I Gotta Be Me: How to be Authentic in the Workplace

Co-sponsored by the Office of LGBT Awareness and the Career Development Center, a panel was created to discuss how they are authentic at their workplaces and gave advice for those who will soon be entering the workforce. On February 29, 2009, Richard Humphrey ’74, facilitated the discussion prompting questions, but encouraged the audience to interject at anytime. The panel consisted of Eric Bloem ’99, the Deputy Director for the Workplace Project for the Human Rights Campaign, Paul Marin ’90, Regional Director for Sub-Saharan Africa for the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, and Gitanjali (Gita) S. Gutierrez ’92, attorney with the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR).  

Richard began by asking, “Were you able to leave Bucknell and enter the market place authentically and if you weren’t...what were some of the obstacles that caused you not to be as authentic?” Unfortunately, some members were unable to be authentic in their first job, while others actually gained opportunities from it. The general consensus was to gauge how LGBT friendly each individual workplace is and use your judgment for if and when it is appropriate to share that part of your life. When discussing the pros and cons of being authentic at the workplace, Paul made a very important point, “If you’re smart about it, it’s always a pro. I’ve never thought to myself there’s a con of revealing my homosexuality or my being Jewish. It’s just that you need to be smart about when to do it and what’s relevant.” Another key point the trio emphasized was to know what was driving your choices for your future—don’t go into a workplace if you are not prepared for it during that point in your life, be in an environment you want to be in, and do what makes you happy.  

Laura Denbow, from the Career Development Center, gave her own advise, both from personal experience as well as what she recommends to students. Spend time looking for things at the workplace that are not there rather than the things that are. For instance, if there does not seem to be a lot of women at a particular job, or pictures of families in the workplace, there must be some sort of underlying reason. It is these sorts of things that one must truly be aware of when entering the workplace. Eventually, students were encouraged to ask their own questions about worries or trepidations about entering the workplace. The panel discussed their own coming out, whether it be their time at Bucknell or after, and how those around them reacted. In the end, the take-home message that each member of the panel wanted to emphasize was to be true to yourself. If you do that, you can never go wrong.
Peterson Toscano is a gay activist, educator, and a comic performer. He is also a former ex-gay, someone who tried and failed to change and suppress his homosexual orientation. For the past five years he has traveled throughout North America, Europe, and elsewhere telling his story in diverse ways. In 2003 he wrote and premiered in a one-person comic play entitled *Doin’ Time in the Homo No Mo Halfway House—How I Survived the Ex-Gay Movement!* On February 9, 2009, Peterson performed his one-person play entitled *Queer 101—Now I Know My gAy, B, C’s* at Uptown which explores identity, homophobia, and activism through the words and lives of lesbian and gay poets like Walt Whitman, Audre Lorde and Federico Garcia Lorca. Before his performance, Peterson was able to share his stories with the members of FLAG & BT at a dinner held at the Office of LGBT Awareness. His performance stimulated an array of emotions from laughter to tears. The stories and characters he shared with us were based on major people and events in his life that have helped define who he is today. Through laughter, Peterson is slowly raising awareness of the struggles many LGBT people must endure in their lives.

