

Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Alumni Return to Middlebury



Middlebury g/l/b alumni and members of MGLBA (student group). Photo Hugh Coyle

Hugh Coyle
(Middlebury class of '83)

For some, it was a milestone in Middlebury College's history of dealing with gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues. For Sandra Levine, class of 1980, it was a long-awaited and never-expected Homecoming.

Like many of those who returned to Middlebury College for its second gay, lesbian, and bisexual alumni panel on the weekend of April 3rd (the first was held in November of 1990),

Levine's memories of college life hadn't yet lost their bitter edge. In a moving description of her tormented association with her alma mater, she told of driving past the campus and never stopping. What set her apart from her classmates in the days when she was Middlebury's only "out" lesbian on campus continued to haunt her somewhat in her post-graduation relationship with the College.

All that seems to have changed as Middlebury welcomed back sixteen of its gay, lesbian, and bisexual alumni for a weekend of

panel discussions, meetings with students, and social gatherings. Many described the event as a "healing" or "curing" time, a chance for them to finally dress the psychic wounds received as they struggled with their sexual identities as college students. It also offered an opportunity for the group to share their insights with current students at Middlebury in the hopes of forming a supportive bond with lasting effects.

Nearly a hundred members of the Middlebury community came to hear the first panel on Saturday afternoon. Topics ranged from a brief history of the gay rights movement to parenting options available to gay men and lesbians. The four panelists also fielded questions from the audience, updating the crowd on the current situation in the military and theorizing about the future political impact of the growing bisexual movement.

Saturday's panel focused on national issues concerning gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals, though the speakers often included personal asides and anecdotes in their presentations. Humor was also in abundance, particularly as Ed Weissman, class of '66, discussed Bob Dole's contentious politics. Weissman wondered if his law regarding politicians held true in Dole's case, claiming that "people who tend to have been down on homosexuals in public tend to have been down on homosexuals in private as well."

A reception and dinner followed Saturday's panel and allowed College officials formally to welcome the alumni back to Middlebury. Singer/songwriter Alicia Mathewson, class of '92, offered musical entertainment in the school's Gamut Room later in the evening, and a party sponsored by the Middlebury Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Alliance (MGLBA) capped off the day.

On Sunday morning, the alumni gathered with students for a private business meeting. The group discussed the role gay, lesbian, and bisexual alumni might play in the future, and also addressed logistical questions concerning the March on Washington. A steering committee was formed to capitalize on the weekend's momentum and to develop further the prospects for a viable gay, lesbian, and bisexual alumni network at Middlebury.

The group also had a chance to meet briefly with College President John McCardell. Though he expressed reservations about the notion of forming an alumni group based on a "special interest," he did note that the College was successfully moving forward on issues such as domestic partnerships and hoped to have a working plan in place by the end of the year.

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