

OUTlines

What's IN for those who are OUT (or not) at Penn

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The Great Divide

"That's what they say...college is the best time in your life! If I've already lived through the best part of life, then I don't know how I'm going to get through the rest, I'm fucked!"

Listening to my apartment mate put

her life in perspective, I could instantly identify with the sentiment. In the last few months we had both taken giant leaps of faith and made decisions shaping our futures. We relocated away from the familiar and found ourselves lost and off balance in Philadelphia. Then on top of living with the awkwardness of recalibrating to a new place we were given the challenge of carrying the biggest work load we have ever faced. We had definitely crossed the great di-

vide. We had become graduate students at Penn.

The name "graduate student" carries so many connotations. It

reflects a level of schooling, experience, focus, and maturity. But, sometimes I feel the title is really reflecting the differences and division between graduates and undergraduates. I remember as a "ugrad" thinking of my graduate classmates as those old grad students who acted young. They always seemed to have so much drive and direction (which was in stark contrast with my own experience) but had so much fun, too. Probably because of the title, I never real-

ized they were only a few years older.

Although now that I am the grad student I have found myself in a few ambiguous situations that I do not know just how I should act around undergrads. For most graduate students I know, there is a basic division from undergrads because of their program of study, but since I have been at Penn and began working at the Center, I have met just as many undergraduates as graduates. Whenever I think about those

grey situations it seems obvious I should choose to behave and act as I always would, but I find myself still regressing back to my concept of grad student, which makes me into the 'OLD' student and consequently not wanting to overstep my bounds.

Being in this new skin I find I am questioning myself a lot, and not just in social experiences. Coming to a new university makes differences in learning style very apparent.

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First Impressions

First impressions mean everything and they can make or break an experience. As a first-year Penn student, my first week was filled with many first impressions -- both good and bad.

My most memorable experiences were the first day I came to the LGBT Center for my work study interview and the Welcome Back party at the Center. I was nervous about coming to the Center for many reasons. First, at home I was only "out" to my friends and some schoolmates and I felt as if working at the Center would be like coming out to the world.

Secondly, I had never been around many LGBT people and I worried about acceptance. Could I not be gay enough because I am not an activist? It sounds funny, but I was naive, and I did not know what to expect. Fortunately, that has not been the case.

The first person I met at the Center was a

woman I would come to know as another work study student and ally in the LGBT community. She somehow knew I was there for the interview and was polite and helpful. She helped to take off some of my edge; however I was still as nervous as ever. My interview went well, and included various questions about my extracurricular activities, my reasons for wanting to work at the LGBT Center, and finally my feelings on homophobia in the athletic community, as an athlete. There were not questions about my sexuality, or my participation as an activist, which was a relief.

It was not until after working at the Center for a month that I realized how silly I was to think those topics would be so important in hiring me. For after my interview and after I was hired I started to realize the Center's purpose as a safe heaven of a sort, a support system, and a diversity and awareness promoter. There-

fore, unlike I assumed, I would not be discriminated against because I was not completely out, or not an activist, and so on.

A Welcome Back party was my first big event at the Center, where I was a little less tense but worried nonetheless. Initially I felt out-of-place and like I was being stared at for reasons I did not understand. Was it because I am black? There were few, if any, students of color there. Did I look straight? Is there a look for that? Was it because I was a freshman, or because I was new? These questions ran through my head and left me worried.

My fellow work study colleagues seemed very intuitive and understanding. They were helpful in introducing me to people they knew and going with me to meet people neither of us knew. It was just like any other party, in a sense, but it reminded me of grade school parties, where the boys and girls stayed

on opposite sides of the room. I felt a feeling of relief from the party's laid back feel. In the end, I made a lot of friends I continue to hang out with following the event.

Through both experiences I gained a real sense of support in Penn's LGBT community. It was comforting to know there were others who understood how I might be feeling, what I was going through, or at least cared enough to simply help me calm my nerves. I found many people I could relate to and at the same time I met interesting people who were very different from me but fun to get to know.

My experience has helped me to break many stereotypes and assumptions I had before coming to Penn as well as to understand the real purpose of the Center. All in all, my first impressions of the LGBT Center and Penn's LGBT community have been excellent.

