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# OUT AND PROUD

Left: Pamela Grissette, a residential assistant on campus, shows her pride during the 2016 Miami Beach Pride Parade.  
Middle: Members of the FIU community march along with the FIU float during the 2016 Miami Beach Pride Parade  
Bottom Right: Onlookers watch participants in the 2016 Miami Beach Pride Parade  
Bottom Left: The FIU float, which featured the University's logo and members from the community, is captured as it passes onlookers during the 2016 Miami Beach Pride Parade.



# TRAIN 'N' PROTECT

## FIUPD creates diversity training to better serve LGBT community

MARYBETH LORETTA  
Contributing Writer

In a political climate where LGBTQA rights have been in the spotlight, the FIU Police Department has paid attention.

Alexander Casas, Chief of the FIU Police Department, said that recent attention to LGBTQA issues is the primary reason for its recent training on how to approach and better communicate with the FIU community, which began two years ago.

“We need to try to understand this group a little better. Law enforcement is very good with communicating with each other around the country,” said Casas. “We recognize issues that other communities have had on a greater scale. So once we see an issue elsewhere, we try to get ahead of the problem and train the issue.”

The most talked about letter of the ever-growing acronym was the “T,” standing for transgender.

“We’re always looking for ways to better serve our community and the way that community needs to be served. A big way is to communicate with them and have empathy with them. The better we understand our community and its multiple niches we have, the better we can provide our service,” said Casas. “Services can mean anything from ‘I lost my ipad’ or ‘contemplating killing myself.’ The better we understand we can connect with them, the better we can resolve their issue.”

According to Chief Casas, there have been several incidents on the Modesto Maidique Campus in which transgender students were contemplating suicide. Although the officers had every intention to help the students, the officers were confused as to how to approach them. The training however, has improved these situations.

“With this training, my officers tell me they feel more comfortable than they did before. For example, if I encounter a situation and call them ‘ma’am’ and then

they say ‘sir, I’ll apologize and call them ‘sir’. I don’t get stuck and say what do you mean. I understand. There’s a lot more that goes into why they want me to refer or identify them,” said Casas.

He added that the training started two years ago consisting of eight hours per officer, focusing on communication skills.

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I think we’re in a good place because we’ve made improvements and we’ve equipped our officers to better understand how to talk to people and their comfort level has increased,

Alexander Casas  
Chief  
FIU Police Department

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“It was hard to get training. Our training has consisted of different things like human diversity and communication skills,” said Casas. “We’ve struggled in trying to find a training program that fits with our niche but ... we’re still trying to get better at what we do.”

Casas believes the FIUPD has made strides in understanding this community, but he admits having failed to find a more comprehensive curriculum to better help understand LGBTQA history and culture.

“My failure as the lead of the agency is I haven’t been able to find a big enough training curriculum where I feel comfortable saying we’re in really good shape now. Our empathy is a lot better ... the way we understand things a little better, and we’re more patient when we communicate,” said Casas. “I think we get less frustrated

when someone wants to switch on us, it’s normal. I would like to get a little more formalized training in why someone wants to be identified a certain way.”

He explained that such a curriculum has been found but is cost-preventative. Casas also stressed the distinction between empathy and tolerance. Tolerance of a certain community, he opined, sounds “condescending.” He strives to have empathy, which he believes can be achieved through a curriculum that stresses the history and culture.

“I think we’re in a good place because we’ve made improvements and we’ve equipped our officers to better understand to talk to people and their comfort level has increased,” said Casas. “We’re in good shape but I want to get more formalized training on this.”

Joann Brown, communication professor and the co-facilitator of The Cultural Diversity and De-escalating Trainings at the University, says training is essential in maintaining trust between officers and civilians.

“If members of the community feel that their own concerns are not understood, their confidence in law enforcement personnel to meet these needs may be severely diminished,” said Brown.

Since the fall of 2015, about 500 law enforcement officials of various ranks have participated in this training. Although they have not created a training specifying in the LGBTQ community, she did explain how they have trained many law enforcement officers in understanding their own personal biases.

“It begins with a computer assessment specifically designed to identify internal cultural biases of the individual officers. Discovering implicit personal biases and preferences leads to increased self-awareness and insight into personal behavior,” said Brown. “This is paramount as law enforcement officers need to understand, respect, and be open to communicate with all segments of the population if they are to be successful in their role.”

## Course explores non-normative sexualities

AMANDA GONZALEZ  
Contributing Writer

LGBT and Beyond: Non-Normative Sexualities from a Global Perspective” is a new spring course that will explore the inequalities faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer-identified individuals and also highlight the expanding activism for the community.

“The course explores the ways in which gender and sexuality are impacted and embedded in the media, politics,

globalization, the government, and more. In addition, students learn about systemic inequalities faced by gender and sexual minority populations,” said Victoria Burns, associate professor at the Women’s Studies Department, who holds a doctorate in counseling psychology. “However, they also learn about the growing activism that is occurring all over the world to ensure freedom and equality for all sexual and gender identities.”

Director of Student Health Services, Oscar Loynaz, said that when he teaches the class, he likes to spend time defining certain terms relevant to the LGBT community, such as outing. He also focuses on the coming out process, coupling and the inherent challenges linked to those experiences. Gender identity and expression are also highlighted, as well as a historical perspective on these issues.

