

Jaden Farris: Let's be clear, queerness is an identity not an ideology | COMMENTARY



capitalgazette.com/2023/07/10/jaden-farris-lets-be-clear-queerness-is-an-identity-not-an-ideology-commentary

Jaden Farris

July 10, 2023

At the June 26 Anne Arundel County Board of Education meeting, school board member Corine Frank coined being a member of the LGBTQIA+ community as an ideology. Of course, being gay is not an ideology.

This is just a figment of the imagination of those who are intolerant of diversity and who want to create a homogeneous society. Queerness is an identity. My sexuality and gender are not a political statement or a set of beliefs or philosophies that I choose to follow. They are simply parts of who I am.

I mean, seriously, do you think that queer people woke up one day and decided to be gay? That we read a book about queer theory and decided that it sounded like a good way to live our lives? No, of course not. As Lady Gaga said, I was born this way.

And it's not just me. There are queer people of all political persuasions. We are gay conservatives, lesbian liberals and transgender people of all political stripes. We're not a monolith. The idea that queer people are a monolithic group with a single political agenda is simply not true.

To say this is to deny the lived experiences of millions of people — including the youth who you represent. It is to say that our very existence is political. It is to say they are not welcome in our workplaces, our communities or our schools, and that we have to justify our right to exist.

But we don't need to justify our existence. We are here, we are queer and we are not going anywhere.

So why do some people insist on calling being queer an ideology? I think it's because they're afraid of what they don't understand. They don't understand what it means to be queer, so they label it as something dangerous and threatening. They want to pit us against each other so that we're too busy fighting among ourselves to focus on fighting for our rights.

But we won't let them divide us. We will not be afraid. We know that we are stronger together. We are a community and we will not be silenced.

But the truth is, there's nothing dangerous or threatening about being queer. We're just people, like everyone else.

Coining queerness as an ideology is just a scare tactic. A way to try to scare us into submission. We're not afraid. We're not going anywhere. And we will not stop fighting.

So, what is the ideology of the people who say that being queer is an ideology? It's the ideology of intolerance and hate. It's the ideology that says some people are less than others because of who they love or how they identify.

That's not an ideology I want to subscribe to.

So if you're someone who says that being queer is an ideology, I ask you to think again. It's an identity. And it's not something that we can or want to change.

What we can change is the way we treat each other. We can create a world where everyone is treated with respect and dignity, regardless of their sexuality or gender identity. And that's the world I want to live in.

And it's not just me. There are millions of people around the world who are queer. We come from all walks of life. But one thing we all have in common is that we're not choosing our identities. We're just living them.

We deserve to enjoy the freedom to be ourselves — no matter who we are; however, too often, others try to put people in boxes based on the color of our skin, who we love and how we identify. The ideology of intolerance and hate is a threat to all of us. We must stand together to defeat this ideology and create a world where everyone is treated with respect and dignity.

Jaden Farris is a recent graduate of Anne Arundel County Public Schools. He serves on the board of directors of Annapolis Pride and GLSEN Maryland, as well as being a commissioner on the Anne Arundel County Human Relations Commission. He lives in Crownsville.