**Freedom to Marry Week Review**

Freedom to Marry Week was a huge success. Alyssa Gianino devoted many hours to organizing and running the many events she planned for the week. Peterson Toscano started the week off with a roar at Uptown on Monday, February 9, 2009. His comedy act raised awareness to the crowd of exactly what Freedom to Marry Week was all about. Tuesday, February 10, “Pursuit of Equality,” a film about San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, was shown in the Gallery Theatre. The movie starts with the first same-sex couple exchanging their vows and a whirlwind of controversy. From the streets, to the courtrooms, and even the steps of City Hall, same-sex couples begin the long fight for equal rights and a new generation of politics. In the Cafeteria Wednesday evening, three wedding cakes, complete with tiers were distributed along with information. Upon each tier, a gay, lesbian, and straight couple was adorned in hopes of making others aware of the idea they represent. The week’s main event, The Freedom to Marry Dinner, held on Thursday, February 12, was a yet another triumphant success. Students and faculty joined together for a delicious meal and a common cause. After dinner, a touching film was shown of anonymous students sharing their ideas, beliefs, and hopes for the future coupled with pictures of families—both straight and LGBT. With heads held high and increasing support, the fight goes on for equality for all citizens of this country we call home. The week culminated with the award winning movie, *MILK*, being shown at the Campus Theatre. Starring Sean Penn, *MILK* portrays the struggles of one man's fight for gay rights. A reception was held in the theatre before the movie began.
On Tuesday, February 24th at Uptown, a group of students, faculty and staff enjoyed an evening with comedian René Hicks. From jokes aimed at college students and funny anecdotes about family reunions, to more serious jokes about the experience of coming out and race relations, Rene kept the audience rolling in laughter.

(paraphrased) Everyone gets excited about “Book Buy Back” then you hand them over and hear...sorry this book won’t be taught next year, nope, neither will this one or this one. Oh, this one we’ll take...Here’s two dollars.

“Family reunions is that time when you come face to face with your family tree and realize...some branches need to be cut.”

“When I told my relatives (I was a lesbian), I actually got rid of a lot of annoying relatives.”

(paraphrased) I’m a Mahogany-American...look at all the white people in the audience; you know they’re thinking, wait, am I allowed to laugh? Or is that what they are calling themselves today? I thought they were called African-Americans...

On her website she writes, “There’s so much ‘politically correct’ rhetoric about diversity and multiculturalism, with very little result of actually bringing people together on a lasting basis—laughter can bring people together...We need a lot more laughter in this world and a lot less of the dumb crap that divides us.”

René has performed in countless clubs across the nation and internationally, and is particularly popular on the college campus circuit—where she has performed at over 600 colleges and universities. She was the first African-American woman ever nominated for an American Comedy Award for “Best Female Stand-Up,” she has appeared on numerous television shows, including her own half-hour special “Comedy Central Presents...René Hicks,” and she is a two-time recipient of the coveted National College Comedian of the Year Award.
The Office of Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Awareness, is committed to making Bucknell a safe place for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. This is accomplished by supporting student groups and efforts to educating and increase awareness about LGBT issues and current public policy concerns. The office is guided by an Advisory Board comprised of students, faculty, staff, and administrators who are interested in and committed to the mission of the Office.

Given that Bucknell is dedicated to prepare its students to be morally responsible citizens, and given that societal attitudes are changing, the University attempts to promote attitudes and behaviors among its students which will create a climate of mutual respect and empower us all to appreciate diversity.

Current Safe Spaces:

Fraternities:
Chi Phi (chapter and house)
Delta Upsilon (chapter and house)
Tau Kappa Epsilon (chapter)
Theta Chi (chapter and house)

Sororities:
Alpha Chi Omega (chapter and suite)
Chi Omega (chapter and suite)
Delta Gamma (chapter and suite)
Kappa Alpha Theta (chapter and suite)
Kappa Kappa Gamma (chapter and suite)
Pi Beta Phi (chapter and suite)

Others:
Social Justice Residential College
Languages and Cultures Residential College
Environmental Residential College
Women’s Rowing Team

Fraternities:
Chi Phi (chapter and house)
Delta Upsilon (chapter and house)
Tau Kappa Epsilon (chapter)
Theta Chi (chapter and house)

Sororities:
Alpha Chi Omega (chapter and suite)
Chi Omega (chapter and suite)
Delta Gamma (chapter and suite)
Kappa Alpha Theta (chapter and suite)
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Don’t Forget!!!

Day of Silence and Jeans Day on Thursday, April 16, 2009
Picture on Rooke Chemistry Steps at Noon!
Pick up your Day of Silence Cards at the LC Mall and Break the Silence with FLAG & BT and watch MILK!

Do you have any LGBT topics that you would like to see covered in future issues?

Send in your ideas to lab036@bucknell.edu

http://www.bucknell.edu/LGBT.xml