“Students of all sexual and gender identities are welcome in this class,” said Burns, with Loynaz adding that usually about three-fourths of the class are students who identify as heterosexual and who express a curiosity and desire to be an ally.

While the two most common majors seem to be psychology and history, there’s someone from virtually every field enrolled in the course.

Students in the course are introduced to a myriad of community service organizations, in an effort to both recognize the resources available and also provide students with institutions aligned with their beliefs and interests. Among the participating organizations are Save Dade, Equality Florida and Yes Institute.

“I hope that what I bring to the class ... will at least give people something to think about or [prompt them to] look at things in a different way,” said Loynaz. “... We are where we are today as a result of the hard work and sacrifice of many people before us, [and] where we are in the future will depend on the work we do today.”

All three sections of the class are currently open, with Loynaz teaching the in-person class at the Modesto Maidique Campus on Wednesdays from 5 p.m. to 7:40 p.m., Burns teaching the online course and Gisela Vega teaching the in-person class at The Biscayne Bay Campus on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

### EDITOR’S NOTE

## Let’s talk sexuality



EDITOR IN CHIEF

Programs and Services hopes the outcomes will be. We also speak to professors about how they work to create safe spaces in their classrooms.

In the same vein, our editorial shares tips for professors and students to build a trusting environment in which sharing preferred pronouns and names comes easily.

Our Opinion writers tackle issues such as the Catholic church and its relationship with the LGBT community, the battle for equal rights that the community faces and argues that homosexuality is not an illness.

In Sports, we find two female athletes who speak about the challenges they faced while coming to terms with their sexuality.

We want to contribute to a healthy conversation in which students and faculty feel comfortable being who they are without concern or fear.

While sex, gender and sexuality exists on a spectrum, it’s not often that those who are not cisgendered and heteronormative get much media representation.

We wanted to begin the conversations necessary to change that.

In News, we speak to FIUPD about their training to deal with students who have preferred names that differ from their given names. We also take a look at a global perspectives course that explores non-traditional sexualities.

In Entertainment, we feature the Drag Ball happening today and what the office of Multicultural

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Oscar Loynaz  
Director  
Student Health Services

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# Rescinding of Title IX protections for the transgender community causes fear of marginalization

**MEYER GRUNBERG**  
Contributing Writer

**T**ransgender students want a level playing field; the rescinding of their protection under Title IX threatens that.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights refers to Title IX as an education amendment that protects people from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive federal assistance.

For many, when this law states that there will be no discernment based on sex, this simply refers to the binary definition of sex as just male and female. Yet, there is a gray area in between for the percentage of the population whose gender identity does not match their sex and who are thus unprotected by Title IX.

On May 13, 2016 the Department of Justice and the Department of Education under President Obama sought to include transgender students under that amendment and expand the law to include prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity, including discrimination based on a student's transgender status.

However, on Feb. 22, 2017, Donald Trump's administration rescinded this interpretation of the law to its original form that does not specify gender identity as a means of protection under the ruling.

"... [This] means people who are marginalized will now be marginalized again," said Gisela Vega, associate director of the LGBTQIA Initiatives at the University.

She mentioned that while the change of directive from Washington might lead to further discrimination based on gender for students on campus, all students would continue to benefit from the institutional support of the University.

"In FIU in 2015, we included into our non-discrimination clause gender identity and gender expression, which covers trans people ... we've been

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People feel a lot more unsafe when you have things like this turned into a political issue and it becomes too clear that your lives are polarized....

Tim Vargo  
President

Stonewall Pride Alliance

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very progressive in terms of trying to make sure that our trans population feels safe and protected," Vega said.

In addition to the University policy that does

indeed safeguard from discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, there are various student-led support groups like Stonewall Pride Alliance, Delta Lambda Phi, and Safe Zone Training that aim to establish the encouragement students may need.

"People feel a lot more unsafe when you have things like this turned into a political issue and it becomes too clear that your lives are politicized..." said president of Stonewall Pride Alliance, Tim Vargo. "[On campus] it wasn't as scary, this was primarily a scary thing for our youth [in high schools]."

Vargo said he would like to see an increase of involvement from transgender students at the University. The lack of involvement might be due to a deficiency in knowledge of the groups available, insecurity in 'coming out' or due to simple time conflicts, Vargo says.

He believes that much progress has been made, as seen by the gender neutral bathrooms on campus, but there is still much work to be done.

"The main thing is making sure that bathrooms aren't gendered at all ... non-discrimination laws are always a start," said Vargo. "[Our goal is] making sure people can use the bathroom of their choice [and] ensuring protective laws to make sure nobody is being assaulted."

For more information on the LGBTQIA Initiatives and programs for the LGBTQIA community, visit [lgbt.fiu.edu](http://lgbt.fiu.edu).

## LGBTQIA GLOSSARY OF TERMS

In microcommunities, there can be an array of terms which are unclear to those outside the community. For example, without providing context and a definition, the term "cisgendered," is often used to describe a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex. The following list of terms, sourced from FIU's Student Affairs website, is a brief introduction to obscure terms of the LGBTQIA community but in no way a complete list.

### LGBTQIA

Sometimes referred to as "alphabet soup," this acronym stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and ally or asexual. Some people will change the order of the letters in this acronym and some will only use some of the letters. Recently, people have moved to putting the "L" at the front of the acronym as a way of addressing multiple areas of oppression that lesbians face as both a woman and a lesbian.

