

Awareness Harmony Acceptance
Advocates



AHA Advocate Talk: Erin Davies



Students at Ball State University got to see a rainbow-colored Volkswagen Beetle called the Fagbug September 28. The vehicle may seem to be controversial to some but, for Erin Davies, it is a way to cultivate awareness. The vehicle was displayed on the east side of the L.A. Pittenger Student Center lawn. It is the topic of the documentary [“Fagbug.”](#) which was shown that evening in the Fine Arts Building on Ball State’s Campus. Erin Davies, the creator of the documentary, was to speak about her experiences and her travels after the documentary was shown to students. In April of 2007, Davies’ car was vandalized with the words “fag” and “u r gay”, spray painted on the side and front of her vehicle. Instead of removing the vandalism, she traveled around the country to encourage dialogue about hate crimes and raise awareness about homophobia. Davies documented her journey in her film “Fagbug,” which has gone onto win more than 25 awards. Event was sponsored by the Ball State [Multicultural Center](#) and [Spectrum](#).

Samantha Ellison: On April 18th 2007, your car was vandalized? What was written on your car? And how did you first feel about this hate crime?

Erin Davies: Someone spray painted “fag” and “u r gay” on the driver’s side and hood of my car. At first I felt shocked. Then I felt ashamed. Then I thought to myself, “u r gay? No shit! Thank you for stating the obvious.”

SE: What were some people’s first reactions to your car? How did other students at your university respond?

ED: The first day I drove the car with the graffiti, I drove to my graduate school, Sage College, in Troy, NY. In one hour, there were fifty phone calls of complaints and I was asked to remove my car from campus. Rather than move it, I took the stance that homophobia isn’t just my problem. It’s everyone’s.

SE: How did you use what had happen to your car to create awareness for LGBTQ hate crimes?

ED: I used what happened to turn it into a statement. By not removing the graffiti, I externalized it and had a shared healing experience. People think this type of thing doesn’t happen because they never see it in a visual form. Everyone that saw my car with the graffiti in a year could no longer say they didn’t think it was happening because they never saw it.

SE: How did you decide to come up with the idea to travel around the country? Where did you all travel to? What were some of your most memorable moments along the way?

ED: A friend of mine dared me to drive the car for a year and take it around the country. I traveled to 41 states in 58 days. My most memorable moment was getting an email from VW of America informing me that they heard about what I was doing and wanted to sponsor my road trip. Also, I had a male named Brandon Monson drive the car in Indiana for 3 days to document the differences with him behind the wheel versus me.

SE: The movie Fagbug came out in 2009, documenting your journey across the country? Why did you feel it was so important to document your journey and be able to share this will others?

ED: I felt it was important to document my journey so other people who go through similar things don’t feel alone when it happens. I wanted to give an example of how to be empowered by these types of events.

SE: How have you used your merchandise to educate people on the harmful impacts of homophobia in our culture?

ED: I have a fagbug sticker, t-shirts, toy bug, poster, and DVD. All the merchandise serves as a conversation starter. Two of my t-shirts are the exact graffiti that was written on the car. Since the car got redone after a year, the shirts serve as a conversation piece in the same way the graffiti on the car did. The merchandise keeps allowing the story to be retold.

SE: Now that you have traveled the country on a mission to raise awareness about hate crimes and homophobia, what are your next plans?

ED: My plan is to continue to do so until I no longer hear about stories similar to mine on a daily basis. Eventually I'd like to retire the original fagbug into a museum and complete a follow up documentary. This spring I am flying the car to Hawaii and taking the car to Alaska to reach my 50th state which is a huge milestone.

[Watch Fagbug Documentary](#)