

MIKE LUCKOVICH ATLANTA CONSTITUTION 6/17



Feeling of humiliation does not discriminate between the races

Both black and white people experience the same emotions.

Three weeks ago in Brendle auditorium, Arun Gandhi said to the audience, "I maintain that unless you have suffered humiliation, you will never realize and never understand how dehumanizing it is." One excited student stood up and began to clap — his

Matthew Smith-Kennedy

STUDENT COLUMNIST

sound was met with silence.

Gandhi's statement seems to be right out of a common-sense manual. Humiliation is personal experience, and if you don't experience it, how can you know what it is? Is there a substitute for experiencing humiliation? Probably not. What is not clear is who has suffered humiliation. Gandhi explained his dehumanizing experience in terms of suffering racism and prejudice in South Africa.

Many other minorities similarly claim humiliation because of majority racism and prejudice. In my own observation, this humiliating experience (a.k.a. "oppression") combined with black cultural upbringing yields what is called the black experience. Similarly, the lack of humiliation (oppression) plus the white cultural upbringing yields the white experience. In this column, by black or minority experience, I mean the oppressive experience and not the positive cultural aspect.

Right away, a difference is noticed between the alleged white and black experiences. Many people claim that minorities have suffered humiliation in a way that no majority member can understand. It is this assertion that I completely reject on the grounds that humiliation is not race-specific.

Whites and minorities both suffer humiliation, much of which is suffered in the same degree. However, some humiliation comes in different packages. Is humiliation incited by racial prejudice felt differently than other humiliating experiences?

If humiliation feels differently depending on your race, then there must be something fundamentally different between white human beings and black human beings (darker skin does not qualify as fundamental difference). I am not willing to accept the idea that minorities in any way are a different class of human beings. After all, if people of

different races feel humiliation differently, then do they love, hate and think in different ways?

Very few people I know would agree that a different set of emotions exists for different races. But this is exactly what is claimed by those who believe that the humiliation of a black person cannot possibly be understood by a white person who has suffered humiliation in the same degree.

At first glance, this discussion thus far may seem not to have any real-world application. However, several weeks ago I saw these sentiments in action. At a hall government meeting, a minority student sought a form of affirmative action for the hall council. The student proposed that minority representation be legislated so that the hall council would always contain a minority point of view. The student believed that the majority council was not looking out for minority interests since no council member knew what it was like to suffer oppression or humiliation on campus.

A first objection is that acquiring appliances and making TV lounge rules hardly necessitates an oppressed point of view. A second objection is that most hall governments have to beg people to serve on their councils and do not turn away people based on race. A third and more important objection is that the student's request is insulting to the hall members. The student was basically saying that a white person cannot represent his or her minority neighbor because of gross racial oppression (and its racially unique humiliation). The reverse of this logic is that no minority can fully represent a majority student.

In effect, many people have racially labeled emotions under the terms of white and black experience. Gandhi said, "We have created so many labels for ourselves; they're in so many little compartments in which we want to crowd ourselves, that we don't see the mainstream of humanity. We've got to look at each other and create that kind of relationship."

It seems that we use labels to quickly, but often inaccurately, assess other people. In a sense, labels aid and abet our prejudices. Some readers of this column wondered at the outset whether I was white or a minority. You needed this bit of information so that you could anticipate/prejudge what I would say. Had the topic been political, some readers would seek to label me as liberal or conservative.

Gandhi sees labels as unhealthy because they inhibit relationships between people as human beings. I also see labeling as dangerous because the least mentioned label seems to be the most inclusive — human being.

Christians and homosexuals should stop fighting and listen to each other

An InterVarsity meeting featured very little respect.

Free, I'm really free, my friend. Freed by the blood of the lamb," emits from the mouths of students as they gather to worship at the weekly InterVarsity Christian Fellowship large group meeting. The singing of

Tyrese Howard

GUEST COLUMNIST

worship songs like this one and a brief announcement period are the routine start of the Friday night meetings. As the speaker is being introduced, the students settle in comfortably to hear what God has to reveal to them. On Oct. 10, the speaker was Jonathan Inman and the topic was "Dealing With Homosexuality with Compassion and Understanding."