### GENDER FLUID

Being fluid in motion between two or more genders; shifting naturally in gender identity and/or gender expression or presentation. May be a gender identity itself. Refers to the fluidity of identity.

### GENDER EXPRESSION/PRESENTATION

How one expresses oneself, in terms of dress and/or behaviors that society characterizes as "masculine" or "feminine." May also be androgynous or something else altogether. Some people differentiate between the two terms.

### INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA

The fear and self-hate of one's own homosexuality or non-monosexuality that occurs for many individuals who have learned negative ideas about homosexuality throughout childhood. One form of internalized oppression is the acceptance of the myths and stereotypes applied to the oppressed group.

### ALLY

A person who confronts heterosexism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, heterosexual privilege, and so on, in themselves and others out of self-interest and a concern for the well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other queer-related people, and who believes that heterosexism is a social injustice.

### QUEER

Used by some within the LGBT community to refer to a person who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex or transgender, or someone who is supportive of LGBT issues. This term is often as much a political statement as a label. Once used as a derogatory term to refer to a gay, lesbian, or bisexual person, the word has been "reclaimed" by some individuals to positively refer to LGBTQIA persons as "non-conforming."

### GENDER IDENTITY

An individual's basic self-conviction of being male or female. This conviction is not contingent upon the individual's biological sex. This also has no bearing on the individual's sexual orientation.

### INTERSEX

Formerly known as "hermaphrodites" (a term that is now considered offensive), this term refers to people who have traits of both male and female sexual organs and/or have ambiguous genitalia. There are at least 16 different ways to be intersex.

### SEXUAL ORIENTATION

An enduring emotional, romantic, sexual, and/or affectional attraction. Terms include homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, non-monosexual, queer, and asexual, and may apply to varying degrees. Sexual orientation is fluid, and people use a variety of labels to describe their own. Sometimes sexual preference is used but can be problematic as it implies choice.

### HETEROSEXUAL PRIVILEGE

The basic civil rights and social privileges that a heterosexual individual automatically receives, but are systematically denied to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons on the sole basis of their sexual or gender identity.

# CULTURE SHOCK

## MPAS to ‘expose FIU community to drag culture’

**JOSHUA CEBALLOS**  
Assistant Entertainment Director

While homecoming features images of kings and queens as portrayed in mainstream media, the Office of Multicultural Programs and Services is bringing a different type of queen to campus with its annual Drag Ball.

The Drag Ball will be held at MMC on March 30 in Everglades Hall, in the housing quad. The event will feature various performances by local drag queens and drag performers.

Richard Moreno, graduate assistant for MPAS’ office of LGBTQA initiatives, is spearheading this event, and he wants this event to be more than just a performance.

“The purpose of the Drag Ball is to expose the FIU community to drag culture and the various drag queens that we have here in the community, but then we also have an educational component to it... We’re gonna have info on drag culture, drag history and really incorporate that educational component,” said Moreno.

The Drag Ball will feature performances by the HEARTbeats, an a capella singing group from FIU’s Honors College, as well as drag queens such as Tiffany Fantasia, a local performer who has been featured in this event in previous years, according to Moreno.

Moreno feels that there needs to be better awareness about the drag community and what it means to be a drag queen and do this kind of performance. He believes that

the lack of education on the subject can yield dangerous results.

“For folks who aren’t educated on the issue, they may just see drag as men dressing up as women, like that’s the point of it, and a lot of times that might be equated to people who identify as transgender... and that contributes to a lot of violence towards trans individuals, especially when they don’t pass as cisgender [identifying as the same sex you were born

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For folks who aren’t educated on the issue, they may just see drag as men dressing up as women, like that’s the point of it, and a lot of times that might be equated to people who identify as transgender... and that contributes to a lot of violence toward trans individuals, especially when they don’t pass as cisgender,

Richard Moreno  
Graduate Assistant  
Multicultural Programs and Services

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as],” said Moreno..

There are some programs on television that feature

aspects of drag performances, such as “RuPaul’s Drag Race” on VH1, a competition show for drag queens in which they choreograph and create shows to pass challenges set by a panel of judges.

For Moreno, shows like RuPaul’s Drag Race are good in that they expose individuals to the culture, but this show in particular does have its flaws.

“There are some things in there that I wish they didn’t incorporate into the show... there were times when they would incorporate transphobic language into the show, like their use of ‘shemale,’ that [is] a term that is very transphobic,” said Moreno.

For students who believe that drag is only flashy makeup and men dressing as women on a stage, Moreno wants this event to illuminate the many facets of drag and show that there is a purpose and a deliberate process behind it.

“There are so many different types of drag, that oftentimes it’s all very nuanced in whatever that person’s drag looks like. the makeup, the outfits, the way they walk, the way they move their hands; there’s so many nonverbal aspects to it, where every single component of what they do all comes together to tell a message,” says Moreno.

The Drag Ball will be coming to the Everglades Hall lounge on Thursday, March 30 8 p.m. MPAS welcomes and encourages students to attend and experience something new and learn about a culture that not everyone is aware of.

## Labeling people to process ‘complexity’ could cause problems

EYES ON THE EARTH



AMANDA JUNG

We live in a society that is comfortable with the idea of labeling everyone. Whether it’s your gender, your religion or your sexuality, you are forced to fall under a certain category and we’re so used to this concept that most of us don’t mind answering these questions when we’re asked.

