

SPECTRUM

This is the second in a series of articles on gay and lesbian issues. If you have ideas on future articles, or any comments or questions on homosexuality, please contact me through the Student Union: c/o GALA, Rm 126 SUB. Campus mail, TR

HOMOPHOBIA by Terry Richard

Homosexuals are halves of a male whole pursue males, and being slices, so to speak of the male, love men throughout their boyhood and take pleasure in physical contact with men. Such boys and lads are the best of their generation, because they are the most manly...

(From Plato, The Symposium)

In many ways homophobia is as serious as racism because a distinct group of individuals can have their rights taken away from them. Discrimination against homosexuals is akin to discrimination against blacks as people who are gay can lose their jobs, be evicted from their homes and be rejected from family and friends. Where do we draw the line? Why are people so afraid of us?

Last March Martin Luther King III gave a speech in Pough Keepsie, New York after which he said "something must be wrong with homosexuals. Many gay leaders were opposed to his comments and he then

apologized adding "his father's legacy was to rid the world of bigotry and discrimination." He also stated the "he had to examine his own attitudes towards homosexuals"

In earnest there is simply no way to describe the prejudice against homosexuals in North America. We are discriminated against income taxes, housing, employment, insurances, and inheritances, and gay-bashing is very much a growing problem in many cities, Fredericton included.

I have come to the conclusion that there are people who simply do not like us and yes they will to to any extreme to make our lives miserable. Homosexuals have to realize that although they may not like our lifestyle, we are still human beings. When Andy Rooney of CBS' "60 Minutes" condemned us last February probably the biggest comment he made was that he wouldn't want to be locked in a room with a bunch of us. It is obvious that he doesn't like homosexuals, but did he ever stop to thin that it is the act of homosexuality he hates and not

so much the person? As "Newsweek" reported "Rooney's comments would be tolerable only if gays were having sex in the room." People fail to realize that a person's sexual preference is only a part of a person's personality (albeit a large part). So many other qualities make a person. Just because I have family and friends who smoke doesn't mean I hate or condone them just because I hate cigarettes.

I'm using the term "homophobia" mainly because it has come into common usage. I do so reluctantly because it signifies the phobic avoidance of homosexuals rather the their aggression that the anxiety evokes. Most importantly, the term is inaccurate because this hatred appears to be secondary in our society to he fear and hatred of what is perceived as being feminine in other men and in oneself, and not of homosexuality per se.

Most homosexuals are perceived as feminine by heterosexuals because we desire to have sex with an d love other men, whether of not we are conventionally feminine of masculine in our behavior or appearance. The more feminine of different a gay man appears the more hostility he will evoke, unless he can be

"campy" enough to make himself look straight. Studies have also shown that men tend to be more homophobic than women.

Homophobia is also more prevalent when men are sleeted to participate because of their masculinity. In these situations gay men must repress who they are to maintain the pubic of private image of the group in order to continue belonging. Such organizations of this sort are the military, CIA, and the FBI. Homophobia is basically found where value is placed on an individuals image of "being a man" where its prized within the structure of the institution of as part of the public image of that institution. For some men groups like the Catholic Church have a paradoxical situation which may cause a high degree of anxiety and conflict about one's feminine qualities.

AIDS has also triggered a homophobic attack on gay men who have been vilified for causing and spreading the disease. A letter from the American Family Association solicitation of signatures for a petition read! "if you want your family's health and security protected, these AIDS-carrying

homosexuals must by quarantined immediately. There disease carrying diviants wander the streets possibly making you the next victim." Gay men do not cause AIDS, a virus does and it is when people practice unsafe sex and share needles that the virus is spread.

It may be true that some gay men did flaunt the right to their sexuality during the liberated '70's and early '80's, but to says that all homosexuals have been sexually promiscuous is nothing short of asinine. Stating that all hay men flaunt their sex lives is a pernicious stereotype directed at us.

Richard Isay, a psychiatrist and author of the 1989 book "Being Homosexual: Gay Men and Their Development" sums up what homophobia really is. He asserts that homophobia has little to do with the sex act itself. "This hatred of homosexuals appears to be secondary in our society to the fear and hatred of what is perceived as being feminine in other men and in oneself." It is only when people realize that gay people are not some kind of perverse creatures living in some part of the earth that homophobia will finally be eradicated.

The first scheduled meeting of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance (GALA) is Thursday, October 4, 1990 at 7 pm. in Rm 26 of the SUB. All members of the gay and lesbian community are encouraged to attend. Look for an article devoted to GALA in the coming weeks.

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