-KeAndra Dodds

An Exciting Month

After a summer of regular feet walking all over me, come September I get excited at the rush of new shoes and some of the same old ones, too. Back to school is always lively, but I had a great start to say the least. I had a university president, a provost, some great allies, new friends, and familiar faces come to say hello earlier this year. The week leading up to the big bienvenu was marked by many people planning last minute touches to the year's kick-off events. I had the pleasure of hosting many of them.

To start, my walls housed one of the Center's most wide-reaching events on Thursday, September 9th—"Orientation" Orientation. Members from groups on campus and in the greater Philadelphia area came to expose new and returning Penn students to what campus and Philly have to offer. Most of Penn's LGBTQA groups were represented as well as many of the other re-

sources Penn has to offer, from athletics and alumni to cultural centers. In all, over forty groups had the chance to get their word out thanks to the event planning of Nikki Riley.

Following a long night and much needed rest, I prepared myself for September 10th. Typically my doors close at 6p on Friday, but people kept coming for the Welcome Back events that took place. "How to be an Ally" brought in a crowd of people who wanted to learn how to be better supporters of the LGBT community. ALLIES kicked of another exciting year with this event.

While I had a great group of ALLIES-to-be in my library, my friend, Harrison College House, kicked out the burnt plum carpet for "You're Not the Only One." This event sought to bring people together who were both out and not in a confidential environment. New LGBT students met with campus veterans to see that Penn has an invit-

ing and welcoming community in addition to spaces like me.

To top off the night, QSA hosted its Gay Affair in my Goodhand Room. Starting around 7:30p (well after my typical bedtime), people flooded the place. Music, food, and most importantly, good company made the event lively. There was a great turnout, and I was more than happy to greet some new feet.

After a little over a week and a half of recovery, the last Welcome Back event was the annual Open House on September 22nd. It brought in an impressive crowd in size and stature. Many new acquaintances made their way to munch on great Rx catering. Despite the food dropped all over me, I still looked great thanks to floral displays made by one of my new caretakers, Gregory Sparks. As

people poured in and a vibrant community pulsed, people waited with anticipation. I hosted President Gutmann for the first time, who in follow-



ing weeks has only had great things to say about me. President Gutmann and other top Penn persons scuffed my floors and chatted with Penn's LGBTQA community.

Fwew, talk about an exciting month! If you have not climbed my steps (or ride in my posh elevator), stop by. If the above sounds exciting, you should see me on other nights! I also have a kicking kitchen where you can spice up your life (and hopefully mine, too). Hope you enjoyed the beginning of the year as much as I did!

~ The Center (AKA Eric Boschetti who has lived, breathed, and eaten more than his share of the LGBTQA)

OUT & In-Focus:

David Boyer C'93

Remember senior year of high school? For me, with the SATs, college applications, and grades, the one other thing I had to worry about was whether or not I was taking a guy to my senior prom. I was not completely out to everyone, so this was a huge decision to make. It's interesting how this ritual embedded in American society has become a certain heterosexual rite of passage for teenagers of all classes and races. And now that the gay community is getting younger and younger, it's no surprise many queer teens will want to take part in this tradition.

I spoke to David Boyer, the author of *Kings and Queens: Queers at the Prom*, about the prom experiences of queer teenagers across America. As a graduate of the College of Arts and Sciences in 1993, Boyer moved to San Francisco after college to work as a freelance and editorial writer.

The idea for his book started when he interviewed ten queer people about their prom experiences for a magazine article. But it was not until five years later he picked up the thought again and expanded it into a book. He wrote the book as an anecdotal gay history, told through prom stories and photos about the lives of queer people at different points in the 20th century. This oral history reads like a monologue, written word for word taken from the interviews. Boyer felt that, with the expansion of gay media and the popularity of gay-themed shows like "Will & Grace," gay teens are losing a sense of queer history and struggle. He did not want gay teens to forget the struggle and take their better lives for granted.

To kick off his writing, Boyer started a new web site, <www.gayprom.com>. He thought it might be the perfect method to start his research and meet people in a com-



pletely different way. Rather than going into chat rooms and asking people about their experiences, Boyer publicized the web site with the gay press to encourage people to come and post. Anyone can still visit the web site and read the posts, which are organized chronologically starting from the 1920s.

As Boyer spoke of his research, he told me of many interesting

things that he discovered. He was surprised when he found queer people who graduated before 1960s tended to marry someone of a different sex, but then divorced in their later years. He was also surprised at the singularity and loneliness people felt before the 60s and the 70s, when people actually started to come out. A few decades ago, people who were gay went to therapy and were routinely "treated" because homosexuality was seen as a mental illness.

