

COLAGE funding issue interests readers

Student's money not for gays and lesbians

I read ASUN President Jeff Petersen's letter opposing funding for the Committee Offering Lesbian and Gay Events (Daily Nebraskan, Feb. 21) and I agree with everything he said. I don't want my money going toward financing gay/lesbian activities, no matter what the amount. Does this make me homophobic -- as homosexuals are quick to point out? I don't think so, otherwise I wouldn't function in this society very well.

I am not interested in gay/lesbian activities or helping the gay/lesbian cause. They still have their right to exist -- just don't use my money. Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs James Griesen will probably give these individuals the money they want from somewhere before this issue ever goes to court, but I thought I would make myself heard anyway.

Trudy Watts
freshman

COLAGE important to UNL's community

I believe COLAGE has an important role to play in the total university community.

I have been teaching at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for 13 years in Human Development and the Family, and many times in my classes I have found it important to discuss sexuality and homosexuality. People, young and old alike, tend to be greatly interested and greatly confused when it comes to issues of sexuality, and over the years it has been very helpful to me to have small groups of gay and lesbian students come to discuss issues of sexual orientation with my classes.

I chose to do this back in 1976, or so, when I was appalled over an incident that occurred in Arizona. A UNL student, the coordinator of the gay student group on campus, was vacationing in Phoenix. He and some friends had gone to a gay bar for drinks and to talk. He was not "cruising" at the time. He simply was visiting with friends. The young man and his friends were accosted when they left the bar by a group of high school football players. The young man was beaten in the parking lot of the bar and died from his injuries.

This did not seem much different to me from Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 40s, where Adolf Hitler forced homosexuals to wear yellow ribbons to readily identify them. Hitler sent countless homosexuals to the death camps, along with Jews, Poles, Russians, gypsies and others.

The major researchers who have studied the development of homosexuality generally have not been able to conclude why some humans end up straight and some end up gay. Each gay and lesbian individual's story about his or her development tends to be relatively unique: some had cold mothers and warm fathers; some had warm mothers and cold fathers; some were orphans; some had early sexual experiences with a person of the same sex; others did not; and so forth.

One leading authority, Dr. Lawrence Hatterer, a psychiatrist, said: "With perhaps 20 million American men who practice some form of homosexuality, it's inconceivable that all should have emerged from the same set of causes . . ." Hatterer continued that in more than 10,000 interviews with gay men, "I've heard . . . every combination and variation of parental history that you can imagine."

I personally decided that since the scientific community was confused about the issue, it would be important to show young heterosexuals that gays do not necessarily choose to be so. And this is just another good reason why they do not deserve to be persecuted but better understood.

The discussions in my classes with gay people have always been very straightforward, honest and often useful in helping both straight and

gay students in understanding each other better. Perhaps a dozen or more times I have asked the panelists -- never the same students -- why they decided to come to class.

I play devil's advocate in my questioning: "Are you coming here to recruit?"

The answer is always "Of course not." But the best answer I have gotten is: "Do you think I would want other people to go through what I have to go through in life?" i.e. the hostility, aggression, shunning, hurtful jokes, loss of jobs, loss of love and rejection from other family members, fear of the possible loss of life, and so forth. Many young homosexuals have told me that their parents "disown" them when the person openly admits his or her homosexuality.

I have three daughters. My oldest daughter, 19, is one of the few heterosexual members of COLAGE. She is a member of the group, she tells her mother and me, because she believes homosexuals are terribly persecuted and because she has many gay and lesbian friends who are fine people. My daughter argues that perhaps up to 10 percent of the people in this country are gay. No one will ever know for sure, of course.

My daughter tells me she is involved with gay rights because gay and lesbian people need support, too. I agree. Gay and lesbian people clearly are a persecuted minority. Perhaps the University of Arkansas case which ended up in the Eighth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals is reason enough to modestly support the gay and lesbian students on this campus. Apparently it has been found illegal to block student funds for gay and lesbian programming.

A better reason to support COLAGE, however, is that perhaps up to 2,400 students at UNL are gay or lesbian. We will never know for sure, because it is too dangerous in our society for the vast majority to come out. COLAGE is trying in a modest, very sincere way to help all of us understand each other better. That, of course, is what a university is all about.

John DeFrain, Ph.D.
associate professor

COLAGE issue is funding, not morals

In response to the recent furor raised over the denial of funds to COLAGE -- the issue is not morality, it is whether the majority of UNL students wish to fund that organization.

The ASUN Senate represented the student body in denying these funds. Just because it is a university organization, it is not entitled to student funding. The money I pay to the university is still mine, and whether I

choose to pay for something, or to get a refund is still my choice -- it's my money.

