

Slanted agenda

Women's studies program overtly promotes lesbian curriculum



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The women's studies program. Feminism? Lesbianism? If those were the terms that came to mind, don't despair. You're not a b-b-bigot, nor are you guilty of vicious stereotyping. It seems to me you're right on the money.

I am actually a proponent of women's studies programs. In fact, I was actively pursuing a minor in women's studies and intended to do my honor's thesis on the black women authors of this century.

I am in favor of a women's studies program if it "explores the contributions of women to all aspects of society, and integrates a new and broader understanding of women and gender into traditional academic fields," the stated goal of UNL's program.

Such a program is both worthwhile and needed. It is valuable for students, male and female alike, to spend time in academic pursuit of understanding gender differences and how they con-

tinue to affect different aspects of society.

Pretty politically correct, eh? So anyway, I used to be this women's studies buff.

Then, I single-handedly (with no help from my scholarly guides) discovered the women's studies program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is a conduit for the lesbian agenda.

Now, I'm not saying there is no place for the study of lesbian literature or experience in the program. I'm not even breaching the political or moral arguments surrounding a homosexual lifestyle.

Rather, I am asking if a well-developed program is one that devotes the most study to a faction of society that makes up only 10 percent of the population.

Before I proceed to argue that the program promotes the lesbian agenda, I want you to consider something for a moment.

UNL is exempt from federal income tax under the Internal Revenue Code. As a result, it is prohibited from participating or intervening, directly or indirectly, in any political campaign.

May I point out that political campaign does not necessarily denote the candidacy of an individual.

As a matter of fact, I do believe homosexual issues are widely accepted as partisan issues to some extent.

Having said that, there are several questions that follow. Is there an actual campaign for the political advancement of the gay and lesbian lifestyle?

And if so, does UNL's women's studies program qualify as participating in that campaign?

I'm glad I don't have to answer those questions, because if the answers are yes, things could get messy. UNL's continued tax-exempt status could be called into question.

All of this hinges on whether or not the women's studies program could be considered part of a political campaign.

May I direct your attention to the women's studies Web site (at <http://www.unl.edu/womenssp/wshome.html>)? Here we will find the history of the program by Professor Moira Ferguson, who was appointed the first chairwoman of the program. "Its (the women's studies program) impetus came from a national movement to elevate standards of justice and democracy in the United States. The personal unrest and desire for social transformation that characterized this movement took place throughout the 1960s."

She goes on, "A fundamental change erupted in the traditional academy: interdisciplinary studies and the link between activism and scholarship was formally opening up."

The program hails one of the advantages of a degree as its focus on and dedication to the study of women of different sexual orientations. The program also ensures students they will be encouraged to examine alternative lifestyles. In my experience, that's code for "today, we will be studying

lesbian literature ... again."

This historical account goes on to discuss the evolution of course work and points to English 310N, 20th Century Lesbian Novelists, as a course "particularly worthy of singling out because of its subject matter."

Ferguson further lists the housing of "Sinister Wisdom," a lesbian-feminist journal, for three years at UNL as one of the "spectacular" accomplishments of the program. She raves that during the same time, 1979-1982, the Lincoln Legion of Lesbians was organized and co-sponsored important community women's events.

In addition, when the Midwest Women's Studies Association conference was sponsored and hosted by UNL's program in 1985, the keynote speakers were lesbian and poet Pat Parker and lesbian feminist Mary Daly.

Just imagine for a moment the family sciences department sponsored a conference in which the only speakers featured were from organizations such as Focus on the Family and the Christian Coalition.

The argument would certainly be made that speakers were not "inclusive" of other points of view.

Likewise, a women's studies conference that showcases only lesbian authors and speakers is not inclusive of the majority of the female population.

If you were to search course syllabi for the program, you would find reading lists that concentrate on such renowned lesbians as Lorde, Feinberg

and Allison.

And while I have taken several women's studies classes that have been both challenging and well-developed, such as Black Women Authors taught by Dr. Venetia Patton (a course that could very well be a superstar of the English Department), I have taken several courses that were not so flawlessly designed in terms of accurate representation of cross-sections.

For example, I took a 20th Century Women Writers class where at least 70 percent of our reading material was lesbian literature.

And while I would concede lesbianism certainly has its place in the 20th century, I am not convinced it comprises 70-plus percent of 20th century women's works worthy of studying.

Do you see what I'm getting at? The current focus of the course material does not present an accurate cross-section of the experiences and contributions of women. It is heavily weighted toward advocating lesbianism.

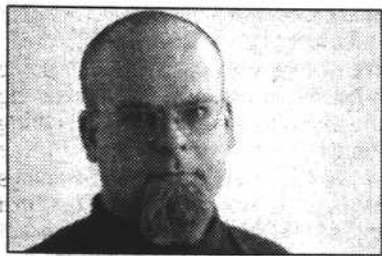
I'm not saying the program is solely devoted to the lesbian agenda. Nor am I saying all feminists are lesbians, or all students in the women's studies program are lesbians, or even feminists for that matter.

