

Police Interview

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Tim: Yes, and they can go to the chief. I really believe the chief wants to change this department.

OITM: What do you see as being the issues of the gay and lesbian Community? What would you like to know about?

Greg: I think I speak for most officers when I say that we don't know how large a community there is.

Sonny: What are their expectations, and their fears? We can't help them unless we know some of the things that effect them. If there's a high number of people that are afraid to walk out of the house and walk to their car, we need to address, as a police department, those issues. That's where I am stumped.

OITM: Who are we, and what are our fears. What else?

Greg: What are your needs? Do you have particular needs in your community? Obviously we're addressing that with the domestic abuse issue, that's being looked at now and that's fantastic, but what else is indigenous to your community?

Dave: I would like to interact more with the mainstream gay and lesbian Community. It seems we're always hearing from what appears to me to be the radical segment of the gay and lesbian Community. Highly vocal stuff like the domestic partners issue, ACT-UP, very vocal, very radical people. I have a couple of friends that are gay and they're mainstream. They're not radical in either appearance or thought or ideas. It'd be nice to know some of those people, 'cause sometimes we feel really accosted by the strong radical segments. And I know that's not the way a lot of the gay and lesbian Community thinks. These are the activists.

OITM: You make an interesting issue, and even though I'm interviewing you I'll throw this in. Certainly no one represents everyone, and at the same time I think there are a lot of people who are frightened to do certain things that ACT-UP does for them, that activists do represent some people who are mainstream. I've not been a participant in any ACT-UP actions, and I don't know of I think of myself as an activist now, but I consider myself radical in that I believe in challenging the status quo and rocking the boat.

Dave: Absolutely. The point I'm making is that there are a lot of people...I don't want to use the word normal because everything's normal when it's in perspective...

Greg: You can't label them as gay by looking at them, not that you want to assign labels to anybody, but...

Tim: Some of the contacts we've had are made to be more adversarial than needed. When I first was learning the job and checking into people loitering [at pick up places] I would put the spotlight on people, and my trainer would say "No, that's not necessary, this is what's going on down here, you don't have to be particularly alarmed about it." When we go out at night, and I know it's intimidating, we have to check on people. We have to know what's going on. There was some talk at the time that the police were harassing people. It's just that we have to be encountering each other at certain times. Some demonstrations I've seen, not gay ones, they're very adversarial. We're there to do a job, not to intimidate. We get hassled and it's alienating to the police to always feel like we're targets. I know there have been abuses by police, and people say there have been a lot of abuses by police.

OITM: Taking on the system, does it always have to be in adversity? How can there be positive, constructive disagreement?

Tim: At the marijuana rally some of them did come over and say that they were there to make a political point rather than to take us on or slander us or whatever.

OITM: You need to know that we are not trying to hurt you also.

Tim: Yeah. Part of being a police is that you get threatened all the time, and groups especially are intimidating. Frankly, for all the junk on our belts, you can't do much when there are 10 or 12 people, or maybe more. That's stress.

Dave: The same officer that may not give the quality service that the gay or lesbian is expecting in a situation with the police, whether it's a domestic violence issue or an assault, that's the same cop that treats everybody like that. It's usually pretty consistent that that officer is one of the slugs and doesn't care about anything. It's not just gays and lesbians, it'll be blacks, it'll be that he or she doesn't want to take prints or collect proper evidence, or isn't really a good cop. Put it this way. If you're not receiving good service chances are no one is, and the complaint should be lodged. Don't feel isolated or that it's because you're gay.

OITM: Are you aware of violence against lesbians and gays? How do you see the role of the police in addressing this?

Tim: I have a bias. I understand where hate crimes legislation comes from. I've seen so many people hurt in the past 5 years. My bias is that any crime of violence upsets me and should be handled equally. I know it happens often that you arrest the guy and he's out on the street. The part of hate crimes legislation is that maybe it forces people to take it more seriously. In an ideal world all violent crimes would be taken seriously. That's my bias. I understand why you think it's necessary. We talk about domestic abuse in the gay community; the domestic abuse in the straight community is appalling.

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