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Learn to respect, celebrate differences

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Learn to respect, celebrate differences

Pride Week an opportunity to enlighten oneself, others

What is this Pride Week crap about anyhow? Straight people don't have a pride week. I began thinking about this question, but then I remembered, it is OK to be different. That is what makes this world interesting, right? Pride Week is a time when the people of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community band together to celebrate their differences.

I wouldn't say that I'm proud to be gay — as I wouldn't say that I'm proud to be white. But after nearly a decade of teary-eyed bedtime prayers begging God to make me straight, I'm finally proud to be different — alongside others in my community.

However, I have a confession to make. Even in this small community labeled abnormal by society, there exist prejudices towards one another. The thought of drag queens and transgender people had always made me uncomfortable, and I'll admit the concepts of bisexuality and gay Republicanism

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still puzzle me. A few of my gay friends would concur. It's awful that I, already on the outskirts of social acceptance, would have prejudice towards another member of my own ostracized community.

I have come to accept that everyone is different. Though supporting George W. Bush, swinging both ways, putting on pumps, donning a shiny evening gown or having an operation to change my sex may not be my cup of tea, that doesn't mean it's not for someone else. I can only walk in my own, smelly shoes.

Just as a straight person will never fully understand what it's like to be gay, I'll never truly understand what it's like to be a

transgender person or suffer the grief one might receive from even the GLB community, let alone that of the outgroup. I have no right to believe that I know what's correct for anyone but me. This is something we all must understand about ourselves.

Therefore, as I try my best to embrace, or at least accept the differences of others, I hope that you will do the same — be you gay straight, or otherwise. We can never truly call ourselves good people until we do so, even if it means that we must agree to disagree. It is imperative that we remain respectful to others, even if they exhibit differences.

Oh, by the way — you can stop praying for me and my soul. Instead, I hope you'll pray for the people who cannot accept that our God made me a little different than he made them.

Aaron Skilling is a senior advertising major trying to keep an open mind.