



Cornerstone University's Response to Soulforce

Soulforce, an advocacy group promoting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender lifestyles in the name of Christianity, contacted Cornerstone University October 31, 2006, indicating its desire to visit CU to provide what it called "an openly gay and affirming voice" discussing matters of "sexuality and faith." The organization exists to combat what it calls "discrimination" and "oppression" propagated by "traditional religion" against people who have embraced alternative lifestyles.

After much deliberation, consultation, prayer, and consideration, in a letter December 18, 2006, CU politely declined a Soulforce visit. However, Soulforce responded in a letter January 12, 2007, informing CU that Soulforce's "Equality Ride" bus would visit the Cornerstone University campus, Monday, April 23, 2007.

In an additional letter April 12, 2007, Cornerstone University reminded Soulforce that the university is not interested in Soulforce's uninvited intention of visiting the CU campus, April 23, 2007, or at any other time. In that letter, CU also informed Soulforce that if its bus arrives on campus, the bus and its riders will be asked to leave the campus. No other interaction, engagement, or access will be permitted for Soulforce riders on campus.

Along with the other rationale points listed below, one key distinction has been particularly important for CU's thinking: *individual vs. organization*. If CU were dealing with a given gay person or even a group of people who happened to be gay, the university might interact with them spiritually or otherwise engage with them professionally. But individuals are *not* what this decision is about. Soulforce is an organization. As such, it works with an agenda that does not align with the mission and activities of CU.

Rationale for Cornerstone University's Response to Soulforce

- CU is a private, evangelical, Christian university that historically and consistently affirms biblical teachings on human sexuality, so CU is under no obligation to provide access to an organization promoting alternative lifestyles in the name of Christianity.

- CU's and Soulforce's differing views of human sexuality are not about university policy. They are about Soulforce's rejection of Scriptural teachings regarding sexuality, which have been affirmed throughout the whole of the history of Christianity and the Church.
- Soulforce generally seeks institutional endorsement and the access it affords. Barring this, Soulforce proclaims its "relentless" intention to do as it pleases to protest what it calls "discrimination." Yet when some schools offered to meet off campus at the school's expense Soulforce declined. When some schools attempted to enter contractual agreements defining the parameters of the visit Soulforce declined. When schools offered forums in which Christian biblical morality could be presented along with Soulforce's point of view, Soulforce generally declined.
- Soulforce does not really want dialogue. It wants unfettered venues of its choosing. If it does not get them, Soulforce seeks media visuals wherein riders can be portrayed as victims, e.g. Soulforce's record of asking local police departments to use handcuffs whenever riders are arrested.
- Soulforce does not act in good faith, often saying one thing and doing another and frequently misrepresenting events as they actually occurred on given campuses.
- Soulforce does not take responsibility for the cost its visit places upon a college or university. Whether welcomed or not, Soulforce's bus stops require a school to expend financial, intellectual, and professional capital, as well as emotional and spiritual energy.
- CU, like all educational institutions, frequently declines organizational requests for presentation times with students. To do otherwise would be to turn students' educational experience (for which students and parents pay) into one long infomercial.
- Soulforce indicated its intention to visit CU one week prior to final examinations. This is not a workable time for CU because faculty and students have real academic work to accomplish. An uninvited tour visit high-jacks time slated for a different focus.
- Each year, CU deals with the whole scope of human sexuality considerations in the normal course of its curricular and co-curricular programming. One example of this is CU's Human Sexuality Committee, which has developed campus educational/spiritual formation events, discussions, panels, and chapels specifically designed to help students learn more about how to apply biblical principles to questions relating to human sexuality.

- CU's decision to decline a Soulforce visit does not imply criticism or critique of other Christian colleges or universities taking a different approach to responding to Soulforce. CU's decision is what we believe is best for CU.
- While CU cares about Soulforce riders as *individuals* with spiritual needs who should be treated with respect, CU is not interested in enabling Soulforce as an *organization* whose values and purpose are opposed to biblical truth.
- CU's decision to decline a Soulforce visit is a testimony in itself, for it recognizes that it is biblically appropriate to recognize sin for what it is while lovingly pointing to God's offer of forgiveness and restoration to those who repent and place their faith in Christ.
- CU's decision to decline a Soulforce visit on campus is one organization's comment to another. This decision does not preclude meetings off campus with Soulforce riders by individuals in the university community who may choose to interact in this way.

Finally, Cornerstone University recognizes Soulforce's constitutional rights, the riders' civil liberties, and the wonderful fact that the United States is a free country wherein people who hold profoundly different values and lifestyles may peacefully co-exist. This does not, however, lead to the conclusion Soulforce must be given access to the university's students or its property. Soulforce is free to say it wishes to visit CU; the university is free to respond with a polite "No thank you."

A final word of compassion:

In the current political culture, "to disagree" seems to be equated with "to dislike," or worse, "to loathe." But disagreeing, even about moral issues, need not require rejection of a person. Scripture captures this thought when it says, "speak the truth in love."

As a Christian institution of higher learning, Cornerstone University affirms a biblical view of the world involving creation, humanity's fall into sin, redemption provided through faith in Christ's sacrificial death, burial, and resurrection, and finally restoration to relationship with God to all who believe. Sin condemns us all, but the message of John 3:16 offers love and hope to every human being.

Cornerstone University's mission demands that we teach our students to treat individual Soulforce riders with grace and respect.