

# NEWS & OPINION

## Gay Student Asks: Why Can't We Be Friends?

By Puck Stengel

True or false, you see a man hanging out with an openly gay man. The other man is gay regardless if you know they are friends or not. Most ignorant people would say "true" right off the bat. Too bad, in this case the answer is false. I have a wonderful friendship with a straight male that is persecuted for being gay because he chooses to associate with me. Some students would rather make assumptions about people who befriend homosexuals than just accept that they can have a normal friendship.

If two straight males are hanging out all the time it's cool because they're each other's "boys." I mean there is nothing wrong with them being connected at the hip because they both like girls. But it's totally different if one happens to be gay. If one is gay, then the other must be. There is no way in hell that a gay and straight male can have the same type of friendship as two straight ones. This is one of the biggest stereotypes straight people face when allying with gay people. Another stereotype would also be, "If you're gay, you lust after every straight person." People that do not agree with the homosexual lifestyle have a right to their opinion. That does not mean that they can treat us like we are a disease that spreads and infects anyone we talk to, hang out with, or befriend.

Ever since I came to the Wesleyan campus, other students have kept their distance from me because I'm gay. They also see the few people that do choose to associate with me as gays themselves. This is just another stereotype that close-minded people have been taught to believe. I never had this much trouble with being gay in Florida. Everything down there is so different from things here. In Florida it's very common to see two males or females holding hands and kissing. I don't know if it is because we are in this "Bible Belt." I guess parts of the country just have different views.

I'm not out to say that people's beliefs are wrong. I'm not that kind of person. Someone's beliefs are their own opinion and I respect that. I just wish they would respect mine. I have heard numerous examples of men saying "Yes, he's my best friend but, if he told me he was gay,

I would stop being friends with him." It's really sad to know that just because a person is different, that others would rather avoid embarrassment instead of being a true friend. When asked why they would stop their friendship, the only response that was given was "Because he's gay and I'm not." How is that an answer? I've seen many accounts where two athletes or a group of males will engage in homosexual behavior by slapping one another on the butt or coming up with an outrageous statement followed by the phrase "No Homo!" First of all, "no homo" is just a quote men use to act on their homosexuality without being persecuted for being gay. Second, this



only shows the insecurity some guys have around homosexual males or homosexual behavior. So if my straight friends started saying "no homo," does that mean people would stop making ridiculous accusations on their orientation?

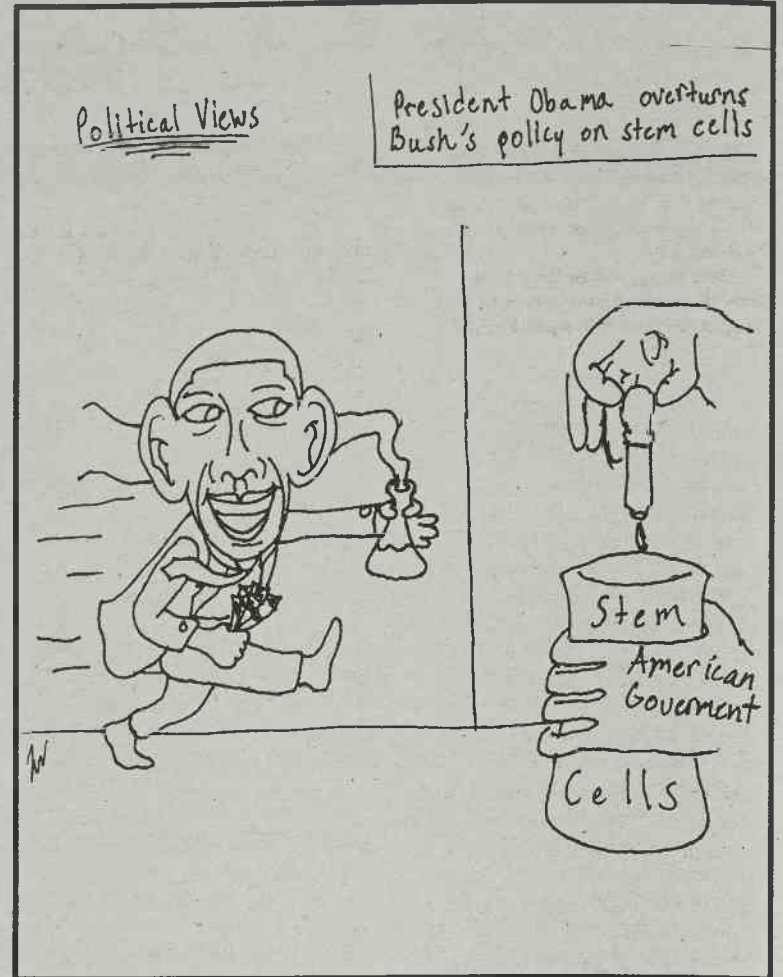
Most are narcissistic by believing just because I'm gay that means I want to be with them. This thought is totally incorrect. I have standards just as much as the next person. Just because you are a male, does not mean I want to date you. That is just as bad as me saying "You're a guy; that means you want to 'fondle' everything that moves." There's a double standard at work here. It is nice, however, to know that some people have different opinions and are accepting of my lifestyle. My best friend Shawn Pemberton is the closest thing to family that I have. And yes, he is a straight male.

