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Rick Smith's Notes

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Rick's Notes

Notes about Rick

"Ricky's Story" Cut from School Newspaper

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12:52pm Thursday, Apr 17

The following article was written by Michael Shirzadian, a staff writer for Cedarville University's student newspaper. It was scheduled to be printed in Issue 10 on April 17, 2008. However, it was cut the day before.

Last year, Soulforce Equality Rider Vince Pancucci challenged Cedarville University to ask how her thoughts, words, actions, and biases harm her homosexual brothers and sisters.

Pancucci joined Michael "Enku" Ide to illustrate the spiritual violence that well-intended Christians so often inflict on the lives of homosexual men and women.

Ide explained how hostility and narrow-mindedness drove him away from the Church, and only the authentic, unconditional love of a handful of Christians he later met brought him back. "Their faith was alive," Ide said, "you could see it in their lives"

Let us, almost a year later, accept Pancucci's challenge. In what ways do our thoughts, words, actions, and biases harm our homosexual brothers and sisters?

To answer this question, we turn to Ricky Smith and his Cedarville experience.

Ricky was an enthusiastic, highly involved Cedarville student. He was a small group leader and class officer. As a communication major, Ricky enjoyed working for Resound Radio. He led a ministry and poured himself into the lives of his friends. Like most students, Ricky came to Cedarville nervous yet excited about his college experience.

Ricky is also gay.

Despite his enthusiasm about Cedarville, Ricky transferred to Ohio State University last semester; Being a homosexual student at Cedarville University, explains Ricky, had grown too difficult. Ricky's story begins early his freshman year.

"Freshman year," explains Ricky via a telephone interview, "the deans had



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reason to believe I was gay.” Ricky met with a Dean Smith, Associate Dean of Campus Life, and together the two discussed homosexuality at Cedarville. “Dean Smith told me that many people at Cedarville struggle with homosexuality. He said there’s at least one homosexual guy in every hall.”

Pursuant to Dean Smith’s suggestion, Ricky attended counseling for two semesters. “Nothing he said, nothing he gave me to read, and no one he asked me to talk to made me change at all. I quit counseling after freshman year.”

Despite leaving counseling, however, Ricky desired, as he always had, to overcome his homosexuality. It wasn’t until April’s Soulforce visit that Ricky’s approach to his sexuality began to change.

“When I heard that Soulforce was visiting, I decided to read a lot of their material. After praying about it, I sincerely believed that nothing was wrong with me. The problem was with Cedarville.”

Despite his skepticism towards Cedarville, however, Ricky did not intend to leave. It wasn’t until last semester—when Ricky’s church and family learned about his sexuality—that things began to change.

“When my pastor called, he labeled me a filthy sodomite and questioned my salvation.” The following week, Ricky’s church voted him out. A week later, Ricky withdrew from Cedarville.

Today, Ricky is a junior communication major at Ohio State University. Within his first few weeks at OSU, Ricky joined the Human Rights Campaign, an advocacy group raising awareness about homosexuality.

Looking back on his Cedarville experience, Ricky is disappointed at the manner in which students treated both him and the question of homosexuality.

“People emailed me explaining that they have homosexual friends that are sleeping around, going to clubs, getting AIDS, and dying alone. They told me that no one goes to their funerals. These are the stories people told to ‘quote’ change me.”

“One girl,” explains Ricky, “suggested that, to overcome my homosexuality, I try to act more masculine. The ignorance floored me.”

Ricky further explains that his hallmates talked about him and his sexuality behind his back. “Everyone talked about me,” says Ricky, “but no one talked to me.”

Ricky suggests that [gay] students at Cedarville begin by speaking with someone they trust. “You shouldn’t have to be alone,” says Ricky.

Ricky encourages [gay] students at Cedarville to contact him at Smith.6557@osu.edu.