

Commentary

A (Queer) Nation of One

by Jeffrey Spencer

[The following is a semi stream-of-consciousness, semi self-conscious response to the many veins of activism in the gay/lesbian/bisexual movement in terms of my role as a gay activist at my own "perverted microcosm" (I am forever indebted to my friend Adam for this phraseology) of Middlebury College. I am in a unique position, trying to remain true to my values, one of which is that we will not get anywhere by pissing people off without having them understand why, and another of which is that we MUST begin to take more drastic action in response to a more and more hostile environment. The following is an attempt to find my place in my community and in my society.]

"I have friends. Some of them are straight."

So begins the "I Hate Straights" manifesto I read in *Queer*, a publication with no information on itself except for this sentence: "Published anonymously by queers." If you were at the NYC Pride parade, you read it too.

Although I agreed with everything that I read, my stomach turned as I read the articles in *Queer* - they read like hypnotic chants, mantras to encourage readers to adopt hatred as a way of life. How could people in my community feel that our movement of love needed to become so separated from that emotion? I felt their hatred eating away at me. Was I the problem, then?

I've always accepted differences among people.

No matter what you do, no matter where you do it, there'll be dissension. As a soon-to-be political science major, I've accepted the historical seven groupings of political parties. I place myself with the Progressives, left of the center, but still definitely left. I espouse the Progressives' belief that there is a need for drastic change, but that it can be done without violence.

But would those who publish *Queer* term me conservative? A self-hating faggot? Ignorant, even? I don't know. I don't know them. I'd like to. I like what they're doing. There is a need for it. Their anger is

my anger, the anger that wakes me in the morning, that keeps me fighting, that lets me glare back at the homophobe who gave me a threatening look as I put up a poster advertising our meetings.

Am I angry enough? Am I fighting hard enough? And am I politically correct today?

I've been accused.

I've been accused of being too politically correct, not politically correct enough, and even of inventing the term. I don't want to define what I am in terms of political correctness except to say that no, Eric and Missy, I didn't invent it - because I haven't read the Holy Scriptures of Political Correctness. If (because no one would know what I'm talking about) I don't use the word "lesbigay," am I politically incorrect? I will proudly be politically correct, but I won't go around arrogantly trumpeting it to anyone whom I meet like some messianic new religion which I am bringing to the masses of sinners.

I have a hard time keeping up with the latest list of non-oppressive vocabulary. When appropriate, I say "African-American" rather than "Black," and I say "lesbians, bisexuals, and gay men" instead of just "gays." I also see the reasons and the need to do so. But honestly, I refuse, upon entering into a conversation, to play the "I'm more PC than you are" game. In fact, if I meet someone who does this, I clam up. Nothing gets accomplished because no ideas are exchanged.

The Right is ever vigilant, looking for an excuse to get us. They love to talk about how we are usurping their First Amendment right to free expression by insisting on vocabulary which doesn't offend. They're out there. They don't want to hear our lesbian, gay, or bisexual voices. But we must make them hear us. Ten percent (probably more) of those begging for the right to offend need to hear some gay-positive messages so that they can rescue themselves from the grips of self-denial and the closet.

It's my task, at Middlebury College, to be everybody's friend. I refuse to accept that role. I will, however, be everybody's gay friend. The Deans, the faculty, the staff, the students, the Board of Trustees - everyone must know that I am gay. If anyone
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*Happy Holidays from
the Staff of Out in the Mountains!*