When you’re filling out a survey, it will ask for your gender. It’s so easy for most of us to check the male or female box. But for others, this task is much more complicated.

When taking a standardized test, we are asked to bubble in our race. This simple question about the color of our skin is a prime example of labeling. Think about it for a second. Has someone ever labeled you or put you into a category that you didn’t feel like you belonged in?

I’m sure that we’ve all been there. Maybe they didn’t mean it in a bad way. We have just been trained to put people in categories our entire lives. In fact, we all live in categories.

Labeling doesn’t always have to be seen as a bad thing. In some cases, it’s extremely liberating. We live

in a generation where more and more people are coming out and are proud of their sexuality.

However, labeling is also very dangerous. According to Psychology Today, “categorical labeling is a tool that humans use to resolve the impossible complexity of the environments we grapple to perceive. Like so many human faculties, it’s adaptive and miraculous, but it also contributes to some of the deepest problems that face our species.”

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Categorical labeling is a tool that humans use to resolve the impossible complexity of the environments we grapple to perceive,

Psychology Today

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A question remains whether labeling people or situations in order to help us understand something complex is fair or not.

When it comes to the LGBTQ community, it’s often a much scarier world out there. I have friends who identify as straight, gay and bisexual. But I also have some friends who don’t dare use a term to define who they are allowed to love.

The world has become more accepting of homosexual and

bisexual people. But, we’ve also seen increased acts of hatred towards these people such as the Orlando Nightclub shooting.

If we are teaching our children that it’s wrong to be a certain way, this could cause a lot of problems. We have a responsibility to the LGBTQ community to show them that not only do they have the people within that community by their side, but people outside of it as well.

We might fall into different categories, but this doesn’t have to decide the type of people we hang out with or advocate for.

In my opinion, I think that people should be able to label themselves LGBTQ if they choose, but no one is at all required to categorize themselves.

However, I do recognize that it’s nice to have a community; people that you are on the same page with and can help you through the hard times.

We all have friends, family and peers that are a part of the LGBTQ community, and it’s our job to support them so that the future generations have it a little easier than everyone does right now.

*Amanda Jung is a staff writer for Panther Press. Her column, Eyes on the Earth, is a commentary on current global environmental issues.*

## Pride Month Highlights

### Drag Ball

March 30, 8 p.m.

MMC: Everglades Hall

### 3D Racial Justice: LGBTQA of Color

April 6, 12 p.m. - 2 p.m.

BBC: WUC 155

### Day of Silence

April 17, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

MMC: Betty Chapman Plaza

BBC: Panther Square

### Take Back the Night

April 18, 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.

MMC: GC Ballrooms

### Social Justice Summit

April 19, 9 a.m.- 5 p.m.

MMC: GC 3rd Floor

### City-Wide Lavender Graduation & Leadership Dinner

April 24, 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

MMC: GC Ballrooms



PANTHER PRESS FILE PHOTO

Onlookers enjoy parade entertainment at the 2016 Miami Beach Pride Parade

## 'People who fall under the aromantic category do feel love, but it's usually platonic'

### LIFEWINKS



ALECIA ALLEN

Have you ever felt that you're not too crazy about having sex or have little to no feelings of attraction towards other people but don't know why? You might be asexual or aromantic.

In basic terms, asexuality means that you're not sexually attracted to other people, but can be romantically attracted to them. This means that while you may go on dates and have a significant other, you're not really interested in having sex. Aromanticism, on the other hand, means that you experience little to no romantic attraction to others. People who fall under the aromantic category do feel love, but it's usually platonic, like the love they have for a family member or best friend.

According to the Asexual Visibility and Education Network, "there are at least one percent of aromantics

and asexuals in the world today."

Sarah Lee, a junior majoring in social work has a friend that identifies as asexual, but their sexual identification, she said, hasn't harmed their friendship and in fact has made it better.

I think it's important to let everyone know that this is not something that these individuals go through and then just grow out of. A person can't say, "oh it's a phase, it'll pass," or "maybe you should just try sex and see if you like it" because asexuality and

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It's like having a friend who you don't have to worry about getting involved with because they don't see you in a sexual way. That person is just in the relationship to nurture, support, and help you be a better individual.

Sarah Lee  
Junior  
Social Work

“These students may be different from other students, but they're fun, loving, and make good friends,” Lee said. “It's like having a friend who you don't have to worry about getting involved with because they don't see you in a sexual way. That person is just in the relationship to nurture, support, and help you be a better individual.”

aromanticism are known to be innate. Instead of trying to change these individuals, just support them!

Alecia Allen is a contributing writer for Panther Press. Her column, *LifeWinks*, discusses how to improve your life while making a positive influence in the community.

# PROFESSORS COMMENT ON SAFESPACE CLASSROOMS

CHLOE GONZALEZ

Assistant Entertainment Director

April marks Pride Month and in preparation for this month of awareness, Student Media talks to FIU faculty about how they create a LGBTQA safe space in their classrooms.

