

opinion

Acceptance of gay rights 'not a given'

I applaud the Law School faculty for approving a statement of nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation to be included in all admissions applications. I find it disappointing, however, that The Cavalier Daily feels this statement is unnecessary.

In Law School admissions, I feel the Cavalier Daily editors are right in saying, "Homosexuals are not now discriminated against." However, to say, "Homosexuals have never been explicitly discriminated against" is absurd. There may never have been a written statement excluding homosexuals from the Law School, but in past years such a statement was not necessary.

The rules for bar examinations in the United States explicitly excluded homosexuals from taking the exam, thus preventing them from practicing law. Only recently have practices such as this been struck down, largely because acceptance of gay civil rights has not always been a given. Only in the late 70s did polls show a majority of Americans supporting gay civil rights. Therefore, the admissions policy of The Law School prior to the late 70s would have been discriminatory had an openly gay person applied for admission.

Much has changed in past years, and, as I said earlier, I am confident the Law School does not discriminate on the basis of sexual preference. I am also confident,

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though, that in admissions, the Law School does not discriminate on the basis of race or religion.

However, changing attitudes do not mean that these nondiscriminatory statements should be removed from the Law School admissions policy. The prejudices that prevented minority students from attending the Law School in the past still exist, and until the day society has learned to conquer its own prejudices, these statements must remain.

Today, homosexuals probably face more legal discrimination than any other group on Grounds and, more importantly, off Grounds in the "real world." I am not saying we face more hardships than other minorities. Those who are white males probably do not.

At North Grounds, next to the Law School, the Judge Advocate General (J.A.G.) School is open about its policy of not admitting homosexuals. Apart from the J.A.G. School, R.O.T.C. and the Defense Department as a whole bar homosexuals from joining their ranks. This policy not only hurts homosexuals, but the United States government as well. Millions of dollars a year are spent



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in training women and men who are later dismissed on charges of homosexuality. Our government can only be naive if it thinks its policy is effective in keeping the armed forces free of gay people.

On Central Grounds, the Office of Career Planning and Placement, while not itself discriminatory, invites onto Grounds organizations, such as the C.I.A., with which homosexuals may not seek employment. While such a policy does not affect gay people from using O.C.P.P., such a policy seems to condone discrimination against gay people.

On the state level, a law exists in Virginia preventing homosexuals from buying or selling alcohol. While many people argue this law

is not enforced, it acts as a convenient excuse for police officers in Norfolk to raid gay bars.

These examples of discrimination may seem far removed from the Law School's admission policy, but they serve to show that prejudice and discrimination against homosexuals exists, and as do other minorities, gay people need legal protection. In fact, not only should the Law School's decision be lauded, it should be followed by other schools at the University, and eventually the University as a whole.

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