



Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund

A national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, and people with HIV/AIDS through impact litigation, education, and public policy work.

DALE V. BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA FACT SHEET

The Boy Scout Handbook

The Boy Scout Handbook defines “morally straight” as follows:

To be a person of strong character, guide your life with honesty, purity, and justice. Respect and defend the rights of all people. Your relationships with others should be honest and open. Be clean in your speech and actions, and faithful in your religious beliefs. The values you follow as a Scout will help you become virtuous and self-reliant.

— *The Boy Scout Handbook*

The Boy Scout Handbook also defines “clean”:

A Scout is CLEAN. A Scout keeps his body and mind fit and clean. He chooses the company of those who live by these same ideals. He helps keep his home and community clean. You never need to be ashamed of dirt that will wash off... There’s another kind of dirt that won’t come off by washing. It is the kind that shows up in foul language and harmful thoughts. Swear words, profanity, and dirty stories are weapons that ridicule other people and hurt their feelings. The same is true of racial slurs and jokes making fun of ethnic groups or people with physical or mental limitations. A Scout knows there is no kindness or honor in such mean-spirited behavior. He avoids it in his own words and deeds. He defends those who are the targets of insults.

— *The Boy Scout Handbook*

Although one of BSA’s stated purposes is to encourage members’ ethical development, BSA does not endorse any specific set of moral beliefs. Instead, “moral fitness” is deemed an individual choice:

Morality... concerns the “principles of right and wrong” in our behavior, and “what is sanctioned by our conscience or ethical judgement.”... In any consideration of moral fitness, a key word has to be “courage.” A boy’s courage to do what his head and his heart tell him is right. And the courage to refuse to do what his heart and his head say is wrong.

— *The Scoutmaster Handbook*

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