

# Rainbow chalk art met with verbal attack

By **Emma Gadeski** - August 27, 2021



LGBTQ advocates drew rainbow chalk art south of campus on Thursday. An unidentified man dumped water on the art around 8:30 p.m. and used an anti-gay slur. It is unclear whether he is a BYU student. (Ingrid Sagers)

*Editor's note: The individual who used the anti-gay slur was previously a BYU student but is not currently enrolled, according to Media Relations Manager Todd Hollingshead. "Because of federal laws and university privacy guidelines, BYU cannot provide any additional information," he said.*

On Friday, BYU officials condemned a verbal attack that occurred on the south end of campus after LGBTQ advocates created rainbow chalk art.

An unidentified man dumped water on the chalk drawings and used an anti-gay slur on Thursday night, captured in a video circulating around social media. Advocates had created the art near the intersection of 800 North and 200 East.

Amber Sorensen, a Provo resident who came to check out the art and take pictures of it for her Instagram, said the man was walking around rinsing off a big rainbow drawing and a rainbow-colored Y on the sidewalk by the intersection. She pulled out her phone and started filming. Her friend who was with her asked the man if he was feeling "a little less homophobic."

He then responded with what is heard in the video: "Oh — no, uh f—s go to hell," and walked away. Sorensen is then heard in the background saying, "Oh, yeah. I'm sure the Bible actually says that."

The Daily Universe declined to confirm the man's identity without speaking to him directly, and received no response.

University Communications provided a statement to The Daily Universe regarding this incident, which is also posted on the university's Twitter.

"We unequivocally condemn behavior and language that is disrespectful and hurtful. There is no place for hateful speech, or prejudice of any kind, on our campus or in our community," university spokesperson Carri Jenkins said.

The Honor Code explicitly states that each member of the BYU community has the obligation to respect others, Jenkins said, adding that this matter is now under review.

"This behavior runs counter to the directives shared by President (Kevin J) Worthen in his University Conference address Monday. We are striving to create a community of belonging composed of students, faculty and staff whose hearts are knit together in love," Jenkins said. "Every student and individual on our campus deserves to feel that belonging."

The video was filmed at 8:37 p.m. Thursday night. A version of the video with the expletive bleeped out is below. Warning: this content may be upsetting for some.

(Video courtesy of Amber Sorensen)

The main organizer for the rainbow chalk event was Lauren Rogers, who graduated from BYU two years ago. Rogers posted about the event on TikTok, and Valerie Dewey, who lives near Salt Lake City created the [Facebook](#) event.

Dewey said event organizers spoke with Provo police before the event to get it approved. Another organizer, A'Lea Harris, said the group even saw BYU police drive by, giving those at the event waves.

Jenkins further clarified that the rainbow chalk art event did not need authorization from the university because it was on public access property, spanning across the sidewalk on 800 North.

Participants were not part of an organized group, Dewey said.

The main goal of the event was to support the LGBTQ community following Elder Jeffrey R. Holland's [speech](#) at University Conference on Monday, Dewey said. "It was a just a poor choice of metaphor and wording. The general feeling from the talk was a call to arms."

Rogers said she was "deeply hurt" by Elder Holland's words and she knows how hard it is to be queer at BYU. She wanted to show support to any LGBTQ students and faculty at BYU and help make sure they knew they weren't alone.

Rogers said she expected a lot of pushback, but besides the anti-gay slur incident, the response was positive. Students who weren't involved came up to the group and asked what they were doing. "When we explained it to them, they were like 'that's amazing, can we join?'"

Despite the otherwise positive experience, Rogers said it was upsetting to hear the homophobic slur in the video circulating around social media. She hopes the person who did it is held accountable because he was breaking the Honor Code by using hate speech.

BYU's [Honor Code](#) requires students to "respect others, including the avoidance of profane and vulgar language."

Sorensen said she was a little surprised at what she heard because it's something people hear about, but she had never seen it in person. She had a friend whose Pride flag was stolen off her porch earlier this week, so her experience with this kind of thing had been secondhand. "So it was a little surprising in that way, but also not really too surprising. More just kind of sad and disappointing."

"I was a bit shocked to hear the slur come out of this kid's mouth," she said, adding that it caught her off guard.

Harris said participants will be going back to public areas near the intersection of 800 North and 200 East to write more messages of love tonight at 7 p.m.

---

---

**Emma Gadeski**