If one wants to support a certain organization, do it, but if the rest of the student body doesn't want to, don't condemn them and call them close-minded. It is their choice. I belong to a student organization and I pay a substantial sum to support it and its activities every year. I don't expect the non-member student body to fund it also, and I don't blame them or call them names for not wanting to.

And Shawn Leavitt (DN, Feb. 22), I don't ever remember seeing any signs that said "Heterosexual activity only. Homosexuals not invited." ASUN doesn't shun your existence, they were just following the will of the majority by not giving you any money.

Thomas Kernes
sophomore
chemistry

Degree of debate confuses student

The amount of controversy about COLAGE funding dumbfounds me. I find it amazing that all these people are against giving this committee \$750 for a variety of reasons.

First of all, the way I understand it is that we as students are going to pay a certain set fee next year, regardless of where the money is allocated to. If this is true, and even if it isn't, I doubt that one percent of the student body could tell me how their fees are divided up. So why the big uproar when a half-cent of their student fees goes to a suppressed group in our society?

Secondly, COLAGE is recognized as a UPC-sponsored committee and deserves the same consideration as the other UPC committees. The fact is that an overwhelming majority of students don't attend UPC events anyway (I know, I have been a committee member before), so why fund all of the other committees and not this one?

Lastly, and most importantly, what have the people who are against COLAGE really gained? Have they done away with a group that has annoyed some of the student population for years? No.

Regardless of whether COLAGE is funded or not, the group will still exist. Have they stopped this group from having an effect on this issue by trying to deny them funding? No. COLAGE/GLSA has never really done anything to educate the campus about homosexual rights, and \$750 isn't going to change that fact.

In my four years at this campus, all GLSA has been is an advertisement in the Daily Nebraskan and then forgotten. Have the people against COLAGE funding helped the committee's goal of becoming better known in who they are and what they

do? Definitely yes.

The publicity generated by this controversy has to be beneficial to COLAGE. Publicity is just what COLAGE wants, and the people against them are providing them all they need.

I believe it all comes down to this. If you are secure with your sexuality, then the activities of COLAGE will not affect you, and funding should be approved on the basis that virtually every UPC committee has no effect if you don't take advantage of it. If you aren't secure with your sexuality and feel threatened by COLAGE, maybe this committee could do you some good.

Rob Britton
senior
biological sciences

Issue is tiresome; suggestion offered

I am tired of hearing about COLAGE and its "fund-a-fag" campaign to acquire student fees. To me it sounds as if the majority don't want their fees directed towards something they don't agree with.

Now COLAGE is threatening to take the issue to court because they say that not funding their program is due to discrimination and is unconstitutional. I ask you to think of this for a moment. If my religion does not allow me to participate in homosexuality or associate myself with it in any way, yet a portion of my student fees is allocated to the support of such a group, is it possible that my freedom of religion is being suppressed in such a manner that would be considered unconstitutional?

In light of this, might I offer a suggestion? Members of COLAGE have claimed that approximately 10 percent of the student population of UNL is gay. If the student population is approximately 25,000, this would mean 2,500 student are gay, correct? If each one of these students were to

contribute \$1 to COLAGE, they would have sufficiently more funds than they are asking for currently.

Now, you ask, how does one collect the money? Here's what I propose: When students register at UNL they mark a box on the registration form marked "religious preference." Why not have a box for "sexual preference -- homosexual or heterosexual." One dollar would then be added to the total fees of those who marked homosexual. This would also give a good idea of just how many people really want COLAGE. I realize that something of this nature would be hard to do, but it makes sense, doesn't it?

In closing, I agree with the decision not to fund COLAGE. I am not a homophobic or a bigot, but I do not wish to fund a homosexual organization.

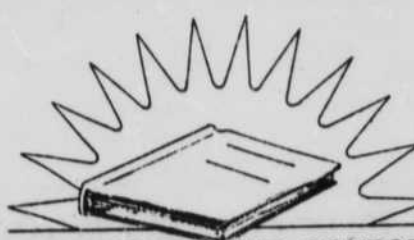
Bill Lahman
sophomore
marketing

Educate students? minds are made up

After having watched the debate over funding of COLAGE I have come to a conclusion. No matter what legitimate arguments are brought up, no matter how many polls are taken and no matter what evidence can be brought forth to deny COLAGE funding, the persons for the support of COLAGE will scream "Close-minded Bigots!" Why is it that this group should be given special treatment based on their sexual preference? It is not through educating people about homophobia that will stop homophobia. Each person has already made up his or her own mind on the subject! I have a brother who is homosexual. I do not love him any more or less for it. He is a person like everyone else. The difference between him and COLAGE is that he doesn't demand special consideration because of it.

James Smits
senior
finance

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