I also asked him about his experience at Penn. Boyer was not out on campus during his college career, but he had been aware of his feelings since high school. He recalls one moment to me, "At the Palladium, a friend asked me, 'Are you gay?' I knew she had a gay friend in high school, but I was so

amazed because it was the first time it ever came up." He described how he had sat in a Sexual Minorities class for a week, but it was too intense for him. He had felt he was not ready to come out to anyone, so dropped out of the class.

But as Boyer looks back on history, he was very surprised at how everything turned out. He discovered three out of his five roommates were gay. And most of them are currently active in the community, raising awareness and helping to increase tolerance.

After talking to Boyer, I was able to put my own life in historical perspective. I never did go to prom with a boy. But I now work in a great place, created to provide support to sexual and gender minorities, which would never have existed before the 1960s. I am well-adjusted as a gay student who is out on campus. And I am able to concentrate on my studying rather than worrying about people finding out about my homosexuality.

-Le Truong

Penn Alumni Come Home...

In Drones!

PennGALA and the LGBT Center had what many would call the most successful Homecoming weekend ever, with three events spanning the day on Saturday, October 16.

Following a continental brunch co-sponsored by all the constituent groups of the alumni Diversity Alliance, PennGALA sponsored its own panel discussion targeted at current students regarding the complex realities of the workplace for LGBT employees. Participants on the panel included moderator Albert Moore, SW'86, who organized the event for the Steering Committee, Patricia Rose, Director of Penn Career Services, Tom Hier, WG'85, and Kimberly Mutcherson, C'94.

Then an innovative process began, "speed mentoring." Student-alumni pairs chatted for three-minutes where students asked questions about professions, general workplace matters, companies or geographic locations where they were considering seeking employment, etc. About twenty student-alumni pairs seemed to be enjoying and benefiting from their chats.

Just after the panel discussion and before the speed mentoring, Dr. Amy Gutmann, who the day before had been inaugurated as the eighth president of Penn, brought greetings. Immediately upon entering the room, President Gutmann picked up a "Straight But Not Narrow" pin, exclaimed, "I love it!", and attached it to her lapel. She recalled her recent visit to the LGBT Center's Open House on Sept. 23: "I have attended many receptions since I arrived at Penn, but at none of those did I experience as much diversity as I saw there, nor as much 'buzz' – a very high level of energy."

At 5p, about sixty alumni and friends gathered in the Carriage House's library to toast PennGALA on its twentieth anniversary (its first event was October 1984). Joanne Mitchell, Chief of Staff for President Gutmann, recognized PennGALA as one of the oldest special interest alumni groups, offered praise for its accomplishments in the past twenty years, including its extensive support of the Carriage House renovation, and wished the group continued success.

Those joining in the toast – and about 450 others – then enjoyed the celebratory Taste of Penn event, which has quickly become a Homecoming and Alumni Weekend tradition, taking place this year at the Carriage House. Tents were up in the courtyard to the south of the building and in the garden to the west. The food was spectacular and plentiful. The large crowd, which filled every available space, was interactive and happy. Many dispersed to after-party gatherings and some to their beds, all having experienced a day of stimulating and enjoyable activities.

~Bob Schoenberg

The Gay Mafia

Standing in a Boston bar after a tough rugby match, the tone is jovial. A good game was had by all, though one team lost and another won. Two ruggers from opposing teams talk about work and how things are at the office. One happens to mention bidding on a contract in the other's home city. The other rugger laughs, as it just so happens it was his company with which the other was bidding for a contract. The one gives tips on how they can negotiate and what will get them the bid. The distinction here is these ruggers are gay and this is occurring in a gay bar. Is this an instance of the gay mafia or just a strange coincidence?

The idea of the gay mafia has been tossed around not only in LGBTQ circles, but also straight ones. The idea of such a network seems preposterous but also powerful. I would contend seemingly normal queer social networks extend past the bounds of nor-

mal networks because they are queer.

Let us examine organized sports in the straight and LGBTQ contexts. A brief example with numbers may help. Using the Gryphons roster (approximately 50), and the loose figure that .10% of the population is LGBTQ, we can say that for every one gay rugger there are 9 straight ones. In a city the size of Phila, there are approximately 450 heterosexual and 50 queer ruggers. As 22 people are on a side and there are two sides per team, the Gryphons can field one team. Potentially, there could be nine straight teams to our one. Again, the 10% figure at work. Here is where the gay mafia links in.

