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Letters to the Editor

Intolerance thrives, even in Powelton Village

Editor:

I am writing to alert Triangle readers to a situation that should concern anyone who cares about studying, working, and living in a community where basic human dignity is respected. While the quality of my own life is being directly affected now, the quality of student life at Drexel may also be at stake in the long run.

I am a home owner near the corner of 35th Street and Lancaster Avenue, an area where many Drexel students pass, especially late at night, to and from social events or bars. On Sept. 29 at 2 a.m., a small group of white college-age males passed by my house and screamed "faggot" and "homo", and also voiced hatred about a rainbow flag that is mounted on my house. This flag stands for equality based on race and sexual orientation. It does not always mean that the owner of the flag is gay or is a person of color, but it stands for the idea that in our country equality and freedom are good things.

After being awakened by the screaming, I waited at my window to see if there would be more harassment or possibly vandalism, since this flag was ripped down from my house three times earlier this year.

At 2:15 a.m., three white college-age males came up the block

extremely drunk. One urinated on the front of my house, while another asked his friends if they wanted him to pour his cup of beer over a car that was parked in front of my house (not my car, by the way). They were so drunk that they did not even hear or see me open the second-floor window above them and lean out to watch the defacement of my own house.

I decided not to call police, although public urination is against the law, since the police have to be pretty speedy to catch someone in the act. I also decided not to confront these males because people under the influence sometimes become more violent or will do more vandalism when confronted in these circumstances. After being called a faggot and homo, I was not willing to place myself in the line of possible physical violence.

Two nights later, on Oct. 1 at 2 a.m., a student party at Buffalo Bill's ended in this way: As extremely drunk students staggered up 35th Street toward their homes, I waited on my own doorstep to see if there would be trouble. Four separate times within just a few minutes, males urinated on properties on our block. Each time, I asked them to stop, and each did stop. The fourth time was with a small group of females and males, and one of them — a white male with dark short hair, wearing a dark blue pullover with long orange sleeves and orange shoulders — began yelling loudly to his

friends: "Hey, go piss on the red brick house where the rainbow flag is." The flag is not out at night because of prior vandalism, but clearly this male has had his eye on it. He continued yelling as the group continued up 35th Street and paused in a Drexel parking lot behind the Pi Lambda Phi house.

Were these Drexel students? It's not possible to know for sure. In some ways it does not really matter. What concerns me is that Powelton Village, a neighborhood with a historic reputation for tolerance and freedom, is in danger of becoming a neighborhood where people are not safe because white, college-age males feel entitled to trash the property and basic human dignity of their neighbors. This is not about being politically correct — this is about the right of all people, Drexel students included, to feel safe in their homes and on the streets.

The males who do these things are cowards — they do not have the courage to face those with whom they have differences in plain daylight and without the influence of alcohol. They are also not in the majority, but I am troubled to think that the real majority of fair-minded Drexel students and Powelton neighbors may not know or even care that systematic harassment and hatred are built-in features of this area of the city.

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Powelton Village Resident