

The Gentleman from New York

[*THE SETTING: A living room of a mansion/hostel in Lisboa, Portugal.*]

"Oh shit, are we going to have that whole Texas-New York talk," the gentleman from New York asked, ready to set me straight on my hick politics and revealing himself to be just as asinine as the people he was about to unleash on. Within a few minutes I knew two things:

1. This dude was not cool.
2. He would not be making out with the Scottish girl who was more interested in reviewing the desserts she had partaken in over the day than anything else.

When I first came to Texas, I imagined it to be a haven of backwardness, too. Most outsiders (or Liberals) do, I reckon. As time went on I grew a bit of fondness for the things that are in the state and started taking offense at some of the jokes of drawls, 10 gallon hats, and prejudice. Not to say they don't exist--they do in great amounts--but they are real things and have real people behind them. I've talked to my share of 10 gallon hat wearers who've said something bad about blacks or gays or Jews, but I can't say I hate them. On the whole, and I know this sounds strange, they were nice enough, usually, and most likely hadn't spent much time with a black, gay, and/or Jew. Their "hate" was not hate but ignorance; sort of like the gentleman from New York.

In fact, I personally believe that true hate rarely exists. Yes, I "hate" Houston (it rains dirt!), but I don't actually *hate* Houston (goodness gracious I'd miss me some Kevin S. and Markus P. if not for the place!). Not convinced? Okay, I'll bring out the big guns.

Dick Cheney. Love him (really? are you related?) or hat--um, dislike--him, you probably agree that he is almost pure evil, soulless, creepy, et al. If you love him, don't take offense: all those qualities are working on your behalf. I digress...

So Dick Cheney, ol' no soul himself, doesn't hate the gays. Why? Because his daughter is gay and he might have spent some time with her over the years. This remarkable phenomenon is part of "knowing _____." (Early seasons of *The Real World* and actually reading the Harry Potter series as opposed to just talking smack about it because it is omnipresent also support this theory.) It is much easier to "hate" (are you tired of imagining me throwing up quote signs with reckless abandon?) a cartoon--a stereotype--of your disaffection than to genuinely hate something. If you know a person they are no longer a category, but a human. It is maniacal to say that you would blindly kill or hurt or discriminate against someone that you actually *know*.

Oh! More anecdotal analogies! I heard a very long time ago that if you eat something 7 times you will no longer hate the taste of it. The food might not be your favorite, but at the very least you will be able to tolerate it. Perhaps, you can concede that it has some redeemable qualities after all. While not a guarantee, you may even like it.

And guess what? I dislike--strongly dislike in some cases--some of the people I agree with politically more than the ones I don't. Sure, if I were to live in California or New York my voting habits might be more accurately represented in the local government, but there would still be ignorants floating around. And though there ignorance would fall in my favor, it is ignorance nonetheless.

The other reason why the man from New York agitated me like steel wool was because, hey, I'm from there (now, at least) and I'm not one of "them." And there are plenty more of "us" there, too. We share the state, unequal as it may be.