“ I think the vulnerability of LGBTQ people stems from invisibility. Society still assumes that there are only men and women, no gender fluidity, and that the 'normal' sexual orientation is heterosexual. I believe it adds safety to explicitly talk about the variety of genders and sexual orientations in class, and the reasons why mainstream society silences these. That is what I do, and since I teach gender related and human rights classes, these issues are central in my teaching. All humans deserve to be recognized and all are to be treated with the same level of respect,

Susanne Zwingel  
Associate Professor

Department of Politics and International Relations

“ I guess really all I've done is to sort of slap down intolerance when it has popped up but now that I'm thinking about it I've never actually taken any positive steps to make LGBTQA students aware that I envision my class as a safe space for them, which is kind of disappointing on my part. I've just sort of been more reactive to intolerance rather than actually... making any statements to the class about tolerance or about safety,

Harry D. Gould  
Ph.D. Associate Professor

International Relations Department

“ When the topic is relevant in my classroom, I always make it very clear that this is the intellectual perspective that a well educated and open minded people should have,

Dr. Abraham D. Lavender  
Ph.D. Associate Professor

Department of Global/Sociocultural Studies

“ The main thing I do is, at the beginning of the semester I have students fill out an information card about themselves. I ask them to state their gender pronoun and I like it's a good way to make clear that I recognize nonconforming people. That's the main material thing I do. I'm gay myself, so, I think, I don't know if I refer to it too much, but I try to be open to those things. I ask them to say what name [they are] registered under, what name [they] prefer, what pronouns [they] use. Initially, I kind of allow people to sort of state whatever they feel about their identities and also kind of give a signal that I accept and recognize nonconforming people,

Dr. Martha Schoolman  
Assistant Professor  
English Department

“ I've always felt that one of the best things about FIU is how it seems to me to exhibit tolerance. Any class you ever teach at FIU, you're going to have kids from a minimum of six, if not 10... I think that I walk into every classroom at FIU with the notion that, 'Hey tolerance is a given here,'

Campbell McGrath  
Professor of Creative Writing  
English Department

# EMBRACE THE RAINBOW

## Hollywood still far from LGBTQ inclusiveness

### SERIOUSLY FOLKS



CAROLINE LOZANO

Last Saturday, I decided to watch “Beauty and the Beast.” Although I was curious to see how this film would compare to the 1991 Disney animated classic, I also wanted to see the portrayal of the character of LeFou, Gaston’s silly and diminutive sidekick.

Earlier this month, director Bill Condon revealed that the film would include an “exclusively gay moment” involving LeFou, who would also be depicted as gay.

The announcement spanned a mixed reaction among many viewers, with some ecstatic for the inclusion of a gay character in a children’s film and others angry for the supposed “gay propaganda.”

The film was initially banned in Malaysia and would only be shown if the scene were cut from the final product as homosexuality

is illegal in the country. According to Deadline, in Malaysia, “on screen, gay characters are allowed to be depicted, but only if they show repentance or are portrayed in a negative light.”

After Disney’s refusal and the film’s subsequent submission to the Film Appeals Committee, the film will be released with a PG-13 rating on March 30.

In Russia, the film was called to be banned but instead, was released with a 16+ rating due to the country’s anti “gay propaganda” laws.

A theater in Alabama went as far as to cancel screenings of the film because it went against “Christian values.”

With all the commotion built up because of LeFou’s sexuality and gay scene, I expected it to be something more than the 3 seconds presented towards the end.

The film’s narrative was sprinkled with queerness, but the “exclusively gay moment” Disney was patting itself on the back for wasn’t revolutionary in the slightest, especially in comparison to the 2012 animated film, ParaNorman, where the typical dumb jock character revealed he

had a boyfriend without shame or ridicule from his friends.

Surprisingly, this isn’t exclusive only to children’s animated films. Mainstream films still don’t evoke the LGBTQ inclusion that the community has long wanted.

“Most LGBTQ characters introduced in films also tend to be gay males while lesbians and bisexuals are forced to take the backseat.”

The majority of today’s films don’t feature prominent gay characters, either in lead or supporting roles. GLAAD, the powerful LGBT advocacy organization, supports this fact on their Studio Responsibility Index.

According to GLAAD, “Hollywood’s films lag far behind any other form of media when it comes to portrayals of LGBT

characters,” said Sarah Kate Ellis, GLAAD President & CEO. “Too often, the few LGBT characters that make it to the big screen are the target of a punchline or token characters.”

Most LGBTQ characters introduced in films also tend to be gay males while lesbians and bisexuals are forced to take the backseat.

In 2016, GLAAD reported that “the overwhelming majority of inclusive films (77 percent) featured gay male characters, an increase of 12 percentage points from the previous report. Less than a quarter of inclusive films (23 percent) featured lesbian characters and less than one-tenth (9 percent) included bisexual characters.”

Now, I’m not trying to say that the film industry has never helped the LGBTQ community. Films have featured gay and lesbian characters — though usually, in a negative light — from as early as 1895.

According to Cinema Jam, “the first film regarded as LGBT is the 1895 The Dickson Experimental Sound Film, in which a dance between two men is considered the

first depiction of homosexuality in film.”

Other films like “Milk” and “Brokeback Mountain” changed the way Americans viewed homosexuals since it showed them as regular people in search of happiness within a bigoted society.

Now, over a decade later, “Moonlight” scored a Best Picture win at the Academy Awards, becoming the first LGBT-themed film to ever do so.

It’s apparent that we’re moving past the prejudices and fears that once haunted our history. I’m also not discrediting the successes of LGBT-themed films. It’s great that these stories are being told and LGBT characters are finally depicted in an authentic manner.

