

Change by Shock Value?



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A new activist group on campus, New Directions, along with the Richmond and Westhampton College Dean's offices, has supplied resident assistants with two fliers concerning sexual orientation. National homosexual support groups created the fliers in an attempt to educate students about sexual diversity issues, said Lee Hawthorne,

Westhampton College coordinator of student life and staff adviser for New Directions.

However, these fliers attempt to achieve these ends by taking stereotypes about gays and lesbians and turning them around on heterosexuals. One could take these fliers as insinuating that heterosexuals are weak-willed, easily influenced, sexually insecure, unstable and distrustful. Is it right to use these tactics simply because gays are discriminated against? One flier, titled Heterosexual Quiz, implies it is not safe to expose children to heterosexual teachers because "the great majority of child molesters are heterosexual."

A WILL speaker on gay/lesbian issues last semester prompted a group of students to begin New Directions. The group's goals are to increase awareness of sexual diversity issues and change campus culture. The group is for straight, gay and bisexual students, group member Walter Cook said.

And while the group's objectives are valid, its methods must be questioned. Hawthorne and Cook said the goal is not to be abrasive or confrontational, but by posting fliers without any explanation, the questions on the fliers must be

taken as they are. And with no explanation as to the source or intent of the fliers, they become confrontational because of their insinuating nature.

If "homosexual" were substituted for every reference of "heterosexual," outrage would occur. Campus organizations would protest. The Collegian would receive dozens of letters to the editor. Administrators would be fired.

Why does a different standard exist? The Heterosexual Quiz takes common stereotypes of homosexuals and turns them around. It asks questions such as:

- When did you decide you were heterosexual?
- What did you have to give up when you chose to become heterosexual?
- Do you consider it safe to expose your children to heterosexual teachers, coaches and scout leaders, when the great majority of child molesters are heterosexual?
- Why do you insist on being so obvious about your sexuality? Can't you just be what you are and be quiet?

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If the gay community wishes to dispel these stereotypes, why are they being perpetuated in this manner? Is it acceptable to ask these questions of heterosexuals even though the gay community would be outraged if the same

questions were asked of it? Again, the issue of a double standard arises.

Diversity in action and thought is a commendable goal. However, the methods used to achieve these goals must be tactful. By attempting to achieve diversity through shock value, a disservice has occurred.