

Dear 'Tim',

Let's talk about disgust, your children and your irrational fears

By Doug Dukeman

All this controversy about you has got me going mad. I'm speaking, of course, about the incident in your "Literature and Cultural Diversity" class on Feb. 5. I'm speaking about you, sir. May I call you "Tim"? Remember that hypothetical situation you drew up? You know, the one where you are attending a baseball game with your future children. All of a sudden, you and your children are in the presence of a same-gender male couple being affectionate. Personally, you remarked, you would not want to have to explain to your children what was going on. Me either! Shouldn't kids know about icky things like affection by then. Don't their schools teach them this stuff? I wouldn't worry too much, Tim. Your children will probably explain it to *you*.

By then, the once-secret-but-now-revealed "homosexual agenda" will have come to fruition. Your children will no doubt have seen thousands of same-gender couples marry across the country and have a few LGBTQ folk teaching them math or reading skills in school. Of course, they'll have friends who are gay, bisexual or lesbian and even friends with same-gender parents. They'll no doubt see the confusion in your face when you notice the men embracing, perhaps even explaining to you how their favorite cartoon character them that love can be shown by a whole range of couples – interracial, same-gender, different-gender, old and young. Well, more likely, it'll be so commonplace they won't even notice it. But what they will notice as they grow up, is how homophobic you are. Perhaps they'll even write you off as another "old-fashioned homophobe" to be left alone in your irrational fear.

But no, you protest, "homosexuality is a sin". Were a man to hit on you, you say, there'd be no need to be frightened. Of course, some "disgust" would be on the menu. Well don't worry, Tim. I'm glad you were able to express how you felt and let go of your irrational fears. Perhaps this particular class wasn't the best forum, but no doubt you needed the reassurance of all those like-minded similarly-disgusted folk in your "cultural diversity" class. I hear the oppressed conservative minority on campus sign up for that class in droves.

I'm still unsure though as to why you'd find it so disgusting to be hit on by a man. I've found if you broadcast your disgust wherever you go, most self-respecting men will think twice about making a pass at you. Perhaps what is disgusting is how you might react. Your homophobia could come out as anger or even violence. Would you lash out? A true dilemma:

a man unable to handle himself in the face of flirtatiousness – let's say it together – "disgusting". Ahh – doesn't that feel better?

If only you'd commented earlier in the class discussion, you would have been a perfect illustration of how heterosexual masculinity is affected by homosexuality. You would have made an excellent case study. No doubt, this is why you spoke up when you did. I'm sure you understood the material quite well. Recognizing in yourself the very privilege you'd be discussing in class for weeks, you no doubt wanted to offer yourself up as an example of a victim of societal heterosexism and homophobia. This was a cry for help, wasn't it? I hear your pleas, brother. Now let me offer you some advice.

First, don't be ashamed of your condition. We're all affected by heterosexism and homophobia. The important first step is recognizing that – and you've done it! You know, if I'd just made a breakthrough like that and broadcast it to my entire class through descriptive hypothetical situations and stunning 16th-century Biblical exegesis, I'd probably contact a U.S. Congressperson too to express my happiness. It's a good thing you have those connections.

Secondly, don't be afraid to testify in the sexual harassment suit that is being brought against your instructor. After all, what right does she have to call you out as being male! Your gender identity is none of her business. Who's to say you've made up your mind on that one. I stick behind you 100%. Suppose you'd wanted to identify as female that day. Now what do you say? Another victim of a sexist society.

Finally, don't worry about your comments being used against you in a harassment allegation or anything. While UNC *does* have a policy of non-harassment and non-discrimination based on sexual orientation, it's not advertised by the Chancellor each semester. He only tells students by email about the sexual and racial harassment policies. And don't even worry about students finding it online, it's not to be found under the list of policies in the Policy section of the UNC website. And even if a student somehow manages to scrounge up a link God-knows-where, it'll no doubt be broken. I'm pretty confident that any student who wants to bring a harassment claim against you will just get frustrated after hours of searching the web. They'll no doubt feel more violated by the University's complacency in preventing sexual orientation harassment than by anything you could say. Cheer up! Oh, and don't be so disgusted with yourself, I'm confident you are on the path to recovery. •

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