It’s a step towards the right direction, but regardless of Best Picture wins or not, the film industry has a long way to go before it can laud itself for its so-called inclusiveness.

*Caroline Lozano is a contributing writer for Panther Press. Her column, Seriously, Folks, is a commentary on the arts and entertainment industry and how it relates to society today.*

## Catholic schools ‘not friendly’ towards LGBTQA

### RIGHT TURN



CHRISTIAN GONZALEZ

It was my junior year of high school. As I sat in art history class, bored to oblivion, one of my friends leaned over and whispered, “I’m gay.”

My first reaction was to laugh. I thought “John” was joking.

At Belen Jesuit, the Catholic high school I attended, the word gay (and its cruder form beginning with the letter “F”) got thrown around quite frequently. When “gay” was used, it was usually in connotation with something negative.

But really, almost anything could be “gay.” Homework could be gay. When a certain sports team performed poorly, that was gay. When someone said

something sentimental, that was also gay.

Most of the time, however, Belen students would use the word in the context of a joke, which is why I laughed when John came out to me.

I thought he was messing around. Nevertheless, he persisted.

“No, Chris, I mean it,” he said. “I told my best friend last night, and I broke down. Tears just came. I’m completely serious.”

My skepticism evaporated. John meant it.

Obviously I did not care; John would still be my friend — the gender of the people my friends take to bed is of little concern to me.

Although relatively subtle, the homophobia found in Catholic high schools like Belen made gay students feel uncomfortable about their sexual preferences and forced many of them to keep their orientation hidden.

Two years after John’s admission, I graduated from high school. By that time, three people had come out as

homosexual. There were 227 students in my class.

Another of those three, “Daniel,” happened to be one of my closest friends. He had told me about his sexual

“The Catholic Church has long preached that one must hate the sin but love the sinner.”

preference much earlier, sometime during freshman year, but he concealed it from the rest of the class, and from the school.

“I was afraid that the faculty would judge me,” Daniel would tell me. “I’ve always been a good student. I do my community service, participate in clubs, and do all that sort of stuff. So I didn’t want my image tarnished.”

Regrettably, he was right to be concerned about his reputation. Certain members of the high

school’s establishment — the religious ones in particular — likely would have looked down on Daniel if they had known about his homosexuality, which is

“why he didn’t come out until senior year.”

Things were probably not much better over at Christopher Columbus High School, the other Catholic all-boys schools in Miami. One of my friends recently told me that in a class of over 300 students, only one had come out as openly gay by graduation.

The unfortunate reality is that Catholic high schools are often unwelcoming environments for homosexuals.

To be fair, Catholicism is

not the only reason for this phenomenon. Homophobia is a broader societal problem. This is especially true in societies influenced by Hispanic cultures, many of which define masculinity in a way that excludes homosexuality and does not consider gays to be “real men.”

The Catholic Church has long preached that one must hate the sin but love the sinner. From the persecution of Protestants and homosexuals to the historic preaching of rancid anti-Semitism, the Church often failed to live up to its own injunction. Still, the moral command remains.

As I experienced it, my high school didn’t preach or encourage homophobia. But it did not take an active approach in preventing it either.

Individuals and institutions that support traditional marriage are still capable of combatting homophobia. Indeed, I would argue that it is their obligation to voice

objections to prejudice even as they dispute the right of homosexuals to marry.

It’s possible to argue against gay marriage without surrendering to homophobia. One way to do this is to argue that marriage — defined as the permanent union of one man and one woman — is the only way to ensure the health and prosperity of a society.

As much as I may dissent from that view, I cannot find it in intentions of hatred.

Simultaneously opposing gay marriage and homophobia might be a fine line to walk, but the necessary efforts must be made if we are to reassure gay people that their sexual tendencies shed no light on the quality of their character.

*Christian Gonzalez is a staff writer for Panther Press. His column, Right Turn, is a commentary on foreign affairs, culture, and social sciences.*

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**PANTHER EDITORIAL**

# LGBTQIA students need to feel accepted

A university is about providing a platform for curious people to explore the world and individuals around them. It's impossible to accomplish this if students do not feel comfortable or safe in their environments; and secondly, if students and professors are unable to have civilized discussions about the LGBTQIA community, how the world currently perceives them, and how it affects their quality of life.

It's important that we all be respectful of those around us, ask questions to educate ourselves, and protect those who need it. And in order to do this, everyone needs to work together to encourage a safe and welcoming environment for our LGBTQIA Panthers.

Professors, for example, have the power to promote a safe environment even before the first day of class by requesting that students email them their given name, their preferred name and their preferred pronoun before the semester starts.

Another alternative is for professors to pass around a piece of paper on the first day of class for students to write their given name, along with their preferred name and pronoun before calling attendance.

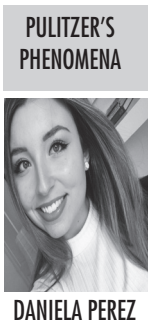
But, the pressure to make a safe environment for members of the LGBTQIA community doesn't just fall on the faculty and administration. Students need to make an effort as well.

For LGBTQ students, if you wish to be addressed by a name other than your birth name or by a different pronoun, speak with the professor privately before or after class.

