

Announcing the
Opening of

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Lesbian and Gay
Community

GENERAL CIVIL PRACTICE

▼
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Brathwaite *(from page 1)*

Winston put it, "to cover their asses.") The office called Winston and said that it was a clear violation of the University of Vermont's non-discrimination clause. He then went to the Vice President of Student Affairs and the Affirmative Action office.

However, the sanctions imposed were "nothing more than a slap on the wrist," said Winston. For two years, the brothers must educate their pledges about homophobia. "It has nothing to do with the pledges; they (the brothers) need education. It is discrimination and they can't be allowed to do it again. UVM has the duty to ensure that."

To accomplish that, Winston believes that the fraternity "needs to go through a rigid process of education about homophobia so that there would be no grounds for negative attitudes and fear." At this writing, the case is under appeal through the Affirmative Action office.

The whole incident prompted Winston to come out publicly. Before, he was out to friends - not for political reasons but more for personal reasons. Acacia changed all that. "I believe firmly in activism. I was told that I wasn't human enough. It stirred something in me to come out."

The reaction has been positive for the most part. His roommates have been "overwhelmingly supportive." He has not lost any friends. His family is concerned that he has opened himself up for a lot of bad experiences, but they are not angry.

There have been letters to UVM's student paper, the *Cynic*, that expressed homophobic opinions. Winston himself has been approached by people saying hateful things and has received enough harrasing calls to have his number changed. Despite all that, he said, "the good outweighed the bad."

To try to make UVM a more open-minded community, Winston believes that more education is necessary. "These are skills (people) learn," said Winston. "They have to deal with people (who are) different. They have to accept them as they are and not as they make them."

For Winston, coming out has "definitely" been positive, both for himself and for the UVM community at large. "It has helped me to be more confident," he said, "and to accept that part of myself. It has forced people to deal with something that they've heard all their lives." Also, by making the case more public, he has alerted everyone to the types of discrimination gay men and lesbians face daily. For that, we can all be grateful.



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