

Following is a letter to the editor of the Ann Arbor News, responding to a vitriolic attack on homosexuality in a guest editorial and a published comment from George Bush. My letter wasn't accepted for publication, even though multiple attacks that I also see as vitriolic have been published by the News since.

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Understanding Diversity: Bush and Beals on Homosexuality

I write to respond to the comments of President Bush and George F. Beals on homosexuality (*Ann Arbor News*, Aug. 12, 1992, pp. A5, A8).

I am a left-hander. I didn't decide it, or think about becoming that way. I didn't even know other people were right-handed until my first grade teacher tried to make me use what was for me the "wrong" hand for writing, and to place the page in a position incomprehensible to me so she could look down the row of desks and see that everyone was "correct." It appears that, as with homosexuals, why left-handers exist in a mostly right-handed world and how they happen developmentally is unknown. If anyone tries to "change" them, not only does it not really work, but it tends to cause malfunctions in other regards, like stuttering and psychological distress.

I don't advocate left-handedness, but I've never been ashamed about it either. If I did advocate it, I doubt anyone would change, or even become right-handed if they were lefties embarrassed to be associated with me. Although some people may hate me for not being like them, sometimes I slip a little and am even proud to be as I am.

I certainly don't remember ever wishing I wasn't left-handed, despite facing a world the righties have made wrong for me. It's so wrong that people who work with me have difficulties just like the ones I have working with them. I use almost every (right-handed) tool in a strange fashion -- even lawnmowers and wrenches. Scissors don't cut. Power saws and paper cutters are dangerous. Like former President Ford, I turn the "wrong" way sometimes and bump into people who didn't expect it. I have cut off the ends of both my thumbs in right-handed tools and had them sewed back on. They're numb now, and that makes me seem even more bumbling. Paraphrasing Beals' terms (of intolerance), if you grant that everyday human performance "reflects God's intent," it is evident that left-handedness "perverts this intent." Nevertheless, I can get a lick on a right-handed guitar that none of my right-handed friends can duplicate. But I suppose Beals and Bush would both regard it as "unnatural" or "not normal."

In his recent book on *The Left-Hander Syndrome*, the Canadian psychologist Stanley Coren concluded that we lefties are all simply birth defects, noting among other things that we are over-represented among jail populations, and suggesting that we tend to die young (if we do, it's probably partly from having more accidents!). Coren mentioned but didn't stress the fact that, as with homosexuals, we are also over-represented among those who score in, say, the upper tenth of a per cent on college entrance examinations, and among the upper echelons of such as art, music, and science. At a recent lunch of U-M National Academy of Science members, I noticed that 40% were lefties. Like the

surprisingly large and fairly uniform proportion of 10-15% in the general population (for both lefties and homosexuals), that's not support for Coren's conclusion.

Beals' arrogant and peculiar version of "demonstrat[ing] to any who want truth" that homosexuality is simply a perversion to be despised consists of reviewing his own beliefs, and citing selected ancient "authorities" about whom the best that can be said is that they knew even less than we do (the worst is that some of the other things some of them advocated are despicable: if you are going to use someone as a source of authority you have to accept everything they advocate; otherwise, all you are really doing is using them to support your own bias). As Coren documents, the same kind of hateful history exists for lefties, as it does for just about every distinguishable variant in the human population, including all (other!) geographic "races" and religions. It is said that the traditional (right) handshake demonstrates that neither party is concealing a weapon, and also occupies the good (right) arm. Left then becomes "sinister" because we lefties can shake your right hand while remaining ready to strike. Pretty scary, huh?

Everything I have said about percentages, distributions, history of discrimination, and failure to understand background reasons is true of both lefties and homosexuals. Ironically, lefties are over-represented among homosexuals, and vice versa. About all to be gleaned from this is that we have much to learn about the complexities of human genetics and development, and how natural selection has molded us (including what, when, and how we tend to "learn," and what the term even means). That, Mr. Beals, is where the truth lies, for "any who want it," and, I daresay, for those who don't.

Even presidents and presidential candidates, like George Bush, Bill Clinton, and Ross Perot (yeah, all three of them -- liberals and conservatives alike) are lefties. Do you suppose that the reason George Bush doesn't mention his left-handedness much is that he's ashamed of it? Or that he doesn't want to "become an advocate for a life style that in [his] view is not normal . . ." Or does George believe that if he advocates left-handedness a lot of people might take it up, causing society to go even further awry in this small but significant regard? Or maybe George's father, who probably would have embraced him even upon hearing of this peculiarity of his makeup (but possibly only in private?), wouldn't have liked him spreading it around that one of the Bush boys is a leftie.

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