



That Controversial Picture

In the June/July issue of *Bloom*, the story “The Trials LGBTQ+ Groups Face with Booth at Monroe County Fair” revealed the struggles Prism Youth Community (a PRIDE program) and the Rainbow Rights Task Force of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington endure when they set up their informational booth at the county fair each year. Along with the story, we ran two pictures of messages left by visitors who were encouraged to draw a rainbow.

The caption reads, “Messages, negative and positive, are left by visitors to the Prism booth.” The bottom photo shows a variety of rainbows, signed by the artists. The top photo shows a hateful message, of course unsigned, that simply reads “Fuck Gays.”

Both pictures were given to us by Prism and the Rainbow Rights Task Force to share with our readers as examples of the varied reception LGBTQ+ children and adults receive as they try to share their message with the community at the fair.

On the day the magazine was distributed, someone chose to take a photo of the hateful picture and put it on Facebook. This individual did not include the supportive picture, the caption, or, most importantly, the story. That Facebook posting created a firestorm of additional Facebook posts and

messages, as well as emails and phone calls to our office from around the country and from Bloomington—many accusing *Bloom* of being virulently anti-LGBTQ+.

This is how hate and divisiveness are spread on the internet. This is the kind of real “fake news” we hear so much about.

Those who are not part of a minority or marginalized group may have no personal reference when it comes to acts of hate. This picture, directed at children, might give them some idea of what it's like. For members of the gay community who were upset by the image, we feel that only by facing hate, head on, can it be combatted. The organizations involved were brave enough to send us the picture. We felt it was our duty to publish it. We stand by that decision.

On our Letters pages (14-15), you will find many of the emails and Facebook comments we received, both for and against our decision to print the picture depicting the hateful message.

The sad irony, of course, is that we and those who wrote on both sides of the issue believe unequivocally in the dignity of all people, no matter their sexual orientation.

Malcolm Abrams
editor@magbloom.com



Thank you for your letters. Your opinions are important to us. We read them all and print as many as possible. We reserve the right to edit letters for inappropriate content and length. Please be sure to include your name and address. Send your comments to: editor@magbloom.com or Editor, Bloom Magazine, P.O. Box 1204, Bloomington, IN 47402

Letters and Facebook comments regarding our story, “The Trials LGBTQ+ Groups Face with Booth at Monroe County Fair” and the accompanying hateful photograph of a sign reading, “Fuck Gays” that appeared in our June/July issue.

For the response from *Bloom* Editor & Publisher Malcolm Abrams, see “Editor’s Message,” page 10.

Thumbs Down

What a sad day to get my latest copy of *Bloom*. I generally look forward to it. Today, I was left in total shock. As an advertiser, loyal reader, supporter, and a gay member of our community, I was diminished. I do not understand how a photo with FUCK GAYS written in it would be published in a day of heightened awareness of the power of words. It was gratuitous. Your readers could easily imagine the negative messages that people would leave. Some of them live it daily. In this most sensitive of times, this was a poor decision. Furthermore, your lack of a sympathetic reaction only works to further distance the consumer from your publication.

The article, while impactful, was negated by the visual assault on the reader with the hate-filled image included. I cannot understand how it passed the editor’s taste level. Simply blurring the words would have made the same impact to your readership. This is not a live broadcast. Mainstream media would NEVER allow such a thing without blurring. The offensive words, in blue, only cut deep to those who truly understand the daily challenges faced in the community. This publication in a small part worked to perpetrate the writer’s point of view. Your publication gave life to the anonymous author. What a shame. Disappointed.

A shockingly poor editorial choice for a photo. This editor doesn’t get it. He doesn’t see how he gave life to the crayon photograph hate speech. It is a visual assault.

DOUG JOHNSON

PREVIOUS CONSUMER AND EX-ADVERTISER

You cannot read the article before viewing the photo, therefore the punch to the gut is already there. I read the article, I still feel like I was punched. For me, the words were lost in the hate of the photo. Your intention was for us to see the hate, isn’t that what good writing is about? To create a story with words instead of photos?

To see this hate speech in print, in a magazine I have loved for many years, regardless why, hurts deeply.

STACE GOFFINET

It was in very poor taste to publish the picture of that sign, whether you were trying to make a point or not. Some things should not be tolerated and by making it public you gave those vandals a voice. You need to recall all your magazines, make a public apology to all who you have hurt, and work towards a more tolerant city. Don’t reward the small-minded haters in this world. Shame on you!

CATHY DORRIS

The editorial piece could have been used without the visual image that was selected! It just brings more attention to putting negative images boldly in our face.

KRISTI MCCANN

The bullies and cowards that do this kind of hate got put in the spotlight. Bravo dumb-ass *Bloom Magazine*.

TOM JENKINS

The article is no excuse for a poor decision, that gives blood to hate groups. It is a visual that should have never been used in a home/garden/lifestyle magazine.