I'm simply raising the question as to whether or not the women's studies program at UNL should be considered a campaign outlet for the political advancement of the lesbian agenda.

I'll have to get back to you on this one.

Are you there, Mark? It's me, God

Teen-age religious experience leaves memorable impact



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I was called to be a preacher of the gospel when I was 16, and the Holy Spirit descended, like a tongue of flame, on the Alamogordo Church of Christ sometime after midnight the second night of the Winter Youth Retreat.

It was hot in the little auditorium, and the sour sweat of adolescence rose like incense through the abstract cross of prominent roof beams.

A hysterical, three-hour tag-team sermon, "On the Resurrection of the Dead," had resulted in extra choruses of "Just as I Am" to accommodate the boys and girls who'd come forward, dozens of them, for prayers and rededications. There were also to be three baptisms.

We stood, the rest of us, and kept on singing.

A girl in one of the front rows fainted from all the heat and standing around, and a little window of colored glass was cranked open on arthritic hinges, letting in a shaft of cold air. It entered the room like a physical presence, reviving everyone.

I looked out the window at white moonlight falling on White Sands in the distance, a layer of sugar frosting spread across the New Mexico desert.

My thoughts raced. I was having some kind of seizure.

We were a stoic and straight-laced people, vigorous in our religion. There was no dancing, no drinking and we sang our simple songs a capella.

Fundamental in our faith, with no

room for the frivolous, so-called charismatic gifts of the Spirit, we were holy but we did not roll. There was not a snake handler in the bunch.

But there I stood, nevertheless, choking back prophesy. Gagging on the word of God. Biting my tongues.

The burden of the gospel had been laid upon my heart like an ache.

Colorful shapes, swooping, reckless balloons, rose through the darkness of my body and burst into sentences in my brain — as if a teaching machine had been turned on, activating encoded material I had never previously examined.

I only wanted it to stop.

The scent of chlorine ran in little invisible rivulets through the room, kissing flushed, upturned faces as the curtain opened behind the pulpit, and a man waded into the water of the baptistry. He wore a house-painter-white denim jumpsuit and was leading a pretty, teen-age girl by the hand.

She looked terrified as she stepped down into the pool, the thin, white robe they'd given her floating to her hips in the water. She seemed absent, as if part of her had already disappeared — the devil cast out.

The minister took her con-

fession of faith and then, covering her face with his enormous hands, shoved her down, under the water ...

And brought her up again, clean.

Her white smock became transparent when wet, and all of us caught a glimpse of nipple as she

arose, hair streaming. She disappeared in a cloud of amens, and another took her place, inching into the water, toe first. This was going to take a little while.

I held my breath — a cure for hiccups — to keep from shouting out what God was telling me.

Because the vision or the hallucination or whatever it was that gripped me formed an equally clear impression of my life ahead were I to tell a single word of what I suddenly knew — and a hairy, raving Prophet of the Lord was not what I wanted to be when I grew up.

Not for me the wilderness and wind, the lonely, mad, hideous stars turning in a winter sky. I wanted to stay indoors, with my friends, to be like people.

I remember thinking, absurdly, that the brand-new drivers' license, of which I was so proud (and which I showed no one because the picture made me look like Phil Collins on tour) would be all that was left to identify my body when I went to God, victim of spontaneous human combustion, stink of brimstone, etc.

The second candidate for baptism passed inspection, blurring out the "I do" at the proper moment, like a bridegroom, and was immersed — just as a fresh, vertiginous wave of revelation passed over me.

A nauseous premonition: I was going to vomit up the truth like a black spider. I would fall out into the

aisle, landing splat on the polished wood floorboards, convulsing like an addict. And then there would be no stopping my mouth.

I ground my teeth together, sewed my lips and eyes closed.

But someone nudged me, and I opened them again, letting out my breath at what I saw: my little brother slipped under the baptismal flood. I had not even heard him confess.

He exploded from the surface, panicky, like a fish on a line. He tossed his head and sent a spray out over the congregation, clung to the preacher and was ushered out of sight. Slowly, the curtains closed.

Another song rose up from somewhere, "Happy day, happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away!"

And I felt the unspeakable urge subside, like watching a storm pass among mountains. There came a slow release of pressure as God went looking for another virgin to carry his unearthly child.

Finally someone stepped to the pulpit and motioned us to sit. We sang a few more choruses, exhausted. A closing prayer dismissed us, and we staggered into the sharp night air, everyone hugging.

All the way home Jon was quiet. He looked like a little wet bird, serious as hell.

I knew how he felt, having passed through the rite a few years before — in those days I could walk on water — and he would be insufferable for weeks to come: our parents, who had packed him off in Superman Underoos, would receive him back in swaddling clothes.

For 10 or 20 days he would live a new life, and then he would masturbate again, lose sight of his pure white soul and sink like the rest of us into the dirty world once more.

I drove somewhat over the limit. I sat uneasy behind the wheel, stared, exhausted, through the windshield.

The sky ahead turned gray and then quite blue ...

Jon fell asleep as we crossed into Texas.



DEB LEE/DN