"When I come to churches, many people are uneasy about what I have to say," Inman said. Inman is the Director of Student Services for Harvest USA, an evangelical and counseling ministry providing services for those people and their families who desire freedom from homosexuality. He believes that the Lord called him to become a minister to people

struggling with "homosexuality and homosexual desires."

"I hope that when I leave here today, I will make some of you who were previously comfortable uncomfortable and some of you who came seeking answers reassured," Inman said.

Influenced by a time limit and a huge amount of content to cover, Inman started his presentation by briefly describing three ways homosexuality supports Christianity and why homosexuality is a sin. Having wrapped up his presentation, he then asked a fatal question, "Are there any questions?" The question-and-answer portion that accompanies every Inman presentation slowly but surely became a heated battle in which Inman was the focus.

After attending his meeting I begin to formulate some opinions on my own about the presentation. I came to the conclusion that what had happened that day was not what was intended as "compassion and truth." In fact, it was just a bunch of people arguing about nothing. If two groups are not willing to come together and listen to what each other has to say, why come together in the first place? Why waste your breath arguing when you can be doing something else on a Friday night at 6 p.m.?

The two groups that this so-called meeting involved were the Christians and

the homosexual culture. From experience, I have seen that these two are some of the most vocal groups in our society today, and they have clashed many times before. Frankly, I'm getting tired of all the stupid fighting. Can't we all just live in this world together? This meeting taught me that it is virtually impossible for these two groups to come together on anything, and that is not the way it should be.

I refuse to take sides, because basically I think that night both sides were at fault. Both groups came armed to the teeth with their beliefs, but neither were willing to listen to each other. One of the frequent arguments here is, "I have already heard what they have to say." Have you really heard what they have to say, or have you picked out the negative, the things you don't agree with, to hear? I think that the latter is the case.

When we confront people whom we know will not agree with our opinions, we tend to focus on that conflict instead of finding something we could possibly agree with. To me, the true definition of listening is finding out everything the other person thinks about an issue without jumping to conclusions.

No, you are not going to agree with all the things your opponent says, but I think that to have an intelligent conversation and even an intelligent debate, you have to know their whole opinion, good and

bad. I can only remember one time during that night, did someone say, "Well, even though I didn't agree totally with what he said, I like what he said about this ..." In my opinion, that is just common respect.

Speaking of respect, both groups were lacking that night. I ask the simple question to them, "Did you think about how the other party might feel about your actions?" InterVarsity, did you think about how this presentation might affect the homosexual community on this campus? Did you handle their questions and complaints in a professional manner, or with indifference and stubbornness?

Those who were adamantly opposed to the meeting, did you ever stop and ask yourself that maybe the intent of InterVarsity was not to be malicious? When you posed your questions and complaints, were they posed logically and without malice? This is respect, people. It's not compromising your principles, it's not giving in to the other side's point of view — it's respect and I say learn it.

I also want to deal with this hate thing, or to put it politely, "dislike." Some Christians dislike homosexuals and some homosexuals dislike Christians or even Christianity. Well, if you happen to fall into these groups, then I'd like to tell you a few things.

I feel that some Christians are hypocritical. I think that the reason there is so

much animosity in the church about homosexuality is that it is another way for Christians to cover up their own sinful natures. The Bible says that all sins are worthy of death regardless of what they are. When Jesus died for our sins he did not make us sinless, but gave us direct access to God so we could ask for forgiveness. If Christians claim that homosexuality is a sin, then they are no better than the homosexual because they have sinned also and are worthy of death. Only through the grace of God and the death of Jesus Christ have they been redeemed.

I say to Christians: If you really want to deal with homosexuality with compassion and love, then you first need to realize that you sin as they do and then help them to overcome what you think is sin.