MICHAEL FAULKNER

This is disgusting. The choice to publish the photo only helped spread their message of hate. The LGBTQIA+ community experiences enough hate and shouldn’t have to see it when we open your publication. What a poor choice in any context.

JILL MOLLETTE



The story with the controversial picture from the June/July issue of *Bloom*.

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. I'd say this one is worth one: disgusting.

MICHELLE HUNTER

Your ignorance in publishing this photo is appalling, the decorative version of gaslighting. Just awful and beyond stupid. Shame.

RICHARD LAFOND

Thumbs Up

A very heartfelt thank you to *Bloom Magazine* for your ongoing support of the LGBTQ+ community, including your recent article "The Trials LGBTQ+ Groups Face with Booth at Monroe County Fair." I have great admiration for the Prism Youth Community, who work with the Rainbow Rights Task Force of the Unitarian Universalist Church (which I serve as Senior Minister) to create the materials and train the volunteers for this Fair booth. It is important that we adults in the greater Bloomington area remain aware of the discrimination and hatred LGBTQ+ youth continue to face in our community. I appreciated the article and photos, which revealed this truth in all its uncensored ugliness.

Even more importantly, the article and the photos explored the beauty of connection experienced by many at the Monroe County Fair booth. The booth is staffed by allies who have been trained to engage with others of differing opinions, using a non-confrontational approach that creates space for empathy and connection. As Prism Youth member Carter Makice said, "I tell the trainees the goal is expanding people's worldview rather than contradicting it. We're going out into that space without the expectation of changing anyone or convincing anyone of anything."

What a powerful approach in these divisive times. I am honored, like many of you, to be in solidarity with these Prism youth who seek beauty beyond ugliness, connection beyond disconnection, and truth in a post-truth era.

MARY ANN MACKLIN

SENIOR MINISTER, UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

I was saddened to hear about the misdirected outrage after *Bloom* published the "Fuck Gays" photo from the LGBTQ+ booth at the Monroe County fair in the June/July issue. The point of the article was clearly to convey the societal issues that the LGBTQ+ community faces, even in Bloomington. That message is well expressed in the title of the piece, "The Trials LGBTQ+ Groups Face with Booth at Monroe County Fair." Including that photo was necessary to make your point. For someone to take that photo wholly out of context and attribute anti-gay sentiment to your magazine is absurd.

BARBARA E. MCKINNEY

**DIRECTOR, BLOOMINGTON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION/ASSISTANT CITY ATTORNEY
CITY OF BLOOMINGTON LEGAL DEPARTMENT**

Having just read the article by Craig Coley in the June/July issue entitled "The Trials LGBTQ+ Groups Face" and, then, hearing about the hateful response *Bloom Magazine* received when someone took one of the photos you included in the article out of context and circulated it on Facebook, I'm reminded of how much work we all have yet to do. Not only do we need to address hatred,

which you did very effectively in your well-written article, we also need to address stupidity.

Yes, there are ignorant and hate-filled people who live in our wonderful town, but they are not in the majority. It was not inappropriate for you to include with the article the photo which has the words "Fuck Gays" on the Prism Youth display at the Monroe County Fair last year. It is the way some people feel about individuals whose identity differs from theirs, and we need to continue to find ways to address such reactions. To take that one photo and not the positive one you included and to circulate it on Facebook is just plain stupid. It does not represent our community. I write with deep appreciation for the work your reporters do.

DOUG BAUDER

**CO-CHAIR OF BLOOMINGTON UNITED AND DIRECTOR OF INDIANA UNIVERSITY'S
LGBTQ+ CENTER**

When images evoke such emotion, an opportunity for change exists. We can't continue to live in a society where we ignore things that hurt us. We need to listen more and SEE what's going on.

SARAH BERNARD KENNY

As someone who is part of the LGBTQIA+ communities, I have to say that seeing something like this gives light to something many of us have faced or do face. For some, it's powerful to know that the hate spewed on us isn't simply going to be hidden and kept in the shadows, nor will we be made to believe it's all in our heads. Just my personal opinion (as someone who's had words like that scratched into HS lockers, etc.).

SCOTT MCNEILL

Quite frankly, if we can explain to our children that #45 can "grab 'em by the pussy," etc., people can handle seeing this image in a magazine.

NICHOLAS BENJAMIN ARNHOLT STARK

We stand beside you 100 percent. Very sorry your story was bastardized like this. You and your excellent staff most certainly deserve better. These are dark times.

MARY CATHERINE CARMICHAEL AND THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR STAFF

If people would take the time to READ the article before bestowing their own version of hate and insults on the magazine, they would see that *Bloom* is trying to bring to light the troubles and disgusting harassment that the brave LGBTQ+ community continues to face in Bloomington (and the world, let's not forget). Is the image hard to see because it's real? I guess it's easier for some people to live in blissful ignorance rather than face reality. Thank you *Bloom*, and I send my gratitude and encouragement to the LGBTQ+ community. You make the world and our town better!

LAUREN M. MEANS