http://www.thetaskforce.org/community/electioncenter.cfm>

Submitted by Mike Gorman

Out On Campus is produced to further the educational mission of Rhode Island College and support all members of our community. Direct all inquiries to our email address:
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