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## Gays Only

Maine Campus

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# 'Gays Only'

The Campus Living advisory committee recently approved the creation of a gay wing in Knox Hall. This gay wing would be a "safe zone" open to gays, lesbians, bisexuals and their supporters.

While many heterosexual students at the University of Maine have focused on the idea that this wing will allow same-sex couples to live together, a larger issue is being ignored. Segregation, in its purest form is about to be practiced here at the university. Allowing students to choose housing on the basis of sexual preference would be tantamount to creating separate housing for black, Asian or white students.

Segregation in education has long since been abolished, but to compartmentalize certain groups the university will revive a long-dead practice. A practice that harkens back to the flawed premise behind the Supreme Court's *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision.

Systematic segregation was dismantled for a reason. Society needs to learn how to work together, grow together and function as a larger whole. Creating separate environments for homosexuals constitutes a giant step backward in the search for equal rights.

If the university is truly concerned about the homosexual population that resides here, and feels that there is a need for homosexuals to have a "safe zone," than a greater issue is at hand.

The university should use its resources to educate its students, not to hide a percentage of them away in some corner, wing or closet.

If UMaine follows through with this proposal than it will become one of only three universities in the nation to establish such segregated housing. The university, in its effort to put an end to discrimination, has failed to see the ramifications of such a project. By sectioning gay students off from other students, they are abandoning the responsibility of constructively integrating them into the campus community and ignoring their vowed commitment to diversify education.

UMaine has been at the forefront of gay rights since the early '70s. In 1974, the university permitted the formation of the Wilde-Stein club, despite threats from the state Legislature. The Legislature threatened to cut the universities budget by \$1 million if they allowed a gay symposium on campus. The university ignored the legislature's threats and permitted the conference. The administration at this institution once again needs to take a strong stance for equal rights and prevent this act of segregation.

The university is supposed to be a place of diversity. A place where people can learn from those around them.

Homosexuals need to be constructively integrated rather than withdrawn from society, so they can be understood and accepted. The creation of a gay wing at UMaine will only exacerbate existing problems and undermine the concept of diversity in education.