

## **Case 1: Minding Your Ethics**

John is sitting at a bar having a drink to unwind from a long day when he overhears three men talking about how they believe that homosexuality is a sign of the decay of our society and should not be accepted. John has a number of homosexual friends and their standing in society is an important issue for him.

At first, John tries to ignore the men, but they are making no attempt to keep their conversation quiet or to themselves. While they clearly have no tolerance for homosexuals, the men do attempt to make a logical and reasoned explanation for why homosexuality is bad. John recognizes that people can have differing views on the ethical issues associated with homosexuality, but he believes that the conversation the men are having is insensitive and that their arguments are fallacious.

As the conversation goes on beside him, John finds himself unable to ignore the men any longer. He realizes he will either have to confront the men or leave the bar.

But John also believes that he may not be able to argue well enough against the men. When he speaks in public, things tend to come out muddled and not as clear as they are in his mind. He is not sure how much the men have had to drink, and while the men do not seem particularly angry now, it is possible that John's butting into the conversation may lead to a fight. Even if it doesn't, John believes the chances that his remarks will change their minds are remote.

Traditionally, John believes that one should mind one's own business at a bar. But he reasons that if the men were racists, he would certainly be unable to leave without saying something. At best, the men would give him a spirited argument. At worst, they might consider his entry into the conversation rude or an invasion of their privacy. On the other hand, it was the men who were having a loud conversation about the topic at a bar. Furthermore, John is worried that it may be close-minded of him to think that his view is better than theirs, even if he holds his beliefs strongly.

As John is thinking through his next move, one of the men breaks from the group to come to the bar and get more drinks. In the process, he greets John and asks him how his night is going.