

## A&T Writer Encounters Hostility for Article on Gays

Contributed by Dexter Mullins -- Black College Wire  
Monday, 27 October 2008

"Overwhelmed by the negative responses"

It started off as a regular Wednesday. The newest edition of The A&T Register was out, and people were reading it with interest. Going into our planning meeting for the next week's issue, I had no idea the words that would come out of my mouth or the trouble they would cause. All my life, I have wanted to be a journalist who was known for contributing to the betterment of society. Someone pitched an idea for a story on interracial relationships. That is always interesting, but I thought that it was a little overused. "Let's do gay relationships instead," I blurted out. It was like I had an out of body experience. I felt as though I literally watched the words leave my mouth and I had no control. Oh no, I thought, what did I just do. I thought bringing awareness to an issue such as homosexual relationships would be a good place to start, but I had no idea what I was in store for. In my attempt make the story balanced and nonbiased, I tried to call everyone I knew who was gay or lesbian who was in a relationship. The conversations went from "hey, how are you?" to "you want to interview me for what?!" There's no way I would ever do that. "Don't call me anymore." I was stunned, because some of the people I knew personally and I couldn't believe the way they were acting. Nonetheless, I found people, two days after I had pitched the idea in our planning meeting. Great, two gay guys. Now I just needed a minister, a lesbian, and a straight person. How hard could that be? Well, after calling about 15 local churches in Greensboro, getting cussed out by two ministers (who shall go unnamed), hung up on by several secretaries, and given the "we'll get back to you" answer, I found out how hard this truly was. I was so overwhelmed by the negative responses, I just decided that I would not call any more ministers. Thinking that it was a huge blow to my story, but not to be discouraged, I continued on. After about a week and a half, and a first draft of the article, I had just about let given up. The article had been tabled twice, and I was beginning to get frustrated. Then I found someone, who also happened to be president of Acceptance Without Exceptions, a gay-straight alliance on our campus. Great! I thought to myself. Now all I need is a straight person. After about four days of searching, I again was getting discouraged. I had a lot more opposition than I had planned on. It wasn't until an hour before the final piece was due on Sunday that I was able to secure my source. Pulling all of the elements together was the simplest thing out of the process. I just had to get through the week, knowing that the photos that we were running would hit front page, and they were above the fold. When I saw the layout I was excited but scared. What if something happens to my friends? That Monday before the issue came out, I called everyone in. "I think we may want to look at your safety..." I told them. Previously, I had them all sign a waiver that released the paper of liability and gave us the right to use their names, but now I wasn't so sure. We decided to change the names of the gay and lesbian students in the article, and leave the straight student the same, only because he represented what we thought was the common campus opinion. How wrong we were. When the article finally appeared on Wednesday at 8 a.m., I was so nervous. I hadn't slept the night before, thinking about what would happen. At exactly 8:30, my phone started ringing, and it didn't stop for three days. I had so many calls coming in questioning me as to what I was thinking writing that article, and so many more thanking me for writing it, a lot of them went straight to voicemail. I just couldn't answer fast enough. Even the Vice Chancellor called me to commend me. Then I realized that out of the 5,000 copies we circulate, this was probably the first time I had seen about 3,000 of them snatched up within hours of distribution. EVERYONE had a Register in their hands. I logged into Facebook, only to find an inbox of about 45 messages, and an honesty box filled with nasty comments, and they wouldn't stop coming in. I just turned it off, I couldn't believe how rude people were. Then I found out that the straight student had his car egged, and that he was calling me a "plagiarist." [Note: He misunderstood the meaning of the word plagiarist.]

I called him, and played back the tape I recorded in our conversation. Word for word. "Oh well, never mind I guess. That is what I said." Exactly. It's now about two weeks later, and people are still talking about it. That was the first time I have ever seen people read the register from cover to cover and actually remember exactly what we ran. I'm proud of myself, but I also feel like a lot of things got out of hand. People only read it because it was controversial. It shouldn't be that way. Maybe now that everyone is reading, things can change.

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