

Georgetown Gays: Fighting for Acceptance

Much ado has been made lately of the fact that *Barrons* now considers Georgetown in a class with the finest schools in the country. I'm sorry Ignatius Loyola, but I do not happen to agree. I make my judgement not on admissions figures, nor on the quality of education, but on the manner in which this university treats its students, which I think leaves much to be desired.

An excellent case in point is the treatment, or rather nontreatment, of gay students. The homosexual community here on campus can take little pride in

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Georgetown's improving reputation. It's hard to feel as though you have much stake in an institution that ignores you, and ignoring the needs of gay students is an art which this university has perfected. A university is supposed to be a forum for intellectual exchange. However, if you happen to be gay at Georgetown, you are left with the overwhelming impression that the administration would prefer you to keep your thoughts, your needs, and especially your pride to yourself.

I never had any difficulty dealing with the fact that I am gay. I have always considered myself a very rational person. I think I was fourteen or fifteen when I knew for a fact that, unlike other boys, there was nothing in the women's lingerie section of the Sear's catalogue that could hold my interest. I knew what I was. I knew I could not change what I was, and I knew that the only way to get through life was to accept those two facts. I read a great deal, and very soon began to share my thoughts with others. Over the last few years, I have found that honesty is incredibly addicting, and my heart has been warmed by the tremendous support I have received from my friends and my family.

For a while I was very disillusioned with my church. I walked out of a mass at home after hearing a priest read a letter from Terrence Cardinal Cooke urging every decent Catholic to write to his City Councilman demanding defeat of gay rights legislation. To this day I wonder if the Cardinal has ever heard of the separation of Church and State. Soon, however, I found my way to an organization called

Dignity. The gay men and women who are its members helped me to understand that there was a place for me in organized religion. The atmosphere at Dignity is extraordinary. Since the organization struggles to survive in a hostile environment, one often feels like an early Christian in Rome. If I remember correctly, they too were oppressed because they chose to act on their capacity to love. In many ways, Dignity works like an underground railroad, and I was delighted to find that Washington too had a chapter.

It was upsetting to learn, however, that such love and concern were lacking at Georgetown. Indeed, this university has only encouraged militancy in me. Fact of life: if you try to shove me back in a closet where I know I have neither the air nor room to live, you may rest assured that I will fight even harder to stay outside.

I do not know if I could ever adequately describe what it is like to be gay at this place. To be told that college is a time to find out about yourself, yet read comments by the Campus ministry that coming out now might prove "detrimental to one's development." To sit in psychology classes and hear the word "pathological" tossed about, as well as theories about homosexuality that you know were discredited years ago. To sit in English classes, and discuss works written by homosexuals, and be told that they possessed creativity in spite of the fact that they were gay, not because of it. To know that the resources available on this campus consist of one film-strip and a handful of outdated books of dubious quality. To be in the School of Foreign Service and training for a career you will never have. To know that the administration is so adept at sidestepping this issue, that you cannot bring yourself to trust them at all.

Some will say that these impressions are false. If that is the case, then the university must do something to dispel them. It has been afforded an excellent opportunity to do so. The gay student organization here at Georgetown has applied for official recognition. I realize the issue is a controversial one, but do not feel that the administration must say no. In fact, I think they are compelled to say yes.

This is a Catholic school, true, but that does not mean that a recognized gay organization cannot exist here. As far as



homosexuality is concerned, the Bible is a source of ambiguity; it is a subject about which Jesus said nothing. Beyond that, it is the duty of all Christians to be in the forefront of the fight against prejudice, discrimination, and hatred. The consequences of rejection must also be considered. Kohlberg says that 93% of morality is learned outside the classroom. To unjustly deny a group of students the right to be accepted as part of the university community would undermine any efforts to create a moral atmosphere here.

I know that the administration is reluctant to take any action that would be construed as support for an alternative lifestyle. We ask not for support of lifestyles, but of life; not of homosexual acts, but of homosexuals. To recognize us would mean only recognizing the fact that acceptance is lacking on this campus, and that gay students need to band together for support, for self-education, and to facilitate the education of the rest of the community. To turn down that request would be to adopt the narrowest possible interpretation of Christ's message. I, for one, do not recall being told to love my neighbor except in cases when he or she is gay.

The administration is afraid of militancy; it can be eliminated by simply affording to the gay students the same rights and considerations that others enjoy. The administration does not want the campus polarized; that has only occurred in places where recognition was denied. The administration fears a negative reaction by the alumni; no university in this country has experienced a drop in alumni funding following the recognition of a gay organization. At Notre Dame, the gay alumni association has raised over \$100,000 for scholarships for gay students.

The administration claims it does not want to complicate matters for those who are still "confused" about their sexuality. To begin with, psychologists say that sexual preference is determined somewhere before the age of seven. If there are confused people here, how could they possibly be expected to sort things out if only one side of the issue is heard? It is inconceivable that those who manage an educational institution could ever believe that ignorance is bliss. And what about those who are not confused? Do they not have the right to work to eliminate the prejudice and ignorance aimed at them? I am afraid that those who make such arguments have listened too long to the likes of Anita Bryant. They may pretend to be altruistic, but what they are actually saying is, "We do not want to help you. Wait until you are out of here to deal with this."

The fears of the administration are nothing compared with the difficulties faced by homosexuals on this campus. I have talked with faculty members who live in constant fear, knowing that they would be let go in an instant if found out. I have met those "confused" students. Their confusion stems only from the hostile attitude of the administration, an attitude which seeks to systematically strip them of their notions of self-worth and pride. To treat people as though they are inferior is terrible; to get them to believe it is unconscionable.

It is my sincere hope that the administration will make the correct decision in this matter and demonstrate that they have understood fully the message laid down to us 2,000 years ago. To deny a segment of the student body an opportunity to live, to learn, to grow, to educate others, and to be treated as human beings, would be most assuredly un-Christian.