

Where the Hell ...

are all of the feminist queer men?

By Trevor Hoppe

Over the holiday break I had a chance to mingle with some of my friends back home in Charlotte. I went to a number of parties and had a chance to have some excellent conversations with a number of gay and bisexual men who I have, at one time or another, called my friends. They are men with whom I always have been extremely candid, sharing my passions and the most intimate details of my life. They are the support network I turn to for camaraderie and, more recently, political dialogue.

This time when I returned home I found myself much more detached from many of my friends. Over the past year, and particularly over the Fall semester, my politics have shifted from the left to the far left as I began to explore feminist theory and other critical social analyses. Thus when I began to discuss these topics with some of my gay and bisexual male friends back home, I expected to be received with some level of interest. Instead, I usually found myself being given the cold shoulder.

In retrospect, I have noticed in my experiences over the past six years of being involved with gay (mostly white) male communities that feminist and progressive ideals are increasingly being shunned and dismissed by many of my gay male peers. This shift in ideologies within the community over the past 30 years represents an alarming historical disconnect. Our community, of which the early thinkers celebrated progressive thought, is increasingly espousing sexist, racist and classist beliefs and, in doing so, reinforcing the institutions that perpetuate the homophobia that we seek to end.

Where the hell are all the feminist queer men?

As I have begun to see the world through a feminist lens I have found it difficult to communicate with gay male peers who find it perfectly acceptable to use rabidly sexist language. I challenge my gay male peers to evaluate their own sexist language. In utilizing this language you are supporting a sexist system that is at the heart of the heterosexism and homophobia that you face. To be sexist is to support your enemies.

Many people simply fail to make the connection

between sexism and heterosexism. It is not simply because of who we sleep with that we are attacked at night or denied respect and dignity without ever revealing our sexuality. Our popular culture has connected non-straight sexualities with feminine men and masculine women. In a society where these stereotypes are coupled with the widespread sexism that values men and masculinity over women and femininity, it is only logical that gay men, who are considered weak and feminine, will be treated with less respect than straight men, who are considered strong and masculine. Similar analyses can be employed to understand how sexism supports the heterosexism our lesbian and bisexual female peers face.

Once the connection between the two faces of oppression has been made, it is clear how using sexist language and supporting sexist institutions support those working to push LGBTIQ people back in the closet and out of mainstream society. One clear example of this language that I hear frequently is gay and bisexual men questioning lesbians as to how exactly they have sex. Underlying this seemingly innocent question is a phallogentric sexist mindset that represses female sexuality and makes it difficult to fathom sexual intercourse without a male. Feminism can give you the tools to understand how sexist comments and practices like this not only support a patriarchy that assails the human dignity of all women but that also undermines any effort toward equality for sexual minorities.

So this is my challenge to every gay, bisexual and queer male on this campus and elsewhere: evaluate your own language and practices with a feminist mindset, as well as those of your peers. When you look closely, I think that you will begin to see what I see - a community buying into the dominant white upper middle class patriarchy that offers you second-class citizenship at best. Seeing this will undoubtedly create a need to be involved in LGBTIQ activism not just during your limited time here on campus, but for the rest of your lives. •

Evaluate your own language and practices with a feminist mindset, as well as those of your peers.