For straight people (and LGBT people who do not like the idea of a gay union), there are nine teams -- more than enough to keep a team busy for two months playing every Saturday. Time spent together is two 80-minute games and 2-3

hours for the drink up (a postgame tradition where the teams drink at the home teams' venue on their dime). Total time spent together: six hours, an hour pregame, two and a half playing and a two hour drinkup. For the LGBT team however, there is one team in each city. What is the option then? Networking.

For all teams, Saturday is a rugby day, but for gay teams Friday is a *driving* day. The Gryphons talk to the Atlanta Bucks, Boston Ironsides and London's Kings Cross Steelers to get games. So now, we have gay teams traveling across the country and internationally to play an 80-minute game or two over a weekend.

As LGBT games are a weekend event there is a welcome party as people arrive, hosting with the opposing team, and the evening of the game is spent seeing the gay 'sights' of the city. The planned and un-

planned consequence is the teams get to know one another as they discuss work, friends, and find connections.

Suddenly, coincidences begin occurring that might not have been noticed had the teams only spent the game and drink up together. Neither team planned on this, but it happened due to the limited number of gay people in a city and thus the forced interaction between teams. Sociologically speaking, the more time you spend with people with a similar trait the more likely you are to build connections.

Similar structures can be seen throughout LGBTQ cultures especially where subcultures are involved. Bear events, called runs, bring together bears from national and international locales. Circuit parties draw national crowds and even get travel agencies to sponsor circuit tours.

The theory depends on the amount of time

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Will Kerry's election actually have any effect on Gay Marriage?

While I was watching the third and final presidential debate I was surprised pleasantly to hear the way in which gay marriage was brought up. Bob Schieffer asked, "Do you believe homosexuality is a choice?"

Bush answered much more tactfully than I thought he would, saying that "...we have a choice to make in America and that is to treat people with tolerance and respect and dignity." He also said, "And I also know in a free society people, consenting adults can live the way they want to live. And that's to be honored."

Kerry, however, immediately said no, being gay is not a choice and made his argu-

ment much more personal by bringing Dick Cheney's daughter into the conversation. He also said, "I think if you talk to anybody, it's not choice."

I thought the most interesting aspect of each of their approaches was how they both bring religion to the discussion. Bush uses his religion as his single reason to fight gay marriage, stating the importance of the sanctity of marriage, while Kerry uses religion as a way to back his statement that being gay is not a choice, saying, "And I've met wives who are supportive of their husbands or vice versa when they finally sort of broke out and allowed themselves to live who they were,

who they felt God had made them." However, even after his likable answers I am still skeptical of Kerry.

With the election looming I cannot help but wonder — and worry a little, too — what will happen to LGBT rights. On one hand, we have a president who is adamantly against gay marriage and/or civil unions. On the other hand, we have a senator who I am not sure actually supports civil unions because he sees the validity in them or if he is for them simply because Bush is not. Is Kerry using LGBT rights as another dividing point?

In such a close election it is important for



Kerry to get any vote he can, which is why I am slightly skeptical of his views on civil unions. It worries me the queer community seems to be so excited about Kerry when I do not think he is actually going to do much. I am not saying it would not be nice to have a president who was not trying to pass anti-gay amendments but it would be nice to have a president who actually fought for the LGBT community instead of using us for our votes and then forgetting until us the next election.

-Karrie Moore

The Gay Mafia *...from p. 6*

spent together, which depends on the number of people socializing, and the amount of time available. Because LGBT people are often forced to stay somewhere because the distance traveled

is greater or the frequency of the subgroup is so low, the time together increases.

Clearly, the theory has problems as it does not take into account animosity and subgrouping that might prevent

such connections. Yet, it might be assumed such things occur in all cultures and do not affect the analysis.

So, there may be evidence LGBTQ folks are more likely to talk to one another and make connections. Does this

constitute a gay mafia or is this just a numbers game? All and all, the gay mafia may be a myth, but looking at the numbers and interaction game, there is more to this myth than meets the eye.