I also say to the homosexual community that it is wrong to condemn the Christian faith just because there happen to be some ignorant Christians. If you don't believe that homosexuality is a sin, then you have a right to that belief. There are some homosexuals who say homosexuality is not a sin and that the Bible does not state that it is, but they believe that Jesus Christ died for them and that he loves them. To me, that is what ultimately defines Christianity. Jesus Christ loves you no matter what shape you are in, no matter what you have done and no matter who you are.

MORE LETTERS

Columnist stands by his viewpoint

The funny thing about taking a stand is that it immediately places you in the line of fire. I learned this the hard way as my stand on the issue of policy violators serving on the Judicial Council and Judicial Board led to a rather negative response in the Oct. 30 issue of the *OG&B* in junior Michael Simons' letter, "Columnist unfailingly insults students." I welcome the response as I feel it has given me a chance to clarify a few things about my statements.

First, Mr. Simons, you are correct in your assertions that I do not know either person who has violations. I cannot comment on

the complete character of either, but I can comment on what they did.

One of these leaders here on campus lied to a resident adviser and was caught in that lie. That goes against the honor code, and I believe we still use it here. The other, according to news reports, was intoxicated and streaked the Quad. That may not be against the honor code, but it is a violation of university policy, and this individual sits on a board designed to hear cases of violation of university policy. I feel that this is inappropriate.

Second, the response to my article urged me to "get a grip on reality." Now, to be honest, I may not be the sharpest knife in the drawer but I didn't quite follow the argument used by Mr. Simons.

The response urges me to get a grip, followed by the statements, "sure, maybe Student Government should screen candidates in the future, but it did not in this particular case." So far, I had a grip on this reality.

I knew this and I wrote about it. Then the response continues: "Let me fill you in on some details that you should have known before you expressed your opinion."

Then the response proceeds to recount how Mr. Simons and the member of the board grew up together. That stroll down memory lane was nice, yet it lacked a view or a purpose.

The fact that Mr. Simons grew up with the board member is not crucial to my opinion: People with violations should not be in a position to judge other people who

commit similar acts.

Next, Mr. Simons challenged me to "run for a position or confront the system face to face." Mr. Simons, I'm pleased to inform you that I am a student counselor in the judicial system.

He loses me in his accusation that I did not confront the system. I wrote an article that expressed my opinion about the present state of the judicial system after talking with Student Government members, Honor Council members, Student Counselors and even a friend on the J-Board. I think I confronted the system well.

If I may, I would extend a word or two of personal criticism about my own article. The only question that I feel deserves to be raised as a result of my article is: Who am I to write an article about honor?

There are a few things that I have done in my lifetime that I regret doing. I think we all have. It's part of being human — to fall and to fail.

So for those who say, "Does he

think he is better than these people?" the answer is no.

I don't hold myself above them to judge them. I realize we all slip; we all fall. Not everyone, however, has been written up for conduct that is inappropriate in a university setting. But, my point was this: I don't sit in judgment of other people who have committed the same acts that resulted in sanctioning by the university. How can anyone be an impartial judge when they are guilty of the same acts?

Mr. Simons, you clearly feel your friend to be a person of great moral character and having the high level of integrity necessary to sit on one of these boards. I, on the other hand, did not know him in preschool, and as you note, I have only seen him splayed out in the paper with allegations about his character being waved around like a four-year-old with his father's pistol.

Because of this negative light in which I have seen him, I will

always wonder about his credibility and efficacy in such a position. If this is unfair to his true character, I apologize; but this is what his judicial record shows him to be.

Mr. Simons, I have a few final comments. First, I hope this is the end of our dialogue. In order to prevent it from being lowered to a second-grade battle of name calling, I would suggest that we just agree to disagree. That's one nice thing about college. We can agree to have different opinions. Second, Mr. Simons, I did not make this happen. I didn't make him commit a violation of university policy. I didn't arm-twist the *OG&B* to run a story decreeing all of his violations; all I did was comment on a campus issue in a public forum. Unlike what you accuse me of doing in your letter, I did not hide behind the shield of an editorial; rather, I took a stand in one.

Nathan Kirkpatrick

Sophomore