

## Sunstone Symposium

### Student dissenter calls for repeal of BYU honor code

By Peggy Fletcher Stack  
The Salt Lake Tribune  
Salt Lake Tribune

7 August 2008

Brigham Young University's honor code should be repealed and then rewritten with input from people of varying opinions, one participant said Thursday at the annual Sunstone Symposium, an independent forum for Mormon thought.

By spelling out strict grooming codes, limiting social interactions between the sexes and reducing avenues for dissent, the LDS Church-owned school is "producing a Mormonism that is smaller than Mormonism itself," said Ashley Sanders, a former BYU student. "It puts two unlike things together - spirituality and hair length, for example - and then re-enforces it to create a relationship that people think is natural and necessary."

Her English professor, she said, could enter a temple with his longish hair, but was denied service at the CougarEat, a cafeteria on campus.

Sanders, who last year organized an alternative graduation to protest the school's invitation to Vice President Dick Cheney to speak at commencement, described being ordered off the school's quad for protesting the Iraq war, while ROTC recruiters were passing out fliers and carrying guns nearby.

"BYU will always approve something that is part of the majority culture and silence minority voices," she said. "By doing this, the school is creating a religion that values insularity and provincialism, rather than expansiveness."

BYU spokeswoman Carrie Jenkins said all demonstrations have to be approved by the administration but that the school did allow many anti-Cheney demonstrations.

"The university does not dictate political opinion for students or faculty," Jenkins said.

However, the school's academic freedom policy strictly forbids any public speaking that "contradicts or opposes, rather than analyzes or discusses, fundamental [LDS] Church doctrine or policy; deliberately attacks or derides the Church or its general leaders."

Civil disobedience, for example, would violate the honor code because it is against the law.

"That would be handled on a case-by-case basis," Jenkins said.

Caleb Proulx, who joined Sanders on the Sunstone panel "Does the BYU Honor Code Honor Mormon Values," presented just such a case. He dropped out of BYU after he was arrested for peacefully protesting the Iraq war in 2003.

"I had already had several run-ins with the honor code office," said Proulx, who now attends the University of Utah. "After I got arrested for civil disobedience, I went to the office to tell them."

The man in the office asked lots of questions, Proulx recalled, and then said, "We'd appreciate it if you wouldn't talk to the press."

Because Proulx had been interviewed by a newspaper reporter, the school put him on an eight-month probation. He then left and shortly thereafter served an LDS mission to Las Vegas.

"I was really bitter about how I was treated by the culture that was spawned by the honor code and the honor code office," he said. "Here I was at BYU. This was my community of fellow Mormons who should have been acting more Christian toward me, I wasn't shrill about [my views]. I thought people would welcome a dissenting opinion. I felt rather shabbily treated by the administration and the student body."

Tristan Call, who graduates next week with a degree in anthropology and Latin American studies, organized a BYU event called "Seven Straight Nights for Gay Rights."

The honor code section about homosexuality forbids "advocacy," which it describes as "seeking to influence

others to engage in homosexual behavior or promoting homosexual relations as being morally acceptable."

Because of that "homosexuality cannot be discussed on campus," Call said. "The code says we should be honest but what if we honestly believe same-sex unions are a good thing?"

The Sunstone Symposium continues at the Sheraton Centre in downtown Salt Lake City through Saturday.