-Phil Cochetti

Scrapbook

It's 3am, and I'm choking back tears again. I wish you were here to make it okay. It's times like these I miss you the most—times like these 3ams when I'm all alone in a cold city with only a cold hard computer screen to stare into and write stories about you to try to preserve your memory. It's amazing how long someone can be there, how many years and years, but when they are gone, you only have scraps of memories remaining. But the scraps are what I cling onto at 3am here in the cold city. I hold them tight at night and replay them over and over in my mind to try and make them sharper and convince myself I will never let you go. Convince myself that each time I relive the memories they become real again.

But you're still gone. I was there when they made the decision. I watched as life slowly faded from your brown eyes, a peaceful exit from a painful existence. But I can't forgive myself for letting them give up on you and I can't forgive **myself** for giving up on you. The doctors said you were in a better place now and out of pain, and that was a comfortable justification at the time, but now it all feels cold. You stared straight into my eyes as you took your last breaths, and I couldn't tell if you were thanking me or asking me for help. I think that's going to haunt me for the rest of my life, but maybe I deserve that.

Remember how you used to sneak in after I fell asleep and snuggle up next to me? I wish you would do that tonight. I wish I had more than scraps to hang onto tonight. The city is real cold and lonely tonight, and the scraps aren't enough. Sometimes even the memories start to fade and I don't feel like they are real. Sometimes your eyes aren't as bright and your smile seems wrong. I'm scared you'll be gone soon, but I need to hold on to all my scraps to remember you were real once. I need to know you loved me once and you weren't just a dream. I need to know I won't be cold forever.

~Amanda Nordstom

The **Great** Divide *...from p. 1*

As an undergrad you become used to what is expected and what you should produce. It becomes this medium of 'preconcieved productions'; you know what they want and you give it to them. Now studying landscape architecture at the School of Design, I do not know the happy medium and I am constantly checking myself between the methods and philosophies I had absorbed as an undergrad and those I am being reprogrammed with at Penn. Sometimes when it feels really uncomfortable, I see myself holding onto

what I know and refusing to slide in an unknown direction. Being pushed and pulled sometimes feels like being suffocated.

As I am experiencing these ambiguous grey areas I find my thoughts returning to my undergraduate experience as a study abroad student in France. I swear sometimes I am listening to my professors and I know the words they are using but they just do not make sense. I find myself leaving the apartment heading out and realizing I have no clue how I will find the address scribbled on my hand. Everyday I am forced into the city and see

how much I do not know. I think to my experience abroad because when I was challenged I uncovered more of myself and came to know my own strength. This helps me to realize these difficulties are constructive in the end.

In the moment where my roommate was reminiscing on her life I felt her pain. I was surrounded with giant drawings, had aching graphite covered fingers, and a deadline looming just over my shoulder. But I had made the choice and I knew I had to stick it out. It was not all that easy to remind myself that for the pain and fatigue I was feeling I

was enjoying all of it. Being forced in a new situation and finding you are uncomfortable is never easy, but often these experiences can be exciting.

The more I know grads and undergrads the more I am comfortable with my new title and my new life. It makes sense as I let go of my own preconceptions, the more I find interesting and surprising truths about this new place. I feel I really started to understand this when I recently said to a friend, "I think I want to move a lot. I think I want to move to a new place every five years. I think China first!"

~Gregory Sparks

A Few Faggots

In my first months working at the Center, it was brought to my attention by a student who had completed our College House SafeZone training, the fireplace in Houston Hall had an inscription that included the word *faggot*. He was neither sure of the intention nor context since it was written in Latin but the F-word clearly stood out and he felt it was something that should be addressed since there was never a proper context for that language. I was touched by the e-mail. For one, this may have been one of the few situations in which the term *faggot* was properly used. More importantly, he took his new found commitment to being an ally seriously enough to not overlook this possible violation in what should be a comfortable space for all students. I can only imagine his reaction to the recent comments of PA Senator Fumo (D) earlier this month.

Following a recent Senate debate on

gambling, Fumo approached Republican Senators Robert Jubelier and David Brightbill verbally attacking them, calling them faggots, several times in a voice so loud it rang throughout the upper chambers. Needless to say, the shock of his words silenced the house and enraged many. To add insult to injury, in his apology, which only was directed to the LGBT community, he stated, "It was a very unfortunate word choice....I should have called them girlie men." What was most shocking for me however, was the LGBT community's response to the Senator's action. Many people in the community have chosen to 'forgive and forget' because of Fumo's past support but to 'let this one go' would be to miss a teachable moment.