It must have been mid-fall semester when I officially met Shawn. I had maybe said hello to him a few times but

never carried on a conversation. I saw Shawn working on his jeep in one of the campus parking lots. It looked as if he was having some difficulties and was frustrated with himself. The only things I know about cars are how to pump gas and how to change a tire. To this day I still do not know what compelled me to see if he needed help. I will admit that he was attractive to me. It may have been his looks that obligated me but even then, why would I risk putting myself out there based on someone's looks? "Would you like some help?" At first he had to think about it. He just looked dumb-founded. I don't know if it was because I had maybe said two words to the kid and I am now asking him if he needs assistance, or was it "why is this gay guy talking to me?" Whatever he was thinking, he did not share it with me at the time. He kindly said "That would be awesome." So that is what started it all. We spent the next two hours fixing who knows what. After finishing the jeep, we went out to dinner with a group of my friends and he was accepted into our family with no questions asked.

Later on as the semester was coming to a close, rumors and accusations were buzzing around the campus that frequently got back to me. They all consisted of false statements that Shawn is a homosexual. It was upsetting to see how quick people were to judge a person by the company he keeps. I guess it goes back to being surrounded by the "Bible Belt." It just showed me that stereotyping and ignorance are powerful in an area with highly religious beliefs. I've known of people ending a friendship because the other person was gay and I didn't want that to happen to myself and Shawn so I told him. His response was "You're gay? I didn't know that. Besides who cares what everyone else says? I know I'm straight and that's not going to change. Just because you're gay doesn't mean I don't want to be friends." I was astonished by his reaction. Shawn and I later talked about it further. I learned that he was actually homophobic in high school and wouldn't dare interact with someone of the same-sex orientation. He continued to say that he now knows that it didn't matter what my orientation was because he has a strong friendship with a gay person and was happy to have me as a friend and wouldn't trade it for the world.

Being gay in the "Bible Belt" has not been the easiest of times. Many people do have high beliefs that the way I choose to live my life is a sin. I understand where they're coming from. It's how they were raised and I'm not going to be one to disrespect them. The only thing I wish is that they would stop persecuting the ones that choose to put their beliefs aside. It is possible for heterosexuals and homosexuals to have a normal friendship like any other person. Yes, we have different appetites for different relationships but that has nothing to do with how we associate with one another. Shawn and I can see past the orientation barriers and just live our normal lives. It is easier to live a normal life than to have one, because the word normal is just an opinion.



## LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Congratulations, All Around!

I would like to congratulate the six students, staff member, and faculty member for their induction into Omicron Delta Kappa. Of these 8 outstanding individuals, I had the opportunity to meet and work with six of them. I am honored, as a member of ODK, to be joined by such fabulous people, people I consider my friends.

Tiffane Bustos, Brandon Jones, Amanda Landi, and Jacob Strickland: I had the privilege of meeting each of you at various stages of your college careers and in various venues and environments during that time. I wish you all the best as you complete your career at NCWC and move on in life. I urge each of you to never forget where you came from. NCWC has given each of you the opportunity to further yourself in education, in your career path, and, most importantly, in society. Keep it up and make NCWC proud!

Ms. Rachael (Dix) and Dr. Bill (Yankosky): I knew both of you throughout my time there at NCWC, both as a student and employee. Whether either of you know it or not, you both taught me many things. I don't know what I would have done without either of you, and many others, guiding me through my years at NCWC, but I

find happiness knowing that I never have to find out. I wish you both a long and healthy career and life continuing at NCWC. It makes me very happy to know the school has recognized two of its greatest leaders.

