

The Class of 2000 challenge

Did everyone see the table set up by the Princeton Review of Liberal Arts Colleges last week (forgive me if I have not used the exact title of the book)? In case you were unaware while writing down

by Peter Theodore
Staff writer

your reactions to Lafayette's social and academic offerings, the Princeton Review is the source which has identified Lafayette three years in a row as the **Number One most homophobic college in the nation!** As evidenced by the Princeton Review, Lafayette College continues year after year to be infamously reputed as one of the most homophobic collegiate institutions in the United States where gays, lesbians, and bisexuals are severely "ostracized" and "unwelcome". Lafayette can certainly be considered a homophobic and heterosexist campus, but does it deserve the Princeton Review's continual ranking as one of the most homophobic schools in the nation?

There have been no reports of any physical assaults on gay, lesbian, or bisexual students, faculty, or staff members. Of course, a visible gay populace which would be required to elicit such violence does not seem to exist on Lafayette's campus. How many times have you walked around campus and seen a man and a woman embrace one another, say "I love you" to one another, or erotically rub up against one another while "spinning"? Compare this figure to the number of times you have witnessed two men or two women exhibit public displays of affection for one another (how about simply holding hands with one another while walking across the quad?). Undoubtedly, on Lafayette's campus, the first figure supercedes the second figure by far. It is true that this may simply reflect the fact that

fewer gays, lesbians, and bisexuals attend Lafayette; psychologists suggest that only ten percent of the general population (suggesting 200 students at Lafayette) are homosexual or bisexual. However, even if Lafayette defies the statistics, it can be predicted that at the very least, 50 to 100 students, currently enrolled at Lafayette, are attracted to members of the same sex as themselves. Why does gay life at Lafayette seem to be so hidden and how can we as a campus community change Lafayette's stifling atmosphere?

This is where the Class of 2000 comes in—read on . . .

While the severity of Lafayette's homophobic reputation can be disputed, it can hardly be argued that in order to achieve a comfortable climate for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, stronger support for and recognition of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students, faculty, and staff need to occur. Increased visibility of gay issues, concerns, and gay life at Lafayette needs to take place. With this belief in mind, a group of students (many but not all from FLAGB: Friends of Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals) decided last year that it was essential to begin a campus wide program which would visibly increase support for and awareness of gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons on Lafayette's campus. The program which was developed is called the Lafayette Safe Zones Program and the program has been structured to facilitate monthly workshops. The primary purpose of each workshop is to engage students, faculty, staff, and administrators in experiential activities that will increase their understanding of gay, lesbian, and bisexual con-

cerns. At the end of each workshop, participants interested in becoming "Safe Zone Supporters" may pick up a resource packet filled with information regarding heterosexism, homophobia, local support groups, religious organizations, and social outlets for the gay/lesbian/bisexual community. Each resource packet also contains the supporter's "Safe Zones" sticker, which is to be visibly placed on the supporter's dorm room, office, or apartment/house door. As is emphasized at each workshop, the role of a supporter is NOT to act as a professional counselor, but is instead to lend an understanding, non-judgemental, confidential ear to those on campus who may feel they have nowhere else to turn.

With the end of first semester coming closer and closer, it is time for members of the Class of 2000 to join the Safe Zones Program and begin challenging the Princeton Review by welcoming those at Lafayette who feel they have nobody to talk to. **This coming Monday evening from 7:30PM to 8:30PM, a Safe Zones Workshop is being offered for only First Year Students (the Class of 2000). The workshop will be located in the lounge area of the First Year Experience (FYX) House, which is located across from the tennis courts along with the Alpha Phi, Pi Phi, and SAE houses.** All First Year Students are strongly encouraged to attend! It is time for the Class of 2000 to CHALLENGE homophobia and heterosexism on Lafayette's campus!!!

Since this workshop is being devoted entirely to the Class of 2000, no sophomores, juniors, or seniors, and no faculty, administrators, or staff members may attend. Many other workshops will be offered for others who wish to become "Safe Zones" supporters.

Letter to the editor

My friends and fellow students, it appears that a challenge has been laid down before us. It is a challenge to give up our principles, to compromise our beliefs, and to abandon our convictions. As stated in *The Lafayette* on November 8th by Peter Theodore (page six), the class of 2000 has been challenged to give stronger support for and recognition of "gay," "lesbian," and "bisexual" students.

The Princeton Review has given the title of most homophobic college in the nation to Lafayette. Since when have they had that category in their reviews of schools? Perhaps when the politically correct police came to town. I want to make something abundantly clear, just because one organization's polling data happened to give us the title of "most homophobic," does not mean that there has to be an all out war waged against homophobia on our campus, or any where. The question is, how much of it is true ho-

mophobia and who defines it?

In reality, those that are often viewed as "homophobic" are just people trying to uphold the standards we have in our society. When someone objects to the so called "homosexual" lifestyle, it does not mean that they are "homophobic," it means that they have a difference of opinion, and everyone in this school has the right to disagree. It is a shame that the class of 2000, or anyone, should be asked to give in to this onslaught on our morality.

And now I hear a new word that has come into play, "hetosexism." What is this supposed to mean? That we are closed minded and intolerant simply by adhering to the laws of nature and what God intended to happen? Heaven forbid if a man and woman get close to one another while spinning. Or even worse, a woman saying to another man, "I love you." I am tired of normal, everyday behavior being made out to be

abnormal and inappropriate. The guilt trip that the "gay" activists are trying to place on the rest of us should be put to an end.

Fortunately, I am glad to hear that there has not been any reported brutality on "gay" individuals at the school. This letter is not an attack on any students that might happen to be "gay." It is, however, an attack on those that think others should surrender their virtues just so a few other people can feel "more comfortable." This is not the proper role of education. I object to any increased visibility of a lifestyle choice which is morally wrong. Period. Just the same, I would object to any Neo-Nazi skin head or KKK groups coming to our campus as well. They have no business being here.

That being said, I hereby grant Lafayette College a new number one ranking, the "Safe Zone" of moral fortitude.

Nat LeTowt '00