



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

February 5, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

When discussing membership development and bringing new members into your Lodge, have you ever heard a Lodge brother or sister talk about only bringing in the "right people"?

I have heard that term used from time to time. The "right people". It's sort of like the term "true Odd Fellow." I wonder what is really meant when people use the term "right people"? Do they mean a person who believes in friendship, love and truth, and who will work hard for the Order and the community? Or do they use it as a euphemism to keep out women, or racial minorities, or people of various religions, or young people?

There are Lodges in California that have no women, that have no racial minorities, where all members are of one or two religions, and where there are no young people under the age of 60. Is this a coincidence? Perhaps. Or is it something more troubling.

Remember, we are ODD FELLOWS. Our history shows that we formed at a time when fraternal orders had members cut from the same mold, EXCEPT for Odd Fellows. We brought in an eclectic assortment of members from various trades and professions. We were dubbed "Odd Fellows" as a result. We should be a fraternal order that is welcoming and open to all men and women of good character who hold a belief in a greater, higher power. Anything less and we turn our back on our history and our future. We ignore - to our detriment - the majority of our community if we exclude everyone who doesn't come from our own particular cookie cutter.

I'm going to share with you a letter I recently received from one of our members, expressing concerns about the use of the term "right people". To protect this member's anonymity, I am not revealing the member's name or Lodge.

But it's food for thought. Here is the letter, in pertinent part:

Hi Dave,

It is sad but true that even some newer Odd Fellows in positions of authority take the attitude that we need to attract only the "right people."

As a new member, I recall raising the issue of the need to attract other new members with the then Noble Grand of a certain lodge.

He said, yes but they need to be the "right people." I pressed him on this statement and asked him to give me examples of ones who would not be right. He struggled and came up with a lame example of somebody who wanted to use the lodge as a place to give private music lessons.



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I wondered to myself what would be wrong with that if they were willing to pay a reasonable rent to the lodge for use of a room.

Now I hear, that same lodge is allowing a candidate for membership to give massages on a professional basis at the lodge and wonder what is the difference. Obviously this candidate enjoyed the backing of the N.G. whereas the other unfortunate apparently did not.

Sincerely,

F - L - T

Dave Rosenberg
Grand Warden