

opinion READER

Floodgate opens for COLAGE dispute

Student complains: Denial is unfair

The denial of funding for the Committee Offering Lesbian and Gay Events was a terrible injustice that should be corrected. Gay and lesbian students pay student fees like the rest of us, and they contribute just as much to the university.

Funding has been provided for other minority groups, so why has COLAGE been left out? This is just another case of unwarranted discrimination on the part of both the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska and university students.

Andrew Meyer
freshmen
pre-med

Student calls denial modern-day bigotry

When I watch old films of the Civil Rights Movement and see angry white faces yelling "Niggers, go home," I wonder what these people tell their children when they see the same scenes. Do they say "I was a fool," or "Well, we tried to keep them out, but the law was against us?"

Similarly, what will our ASUN senators say to their children about their anti-gay stance? Surely in another 10 years, most Americans will realize that hatred of homosexuals is illogical and immoral. The bigotry shown by the recent denial of funds for COLAGE will be difficult to understand in the 21st century.

Arnold Grinvalds
graduate student
English

Sexual practices not the real issue

Sodomy: 1. Anal or oral copulation with a member of the opposite sex. 2. Copulation with a member of the same sex. 3. Bestiality.

-- Random House Dictionary, 2nd Edition, 1988

When I read Steve Thomlison's rebuttal to the Daily Nebraskan editorial (Daily Nebraskan, Feb. 16 and 17), I was amused and very indignant. Amused at Thomlison's ignorance, and indignant to the fact that emotional and internal needs of a class of people has been relegated to a "sexual practice."

However, Thomlison has gotten a great deal of attention, and that could be what he wanted.

If I might direct the reader's eyes once again to the 1988 Random House definition of sodomy, you can plainly see that the first definition listed pertains to heterosexuals. Do they not list definitions according to importance? It's time for all of us to wake up and smell the coffee. We need to take the issue of homosexuality out of the bedroom. Thomlison! Take off your judges' robes. You're denouncing a class of people whose "sexual practices" are no different than your own.

What is different, however, is the deep-seeded need that all people have to be loved and accepted for who they are. Free to love and enjoy whomever they choose, whenever they choose and however they choose as long as the object of their affections returns the same.

People fear what they don't understand. Fear causes people to do things they would not normally do. The way to overcome fear is to go through it, not hide behind it. It's fear of heterosexual repercussion that keeps gay and lesbian students from attending the events scheduled for them on campus.

The Committee Offering Lesbian and Gay Events is trying to aid people with their fear. What if all people who were left-handed feared for their safety and lived in anonymity. You'd feel pretty stupid if you found out your friend was afraid to let you know he

was left-handed because you might reject him. Does being left-handed make him less human? By all means, let's take some of his rights away. He isn't "normal" because he isn't part of the majority. Pretty stupid, huh?

What we need to realize is that homosexuality is not simply a sexual act. Focus your minds above the belt and let them rest in the area of the heart.

Most of my gay and lesbian friends cherish the relationship they have with their God. Are any of you in a position to take that relationship away from them?

Remember, if it is the "sexual practice" of homosexuality that makes it immoral and illegal, then that same "sexual practice" is just as immoral and illegal for the heterosexuals who enjoy the same "sexual practices."

And Thomlison, "As followers of a divine leader we can all appreciate that there are certain intrinsic laws that are passed down to us from the deity and we should take those commands into account with each and every decision that we make."

Remember that the next time you get drunk and drive, or have sex with your girlfriend.

Patti Lutter
staff sec. II
chemistry

Petersen's letter blasted by reader

I am sick and tired of the reasoning behind the denial of funding for the Committee Offering Lesbian and Gay Events. You would think that we have regressed back to the Dark Ages.

One of our ASUN senators finds it necessary to mention the Bible's discussion on sodomy as the reason the group should not get funding because it is immoral. And then ASUN Sen. Steve Thomlison tried to redeem himself by saying that all deities basically maintain that point and that he did not mean to offend anyone. What about the fact that all deities

basically believe that all people should live together and learn about other people?

I know I was offended and I have talked to other people who were also. Where did Thomlison think he was at -- the kitchen table talking with mom and dad about the facts of life? As a senator in our student government he is a representative of the student body, the whole student body, and therefore should act as such. Thomlison was not alone in this and I feel some other members of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska acted irresponsibly in supporting such testimony.

I thought ASUN President Jeff Petersen would see much of the personal bias in the decision, he however did not. He did write a very nice, ambiguous letter that really did not get the point about why COLAGE was not funded. He had five points that all could be argued the other way so I thought I would present you with what I found.

Point 1: Denial of funding does not constitute discrimination. Well, it does when all organizations are not judged on the same standards. I have a feeling that when all organizations were put through what COLAGE was put through there would be a lot of less-funded organizations. If students were allowed to vote I believe a lot of them would feel not all of the funded organizations should be funded. Did other groups have to cite Bible messages to prove their morality? I think not.

Point 2: Sexual preference does not mean a cultural minority. I looked it up and this is what I found. As defined by Bassis, Gelles and Levine (1984), using either sociological or legislative criteria for minority status, homosexuals, homosexuals would clearly qualify as a minority group. They go on to state the standards the U.S. Supreme Court uses to grant minority status: The group in question is politically powerless, has experienced a history of discrimination, has a high degree of visibility and has traits that are immutable.

Homosexuals meet the first two points with ease. And as Petersen argued, you cannot necessarily tell a person is gay by sight, but then you cannot tell a person is Jewish by sight either. And for the most part, psychologists support the reasoning that homosexuality is an innate tendency -- an opinion I would trust more than Petersen's.

Petersen further argues that if homosexuals are a minority, then why aren't they classified under the American Minority Council instead of University Program Council-City. He gives some attendance figures for COLAGE programs, and states that a small number of students actually use COLAGE programming. I've been to some university-funded programs with less than 10 people in attendance.

Point 3: If COLAGE does not receive funding, a dangerous precedent may be set allowing personal and religious preferences delegate who is and who is not worthy of funding. Other groups who may argue that a certain religion is part of their innate self would also have to prove to the extent that COLAGE did, that it is not their upbringing that gave them the beliefs it did.

Many homosexuals do not want to be gay, and their parents certainly did not want them to be gay. But they are regardless of those facts. They could live their lives as people would expect them to or, they can come to terms with themselves and live as they really are.

Point 4: It may be in violation of the NU Board of Regents policy. The policy he cited was on the issue of presenting speaker programs on campus.

Petersen then further developed this argument by saying that most of the events would be one-sided and deal with homosexuals violating the policy by promoting on philosophy or set of ideals. COLAGE has offered a variety of programs that would contradict that argument. What about "My Friend Is Gay and I Don't Understand" and "Homosexuality and Religion," just to name a few.

And don't other organizations promote their own history and culture as well? I haven't seen Black Special Events calling the Ku Klux Klan to come in to discuss a different viewpoint, and I don't think anyone would want or expect them to.

Point 5: His last point is that a majority of the student body does not want COLAGE to be funded. Sometimes someone has to make a stand and look deeper to see what is right. Only a few years ago most of the nation agreed that blacks should go to separate schools, did this make it right? I think Petersen should have taken advantage of the situation and used his leadership to help people see that just because a person is different it does not mean they are necessarily immoral or wrong.

I hope this letter has provided a different viewpoint that the one provided by Petersen, and that COLAGE is judged on its merits as an organization, not the religious and moral preferences of the greater society.

Michele Bang
junior
middle school education

letter

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