For students who don't directly identify with the LGBTQIA community, don't be afraid to stand up for members of the community who are put in situations that are uncomfortable, offensive or threatening and make an effort to use the preferred pronouns and names of your classmates and professors.

At the end of the day, it's important that we're all respectful of those around us, ask questions to educate ourselves, and protect those who need it.

# Homosexuality not a sin, shouldn't be feared



DANIELA PEREZ

**PULITZER'S PHENOMENA**

Although the act of severing the brain's prefrontal lobe is no longer a medical treatment for mental disorders such as schizophrenia and depression, the issue of conversion therapy has entered the political limelight this past year because of Vice President

His parents described homosexuality as a sin, he said, as was anything else that could possibly be linked to it, such as when his father caught him and a friend practicing cheerleading.

"He asked me, 'Do you like boys or do you like girls? You better answer the right answer or I will kick you out of my house and disown you.' That stuck with me for years," Clark said.

And the fear he felt when he realized at the age of six that he liked a male classmate as more than just a friend, he said, followed him throughout his adolescence.

Growing up, he was filled with dread regarding his sexuality and his inability to confess, even having suicidal thoughts.

But, a subtle beacon of hope shed light on Clark's fears when he met someone who assisted him in his journey towards shedding his skin and accepting his sexuality.

Then Clark gathered up the courage to confess his sexuality to his parents by writing them a letter. The results were unexpected.

"They were weirdly accepting. They told me they were expecting it for years and were happy that I was just happy; they told me they loved me," he said.

It stopped being a subject after this discussion, although Clark still doesn't feel fully comfortable telling his parents every detail; he does, however, feel relieved of the acceptance that once caged and ruptured his heart.

Homosexuality is not a disease. It's not a cancer and does not need to be cured. Your family will not fall apart if your kin loves differently than you. Support the lives of this community, emphasize their importance in this world, care for them, and most importantly, don't patronize.

*Daniela Perez is a staff writer for Panther Press. Her column, Pulitzer's Phenomena, is a commentary on human interest.*

Mike Pence.

In his 2000 congressional campaign website, Pence showed a subliminal advocacy towards gay conversion therapy saying, "Resources should be directed toward those institutions which provide assistance to those seeking to change their sexual behavior."

Although not explicit, this statement holds an insidious tone. According to Katherine S. Milar's book, "The Myth Buster," the "ancient techniques" used to change a person's sexual orientation included lobotomy, chemical castration, electric shock, and masturbatory reconditioning.

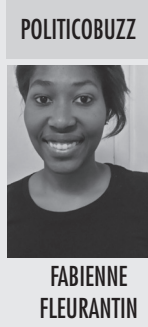
This sounded extremely harmful so the act of "ridding" someone of their homosexuality "disease" started to hide behind a mask that involved counseling, psychoanalytic therapy and prayer.

But, the LGBTQ community has the same brains as a heterosexual male or female. They have the same limbs, genetic compounds, and most importantly, the same hearts that beat for survival.

The LGBTQ community can work, study, perform and love just like any other individual. They are not sick nor are they psychologically inept; they just love a different sex.

Zachery Clark, a junior majoring in international business and international relations, is openly gay; however, this transition was the bane of his adolescence. Clark was raised as Southern Baptist and attended church in his and Pence's home state of Indiana.

# LGBTQA rights matter



FABIENNE FLEURANTIN

We have come a long way with LGBTQIA rights.

It was a beautiful moment in history when we saw the Supreme Court vote in favor of same-sex marriages, making it legal nationwide.

But we still have far to go.

Under the Trump Presidency, LGBTQIA rights remain uncertain. Trump has stated that he will fight for the rights of minorities, but his actions have stated otherwise.

Trump's administration revoked Obama's law that allowed transgender students in public schools to use the bathroom that align with their gender identity.

This is not making America great again. This is taking a huge step back. This is sex discrimination in education, which goes against Title IX.

Identifying as who you are requires overwhelming courage in a society that maintains stereotypes and condenses people into categories.

That is exactly what Trump is doing when he is making transgender students identify with their birth gender instead of their real one.

That's not progression. That's regression and FIU is all about being Worlds Ahead.

FIU has opened its doors to LGBTQIA students with MPAS LGBTQIA Initiatives. "The Mission of the MPAS LGBTQIA initiatives at Florida International University is to meet the needs of the LGBTQIA Student population, by developing and implementing educational, social, and resource programs and services.

These initiatives are aimed at reducing homophobia and heterosexism on both campuses through education, advocacy, awareness and assisting our LGBTQ students in reaching their full potential," according to the LGBTQIA Student Affairs Page.

Not only have they installed gender neutral bathrooms throughout both campuses, but they are planning to provide more in Housing and the Rec Center.

"With an estimated 10 percent of the FIU community identifying as LGBTQ, the request for gender-neutral bathrooms has grown, and allows students and faculty to use the restroom without

having to identify with one specific gender," according to FIU News.

This is an amazing effort

Identifying as who you are requires overwhelming courage in a society that maintains stereotypes and condenses people into categories.

that FIU is making to get their students to feel comfortable and safe in their school environment. Maybe the Trump administration could take a few pointers out of the Panther handbook and move forward, not backward.

