

# COLUMBIA SPECTATOR

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Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXII, Number 178, 17 November 1988 — AIDS peer educators hold student info session  
[ARTICLE+ILLUSTRATION]

## AIDS peer educators hold student info session

By Rachel Hall

Over 40 students attended an information session last night to discuss the moratorium the Barnard administration placed on the school's AIDS Peer Educators (APE) program last month.

At the meeting, held in the Brooks Hall Lounge, APE counselors updated students on the ongoing negotiations with Barnard administrators and circulated petitions in support of the group.

On October 20, Kathryn Rodgers, general counsel and vice president of Barnard College, ordered the group to discontinue its informational sessions until it agrees to supervision by Barnard Health Services. Doctors, and not students, should have the last word on presentations involving medical information on AIDS, Rodgers said.

However, APE members assert that they are continuously updated by experts in the field who are more knowledgeable than Barnard's health services personnel.

At the meeting, APE coordinator Leslie Kantor, BC '89, and other members of the group questioned the moratorium's boundaries and its implications for the activities of other Barnard groups in the future.

"What we want to say to you in part is that we feel that arbitrarily halting a student group is a

dangerous precedent to set," Kantor said. "Maybe it's us this semester, but it could very well be another group next."

Peer educator Elizabeth Klement, CC '90, questioned whether the moratorium inhibits the freedom of members of the Columbia community to provide medical information on AIDS.

"Does this mean that professors cannot use medical information in their lectures? Does this mean that groups won't be able to bring in outside speakers who relay medical information without consulting the administration?" she asked.

The group will circulate two sets of petitions, one to organizations and the other to individuals, which express dissatisfaction with the moratorium and its "violation of students' first amendment right to freedom of speech."

Members of Barnard's Student Government Association (SGA) present at the meeting disagreed with APE members about the free speech issue.

"I don't think anyone should start panicking about freedom of speech," said Leora Joseph, BC '90, SGA vice president. "I don't think there are any other clubs on campus that deal with a life and death situation like AIDS."

According to Joseph, administrators have told SGA representatives that their concern is with their responsibility to students in ensuring they are not misinformed.

"No one's saying that your information isn't sound and that your advisors aren't good enough. No one has ever said that in our meetings; we know your presentations are of good quality," Joseph said. "What they [the Barnard administration] are saying is that they have a responsibility to the student body, and if someone contracts AIDS as a result of misinformation provided by an on-campus group, then they are responsible."

SGA is still deciding whether or not to endorse APE's actions.

However, a private institution is not legally liable for what a group such as the peer educators say, Kantor asserted.

She added that she has asked administrators several times to provide her with one instance where the educators have relayed incorrect information, “and I’ve never gotten an answer.”

“There are no AIDS experts at Barnard College, while we draw our information from people who are on the cutting edge of AIDS education,” Kantor asserted.

She added that the group is reluctant to work with Barnard Health Services because it has misinformed the student body in at least one prior instance.

According to Kantor, a flyer mailed to Barnard College students stated that twice as many women who use oral contraceptives contract AIDS than those who do not.

“What we discovered when we investigated the study was that it was a survey of 1,000 prostitutes in Nairobi,” she said. “We’re very hesitant to work with a health service that thinks that that kind of misleading, alarmist information is okay.”

Kantor said the group has taken several routes to continue its work despite the moratorium, but says it is difficult because Barnard administrators “won’t make any exact statement as to what the bounds of the moratorium are.”

If we become affiliated with Columbia, does that mean we’ll be able to come back onto the Barnard campus? If we become affiliated with an outside group, does that mean I qualify as an outside speaker?” she asked. “The issue here is that we’ve lost a lot of momentum and have failed to educate. If I can qualify as an outside speaker, then I’ll go to a group and get

an affiliation.”

Kantor said that while the group has considered legal action, the process would defeat its desire to get back into the residence halls as soon as possible and continue educating students.

Jenny Naranjo, BC '89, one of a few students currently working with Barnard Health Services to establish another peer education group which will be supervised by that office, questioned APE's reasons for remaining unaffiliated with Health Services.

