Rethinking “moral” sexuality

In last week’s paper, Elisa wrote an article identifying the harmful stereotypes assigned to sexual minorities. I want to thank her for introducing silenced issues into the University community. This article is an attempt to further the discussion.

The social structures of this campus have defined sexuality in very specific terms. There are rules which govern “normal” sexual practices. Desires, acts and persons are categorized and labeled. Expectations are established. Deviation from the constructed norm is understood as perverse, unnatural, immoral. Although we have not created these guidelines, we have consistently endorsed them. These marginalizing forces have been perpetuated dogmatically, leaving our own rules unquestioned. I think the regulations governing sexual practices deserve a critical look.

We should first ask why these oppressive customs have endured. I think the most popular justification for the regulation of sexuality would appeal to a moral order. Some people ground their moral condemnations of sexual minorities in religion. Others argue that a secular foundation, that homosexual acts contravene the “laws of nature.” Regarding religious arguments, I personally believe that Nietzsche still lives (in Graceland), but this is not the only possible response to religious claims. I can understand religion forming an individual’s personal morality, however, it is unreasonable to assert that your personal beliefs are justified simply on the grounds of “religious authority.” A

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We need to believe that our moral judgements are clouded by our own subjectivities. We maintain that our condemnations emerge from no particular perspective and apply universally. It seems to me that the platform against homosexuality serves as a particularly good example of personal psychology investing itself in moral evaluations. When you rip down the flyer advertising an organization addressing gay issues, when you yell “faggot,” you attempt to draw a clear distinction between yourself and your targets. What might that violence, that revulsion, actually signify? Perhaps your own sexual insecurity? Is it possible that you are trying to convince yourself that your own sexuality is fixed, stable and pure? We may wish that our sexualities fall into clearly defined categories but this is usually not the case. I think it is crucial that we pursue our own sexual identities more honestly. Only when we have stopped hiding from ourselves can we put ourselves in position to make more fair judgements about sexual minorities.

Matt Brensilver
Guest Columnist

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Matt is President of Lambda Coalition, an on-campus organization to support and promote awareness of gay/lesbian/bisexual issues.