

USF Should Appreciate, Not Fight, Diversity

Student Responds to Hate Mail

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I would like to address some of the intolerance and hostility that exists at USF.

This intolerance and hostility is targeted toward many groups, from ASP students to gays. Further, the hostility has manifested itself in many forms from hate mail and verbal attacks to the recent entry in the library suggestion book. What USF students must realize is that the world includes many different cultures. It is embarrassing and frightening that USF students are unable to appreciate diversity, or at the very least maintain an atmosphere of professionalism.

I am a gay female, and USF students have created an atmosphere that is beyond simple competitiveness, but one which I perceive as hostile.

I can honestly say I do not feel welcome here.

I received an anonymous letter on January 30th, 1992, and I feel that I must respond to the one who hates me: I do not condemn your views or value system. If your views as expressed in your letter actually exist and you feel that strongly, defend them. You have a strong belief and acted

on it. But, it is unfair to attack me personally, unprovoked, without letting me confront you. Telling me to "go back to the Leper Colony" is immature, stupid and unimaginative. I have no idea who you are. I have not gotten into fights with anyone. After listening to the advice of friends, I have decided to stop trying to figure out what I did wrong. If you knew me, you would know I am gay and that I am not ashamed.

If you were curious, you could have asked. My close friends already know. Forgive me for not wearing a hat that says "dyke" on it. I don't look very good in hats. I did not ask to be gay. For me it is not a choice or a preference. I would never have chosen to be gay.

However, I am not going to hide from people like you. You want me to go back into the proverbial closet. Who is in the closet now? Do me a favor and please sign your name next time. Come out of the closet! Don't be ashamed of who you are!

I have a theory. Hatred toward me or any group is grounded in fear, a fear that maybe we are not different. If we are not different, then we are equal. If we are equal, you are not better, not

superior. This fear of not being superior or feeling inferior, leads to hostility and intolerance.

We have all experienced this. A group of students sits around and tries to determine who will be the C- students. If they can determine them, then they are safe and superior. Another example: Maybe a group decides to "bag" another student. They will cut up someone they know little about. Why? This way, they can feel superior, better than the "fag" or the "dyke."

Just a thought, maybe different cultures and different individuals should simply be viewed as different. Different does not mean unequal; it simply means not the same.

The competitiveness of our law school does not help the situation. I understand the curve, the struggle for class rank and the stress. However, do we have to treat each other only as competitors? Why can't we look at other students as colleagues instead of "the competition?"

We need to take time to get to know each other. No, I don't expect the whole school to bond, but I would like to see people talk to each other and not just at each other. Stop fearing and start

questioning. Stop judging people before you know them. It is easy to hate someone you know nothing about. Take the time to get to know your fellow students instead of pointing and laughing.

To see clearly, to understand each other, we must stop trying to prove we are better. Stop seeing people from a single perspective, measuring people by your own standards. This way we can see without "same" or "different;" we simply see. God forbid, we might even learn to appreciate the difference. Law school is supposed to teach students to see an issue from all perspectives. This can be applied to life. If you meet someone different, try to understand them from their perspective, not only your own. Who knows? You might learn something, or make a friend.

Hate letter - see below

October 22, 1992

hate letter: http://www.steeltoed.net/cher/samples/we_all_know_scan.jpg