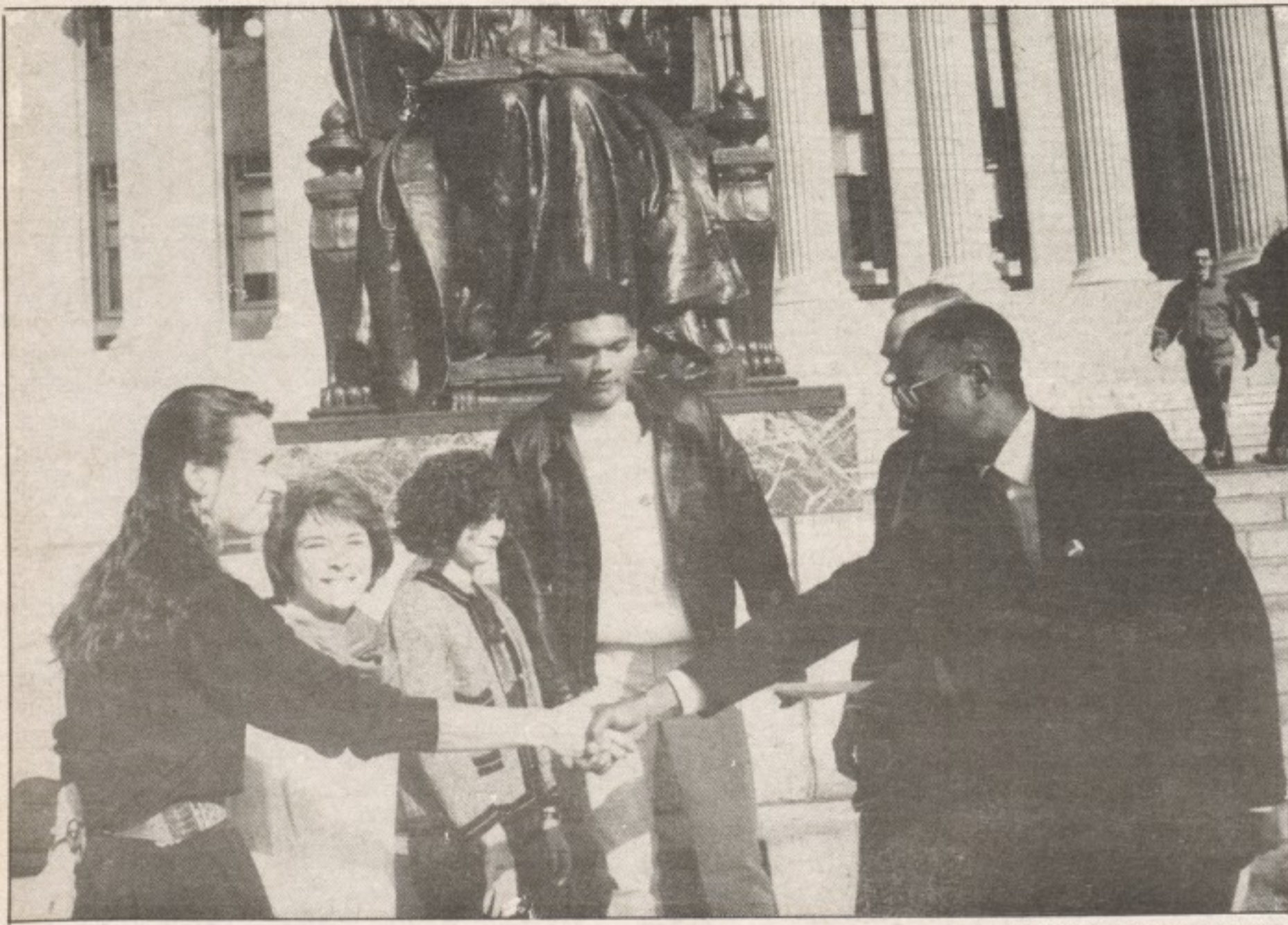
According to Kantor, Barnard officials have requested the group suggest that students change their lifestyles; the peer educators refused to make such recommendations, Kantor said.

In an interview before the meeting, Klement said the group also disagrees with Barnard administrators over such issues as whether to recommend students avoid multiple partners, and use “dental dams,” a latex mouth covering used to protect partners during oral-anal or oral-vaginal contact.

“They want us to not even bring up the issue of dental dams because there haven't been any medical studies done on their effectiveness,” she said, adding, “We present it as a means for possibly reducing your risk.”

“They also want us to say that multiple partners increases your risk, which isn't necessarily true—you're more likely to contract the disease by sleeping with one person without using a condom, then you would if you slept with several people and used condoms,” Klement said.

The educators will meet with Rodgers again today to discuss curricula issues.



SPECTATOR/ANDREW VLADECK

**A GOOD CAUSE:** Barbara Kieber, Community Impact (CI) Oxfam coordinator, accepting a donation for Oxfam and CI from Larry Dais, assistant vice president for government relations and director of community affairs, while other Oxfam organizers look on.