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Editorial Page

• The Right View

Sensitivity U.



Michael L. Lane

Last week's announcement of a new dormitory wing reserved for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals is not particularly interesting. It came as no surprise that the university, concerned more with sensitivity than education, would forge ahead with such a reckless plan. Many would prefer to ignore the issue. However, as a supposed voice of reactionary social policy, I feel that this decision, indeed the university's stance of anti-discriminatory education, is worthy of comment.

To begin, the obvious issue at hand is discrimination. If the university is willing to allow potentially intimate couples, couples whom may have legitimately chosen their roommates with an eye to their being lovers, then they must also afford heterosexuals couples the same choice. This seems only fair; to do otherwise affords special rights to some, while penalizing others. Yet a mutually equitable solution ignores the obvious potential for problems. Few parents would look upon such a university as a suitable place to send their sons and daughters.

Traditionally men and women at universities have lived in single-sex housing. That tradition has evolved over time to include coed dormitories, in some cases extending the coed living arrangement to include co-ed bathrooms. Through the continuing evolution of living arrangements, the sanctity of the bedroom has remained. No matter how crowded and hectic the dorm (and college life in general) has been, one has always been able to close the door for a brief respite, with only one's roommate, more often than not one's friend, to contend with. This sanctuary will now be flood-

ed with the emotional baggage common to all young lovers, whether homosexual or heterosexual.

This is all well and good, and I'll no doubt be labeled a homophobe for even voicing these concerns. But the case of the "gay wing" brings to light a vital issue that transcends the mundanity of student's living arrangement: that we are sacrificing education and knowledge in pursuit of an overworked theory of sensitivity. Not only did the university acquiesce to the demands of a vocal special-interest group, but, and indicative of the whole conundrum, the university has failed to even question the merits or faults of such a plan. Dogmatic attitudes, the scourge of higher education, run rampant in any administrative decision dealing with special-interest groups. The modern university has become an arena for sensitivity training, supposedly making its charges more sensitive to issues of discrimination, hatred and social bias. Yet the "gay wing" only further compartmentalizes groups into stereotypical, mutually exclusive factions who increasingly refuse to see themselves as part of a larger whole, be that a university or a nation.

Education's new-found emphasis upon diversity and crusade against discrimination has, and will continue to mold individuals who are both close-minded and selfish. These watchdogs of discrimination hear and see only what they want to. They are quick to identify discrimination; indeed they see it everywhere. No human action, speech or intent is now free from the label of discrimination. Unfortunately in the course of identifying discrimination so assiduously, they have missed every accompanying nuance that once constituted what was thought of as education.

In a recent history class, the blinders of discrimination worn by the supposedly socially-responsible again, wreaked their misplaced animosity upon the concept of critical education. The professor in question lectures in a style reminiscent of the author David Halberstam, mingling historical fact with detailed biography of the personalities involved. Historical events are presented in language that reflects a perspective closer to the original. This particular case involved the discussion of the slave trade, or in the language of the time, the trade of "my little black boys." Despite his inflected tone, hovering quotation marks and obvious intent, the comment rocketed one student nearly out of his chair, which in turn sent the professor scrambling for explanations. In all, creating quite a disturbance. What would have otherwise been a dry, antiseptic discussion of the slave trade, assumed a level which made it both accessible and meaningful. The original language made the difference between the politically-correct, sanitized rendition and the pursuit of knowledge, a critical, unbiased search. Unfortunately, it seems the pursuit of real knowledge has now fallen victim to the pursuit of being nice to everyone. The traditional mission of higher education, to instill higher ideals and critical theory, has been replaced with mute acceptance of any special-interest demands, no matter how ludicrous, off-base or ignorant they might be.

Michael L. Lane is a senior philosophy and history major.