

Rainbow Coalition P. 10

Rainbow flags have been appearing throughout Powelton Village in recent weeks, which residents say are a sign of solidarity inspired by a spate of homophobic incidents in the neighborhood. Kurt Conklin, who lives at 35th and Lancaster, had a rainbow flag and flagpole stolen by vandals three times since last winter. Then, one night in September, a group of college-age white males stood outside his house shouting "faggot." Conklin says he's convinced Drexel University students are the culprits. "We've always had a problem with noisy, drunk students," he says, "but the homophobic stuff is very troubling." Late last month neighbors confronted a group shouting "Ho-mo! Ho-mo!" in front of another gay resident's home, where a rainbow

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flag was flying. Identified among the mob was a Drexel student who lives in a nearby house occupied by members of the wrestling team. He insisted later that the taunting was merely a joke directed at one of the Halloween party-bound group who was dressed as a woman. Still, the young man promised a written apology and to hang a rainbow flag. Neighbors say the "apology" chastised them for their "misunderstanding of the situation" and that the flag has yet to appear. A meeting called last week by Drexel to discuss the situation was attended by few members of the University community. (Drexel officials did not respond to *PW*'s request for comment.) While some residents say they're upbeat about what came out of the meeting, neighbor Mark Humphreys, who is himself gay, is not so cheerful. "I'm surprised anyone is surprised by this kind of behavior. People aren't allowed to learn about gays. If you say anything positive, you're promoting homosexuality. Politicians think it's debatable whether calling someone a 'fag' is hateful. It's open season on gay people."

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