Some people would argue, as did Fumo,

his use of the f-word does not reflect what was in his heart; that in the heat of the moment sometimes we

"I am okay with forgiving... But dismissing or forgetting is not the appropriate response."

say things we really don't mean. But more often than not, it is in that moment we say the things we mean most; we just don't mean for other people to hear it.

However, I believe despite his words, the Senator is and can still be an ally. We all have what I call an 'ignorance curve'. These are the breaking points at which we confront and resolve the ignorance seeping in to our psyche through a perpetual influx of conscious and sub-conscious stimuli. Now that Fumo has hit his curve, he should take accountability for his ignorance. There is a definite impact to using derogatory word like *faggot*, in whatever context. The best thing Fumo could

have done was acknowledge he is still challenged by heterosexism and homophobia and how we all, like the student in SafeZones, must be vigilant. Instead, he hid behind

political double speak which illustrates the inflammatory nature of the f-word; equating male homosexuality with weakness and femininity.

I am okay with forgiving. It is ultimately the only way we can allow people to learn and grow. But dismissing or forgetting is not the appropriate response. Unless we publicly admonish Senator Fumo for his behavior and hold him to the same standards we do others, especially our enemies, then it is almost as if we are saying with our silence and submission that we can be bought at a price. If you want political representation in the Senate, it'll only cost us a few faggots.

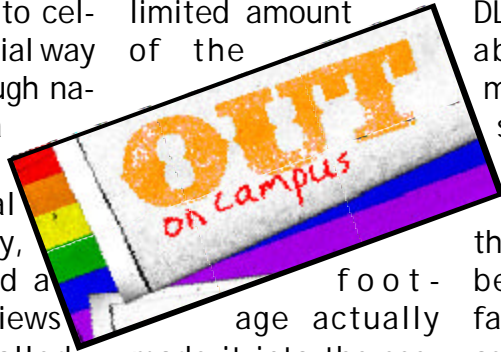
-Ninah Harris

Coming Out Greek

October 11th is National Coming Out Day. In addition to the traditional fanfare occurring on campus, Penn was able to celebrate in a special way this year: through national media exposure. To honor National Coming Out Day, mtvU produced a series of interviews and stories called "Out on Campus Week". In an effort to explore the state of the LGBT community on campuses throughout the nation, they highlighted the lives of several students and organizations. One of these groups was Delta Lambda Phi (DLP), the fraternity for gay, bisexual and progressive men on campus.

On September 24th, mtvU spent several hours interviewing members from DLP as well as gay and bisexual men in more "traditional" fraterni-

ties. They also interviewed the Director of the LGBT Center, Robert Schoenberg. Unfortunately, only a limited amount of the



footage actually made it into the segment. From about five hours of footage, mtvU created a three-minute piece. Fortunately, it was quality that counted, not quantity.

Despite the fact that several men interviewed were never seen on "the big screen", mtvU did a remarkable job. There was no distortion through editing, no twisting of words spoken; these three minutes were very representative of what DLP stands for and why the group deserves just as must

respect as any other campus fraternity.

Malcolm, Carlos, and Bradley, members of DLP spoke adamantly about how DLP's members want a space where they do not have to be the "token", where they can just relax and be themselves. In fact, DLP was created as a means for gay, bisexual, and progressive men to experience traditional Greek life without the added pressure of representing, or more likely hiding, their orientation. Malcolm also pointed out DLP is helping to build the image of gay and bisexual men as normal human beings, rather than as an ostracized minority.

mtvU also spent a large part of the three minutes comparing DLP to traditional fraternities. Jesse, a brother from one of Penn's more "tradi-

tional" fraternities talked about his experiences as a bisexual man in a "straight" fraternity and the members ready acceptance of his sexual orientation. This shows a trend that some fraternities are becoming more and more progressive. While he feels strongly about the inclusion of gay men in all fraternities, he spoke of his understanding of a space reserved for gay, bisexual, and progressive men.

Overall, mtvU did justice to Penn's newest fraternity, as well as to those more traditional ones who recognize not all of their members share one sexual orientation. In the end, all fraternities share the same characteristics: a group of guys trying to have a good time and give back to the Philadelphia community.

-Nikki Riley

The editorial staff of *OUTlines* seeks submissions from members of the Penn community. Poetry, stories, essays, artwork, and articles are all welcome. Inquiries and submissions should be sent to:

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