With all that said, I would also like to congratulate the NCWC student body. Many of you may remember my last editorial in which I said the students were "ruining" NCWC. Although there is still room for improvement, I see a change. I see that the SGA has been put back together. It wasn't a patch-up job either. Your SGA consists of great leaders, such as new ODK member Jacob Strickland. Also, the senior class rep, Tamyra Villines, is a great person in which I saw a lot of potential when she came to NCWC. I am happy to see her taking on an active role. You all should be commended for electing such leaders. Keep up the great work! This is your school! Be proud of it! Enjoy it! Make Wesleyan what you want it to be! If everyone works together, NCWC can become greater than it ever has been in the history of the school.

Best Wishes to Everyone!  
Brandon G. Cyrus, '04

### THE DECREE

since 1960 "of, by, and for the Wesleyan community."

#### STAFF

##### Editors, News & Features

Joyce Collins  
James Randolph

##### Editors, Sports & Activities

Jarad Brown  
Jade Johnson

##### Senior Editor

Jessica Smith

##### Cartoonist

Lorenzo Whitley

##### Faculty Advisor

Dr. William Grattan  
171 Braswell • Phone: 985-5336  
Email: WJGrattan@ncwc.edu

The Decree office is on the first floor of the Hartness Center.

##### Copyright Policy

The Decree holds the copyright of every article and graphic for one-time and future publication at the discretion of the editorial board. Submission implies agreement with this policy.

##### Editorial Statement

Commentary/opinion and letters to the editor represent the individual author's views, and not necessarily those of North Carolina Wesleyan College, the Decree staff or the Decree advisor.

##### Staff Writers

Ashley Ball  
Mikey Case  
Julianne Cyr  
Richie Fender (ADP correspondent)  
Meghan Herd  
Amanda Landi  
Kimberly McCorkle  
Kathleen Penrod  
Makeda Rose  
Catherine Weathers (ADP correspondent)

##### Staff Photographers

Kathleen Penrod  
Claudricia Thomas  
Lorenzo Whitley

##### Special Contributors

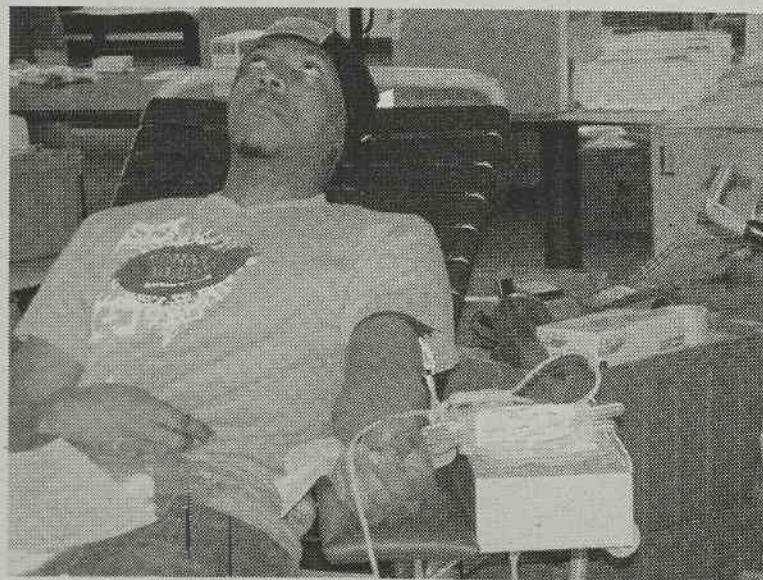
Grace Wallace

##### Submissions

To suggest an article, or submit an opinion piece or letter to the editor, send an email attachment (Microsoft Word) to: WJGrattan@ncwc.edu. Note that the Decree staff checks all submissions for accuracy and edits in accordance with acceptable grammar and punctuation as well as AP Style.

##### Corrections

The Decree corrects mistakes of substance. If you would like to request a correction, send an email to WJGrattan@ncwc.edu, or call 985-5336



NCWC students took part in the recent Red Cross blood drive. Photo by C Thomas

### STUBBLEFIELD from page 1

and there is other important work that needs to be done." Besides serving as associate dean, Dr. Stubblefield has been coordinator of the college's distance learning program. A native of Appomattox, Virginia, he holds a BA from North Carolina State and a Ph.D. from the University of Kentucky. He came to Wesleyan in 2000 after teaching for two years at Texas A&M International University in Laredo. His book, "A Critical Companion to Jonathan Swift," co-authored with former Wesleyan English professor Paul DeGateno, was published by Facts on File Publishing. Dr. Stubblefield and his wife, Teresa, have two children, Marshall, 11, and Lilly, 4. Dr. Stubblefield will officially become the dean on June 1st of this year.