*Fabienne Fleurantin is a staff writer for Panther Press. Her column, PoliticoBuzz, is a commentary that raises awareness about political issues in the US and worldwide. She also covers events at FIU's Biscayne Bay Campus.*

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# Members of LGBT community share experiences as student-athletes

**BRETT SHWEKY**  
Staff Writer

From the battle to obtain equal rights to the fight to break cultural barriers, members of the LGBT community are faced with unique challenges. For athletes within the LGBT community these obstacles only become more difficult to overcome.

LGBT athletes have encountered discriminative intolerance due to heteronormativity, or, a belief that certain people belong in specific roles in life.

Sports have been labeled as a heterosexual role in society by many.

Senior Janna Vick-Morris, a sustainability major, said while she played high school tennis, even though she had not come out, she at times felt isolated from the rest of her teammates.

“

At times I had the feeling that the other players on the team knew I was lesbian and therefore at times I was left to myself,

Janna Vick-Morris  
Senior  
Sustainability

”

“When I was in high school I was a part of the tennis team, however I had not fully known I was lesbian,” said Vick-Morris. “At times I had the feeling that the other players on the team knew I was lesbian and therefore at times I was left to myself.”

Vick-Morris continued by saying that for players in the LGBT community to gain acceptance universally throughout sports, openly-gay athletes must become active role models for the younger athletes concerned about the obstacles.

“Athletes such as Brittney Griner, Jason Collins, Michael Sam and others have all made an impact for the LGBT community in sports,” said Vick-Morris. “Them all openly coming out shows the younger athletes, who are

gay, to not be concerned about the challenges that athletes in today’s world face. That they can overcome the struggles and be perceived no differently from their peers.”

Shanna Vick-Morris, the life partner of Janna Vick-Morris, said when she played high school rugby, teammates who were also part of the LGBT community were able to bond over the similar mindset.

“During high school rugby, I was able to establish great friendships with teammates of mine because we were both lesbian” said the religious studies major. “Since we were both going through similar things, it was easy to bond over the common aspects in our lives.”

## Major sports franchises support transgender rights

**JULIETA RODRIGO**  
Staff Writer

On behalf of the many transgender athletes on college campuses around the nation and in support of the inclusivity of collegiate sports, the Human Rights Campaign, along with the American Civil Liberties Union, the Equality Federation, the National Center for Transgender Equality and many others urge the NCAA to boycott cities and states that enacted laws allowing discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

In response, on March 13, 2017, NCAA President Mark Emmert publicly reaffirmed the organization’s commitment to LGBTQ inclusion in their championship tournaments and events, according to an HRC press released the following day.

Emmert wrote that “the Board and I are committed to [inclusivity], and we expect that all people will be welcomed and treated with respect at our events.”

The NCAA does not stand alone in this commitment. ESPN

reported that the NBA All-Star Game was moved out of North Carolina because legislators failed to repeal HB2, a law which requires transgender people to use bathrooms based on the sex registered on their birth certificate and not by the gender in which they currently identified. The

“

I had no idea they [were supporting transgender rights], So it’s a nice surprise that they are accepting of people’s different lifestyles,

Manny Quevedo  
Graduate Student  
Physical Education

”

state that Texas would not be a contender to host the Super Bowl or other events if the bill is enacted.

Manny Quevedo, a physical education graduate and front desk attendant at the BBC Wellness and Recreation Center, told FIUSM that he wasn’t aware of these recent events.

All-Star Game was then moved and held in New Orleans, where the city boasts LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination protections.

According to Dallas News, the NFL has publicly scorned Texas’s SB 6, a bill that would allow state agencies and schools to discriminate against transgender people, and warned the

“I had no idea they [were supporting transgender rights],” said Quevedo. “So it’s a nice surprise that they are accepting of people’s different lifestyles.”

Quevedo commented that he will continue to support franchises like the NBA and the NFL, and hopes to see more inclusion in the future.

## Stonewall Pride Alliance aims to bring LGBT awareness to University

**STEVEN MELENDEZ**  
Contributing Writer

The LGBT community has experienced a lot of positive changes in the last few years, one of them being the legalization of same-sex marriage, as well as lifting the ban on military service by transgender people.

Tim Vargo, intern at the LGBT Care Initiative Office and president of Stonewall Pride Alliance, is aiming to make a difference and continue the fight for equal rights.

Stonewall, a social group located at the Modesto Maidique Campus, provides a safe environment in which people can talk and deal with LGBT issues, as well as educate those who may not know much about its history.

“Visibility and having a space where you can be genuine is pretty important,” said Vargo. “Personally, since I’m transgender, the way I exist in my classes isn’t the way I exist socially because there is no place for that a lot of the time.”

This alliance brings together LGBT members by providing

them with a variety of events to participate in. Vargo says majority of the events held by his group is educational with a few social events.

A few of these include the yearly Halloween special, as well as the lip syncing competition. Stonewall has also collaborated with the Geek Culture Club for an event last fall semester and will be collaborating with other clubs for future events.

“We have a few educational events coming up, one being the Social Justice Summit on April 19,” said Vargo.

The upcoming events are to focus on pride for the LGBT community.

Presentation proposals for the Social Justice Summit are still being accepted up until April 1, and approval status will be announced on April 4.

The actual presentation isn’t due until April 19, but proposals are due before the deadline.

Bringing LGBT education and awareness to FIU is the main objective Vargo and his team at Stonewall.

Getting the FIU community to familiarize themselves with LGBT issues is a great way to bring togetherness, but he knows it is only the beginning.

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