

Homosexuality provokes debate

Atheist: gays deserve respect

As a member of a minority on the University of Virginia campus, I would like to make my voice heard.

I have remained silent long enough, but after reading Larry Bamford's sermon on the evils of homosexuality (The Cavalier Daily, March 31), I can hold my brazen tongue no longer.

Therefore, and without regard to the future consequences of my actions, I will now make public that deeply hidden, anguished part of me that has longed to cry out against such reactionary views in society. Yes, I am an atheist.

I do not believe in any form of divinity, I do not accept the Bible as divinely inspired, nor do I believe that humans have an immortal soul and will be saved or indeed need to be saved. I do always respect religious views, but these sermonizers just grate on my nerves!

In the words of Mr. Bamford, there seems to be no evidence that true Jesus fanatics, so guiltily aware of their own and other people's sin, represent any particular group of people besides themselves. A resolution to urge them to seek psychiatric help would not be altogether inappropriate for some, who might benefit from such attention.

I am speaking as a disciple of Albert Camus, who has revealed himself as what he intended for us to be: imperfect, but human beings. I don't want to be castigated for "sinning," my roommates don't, my parents don't, and neither does my cat who pursues those functions (sexual and otherwise) naturally inherent to any species.

I wish people would stop harping on sin and pay a little more attention to ethics, which really do not have anything to do with institutionalized religion (The Book of Geeks 1:18, 25). If Mr. Bamford and others like him (who will surely run to their Bibles for comfort and revenge after reading this) did not feel so insecure about themselves and their lives maybe they could accept everyone as brothers, however tainted they might be.

Although homosexuality is not normal in the true sense of the word, it does exist and homosexuals deserve the same respect and affection as other members of society. I sincerely



support the gay community, in part because I have a gay relative whom I love very much. When I learned of his "aberration" did I scream and quote scripture, forlornly hoping that would cure him and ease my pain? Dammit, of course not! The realization only made me care for him more, since I knew the kind of crazed thinking — apparent in Bamford's letter and Anita Bryant's sermons — that still exists today.

At least Bamford does not wish to ostracize gays (in that he has risen above Bryant), but he supports the gay awareness week for the wrong reasons. In short, he feels sorry for them and wishes them cured by a divine miracle. I accept them as they are and do not have to "suppress and remain aloof from uncomfortable ideas and truth in order to preserve a sense of comfort and maintain a precariously fragile personal peace."

Morals demand condemnation

Two aspects of the editorial on Gay-Lesbian Celebration Week (The Cavalier Daily, March 25), invoke my response.

I am an unashamed theist, a Christian of evangelical conviction. I believe in a personal, involved God and in the existence of moral absolutes, revealed to men by that God. Among the Judeo-Christian morals that I have chosen to accept are the prohibition and condemnation of homosexual behavior. Although I hold these beliefs strongly, in the past I

have chosen to confront any proponents of relativism in sexuality on a one-on-one basis, shying from the public forum as an insensitive and often ineffectual way of addressing differences in such matters.

One item in the editorial is readily challenged in a letter. There exists a certain logical inconsistency in urging students to "broaden their understanding of homosexuality" in an "open-minded" celebration, while at the same time saying that you do not endorse homosexuality. If one truly does "not endorse homosexuality or any other sexual preference," then one can see homosexuality as neither "good" nor "bad," only as existing. Celebration is in such a case not an option; "acknowledgement" is about as far as one can go.

The issue that compels me to write, to break my former public silence, however, is the subtle assertion that the only way to escape from the stifling and often arbitrary regulations of society, tradition and peer pressure is to reject the imposed rules of social behavior (especially in the area of sexuality) and to judge such matters existentially. Alas, such an issue is not to be resolved through the editorial page, and I can do little more than to state my objections and beliefs, hoping that some might come to question such thinking.

To believe that ethical matters can ever be judged individually, independently of outside influences and regardless of the existing intellectual atmosphere, is to fool oneself. One can strive for autonomy, but the forces of this society which seek to control lives are too strong; the interests of this life are too great (jobs, families, lovers, pleasures, power, etc.). In bondage to someone, something will result. I must urge the reader to choose his or her master carefully.

Along with the apostle Paul (as he writes in his letter to the Romans, a letter I commend to any seeker of freedom) I believe that the only way any man or woman can escape the things which may bind him or her is in bondage to Jesus Christ. He is the only Master with the power to give freedom. A paradox, perhaps, but one well worth looking into.



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I also do not concern myself with whether or not gays have sexual relations with one another, just as I could not care less if Bramford were ogling at flesh on the sly. The time has come for people to open their eyes and get their heads out of their undershorts. Society does not need religious moralizers any more. Sin is not the answer. (Non-Christian) Love is.

I do realize, of course, that airing my views and my true identity as an atheist will probably hinder my professional aspirations and preclude any thoughts of running for political office, but I have lifted a great burden off my chest. Maybe now Bramford and others will rethink their views. Judging from such a narrow outlook on life, however, I doubt it.