

# COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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AIDS is not a pretty topic. Few college students want to think about men and women, slowly overcome by disease, wasting away in hospitals and at home. They prefer to cling to the illusion that the malady is confined to *others*, and will not affect them. The virus, however, ignores such distinctions: one out of every 300 college students will someday contract the illness.

Clearly, students must be educated about Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Given the facts, undergraduates can guard against spreading the virus. Any group that attempts to erase ignorance about AIDS should be praised for it may help to save lives.

Barnard administrators apparently think otherwise. Last week they imposed a moratorium on the activities of the Barnard AIDS Peer Educators, a student group which conducts workshops about the virus. Barnard officials claim that the student group does not possess the latest AIDS information because it isn't directly supervised by Barnard Health Services. This argument has little justification—these doctors and administrators do not have a monopoly on the truth about AIDS.

The peer educators are certainly as informed about the disease as school health officials are, if not more so. They are guided by two experts in the field: Laura Pinsky, director of the Gay Health Advocacy Project, and Mark Osfield, a health educator at New York University. Pinsky literally wrote the book on the subject, **The Essential AIDS Fact Book**, while Osfield is a member of the American College Health Association Task Force on AIDS. Two of the peer educators are working in the AIDS division of the New York City Department of Health in order to broaden their

knowledge. This is a group that obviously knows what it's talking about.

The same cannot be said for Barnard administrators. Of course, Barnard officials should guarantee that students receive the most accurate information possible. One college administrator should be appointed to the group's board of directors to help with program planning and implementation. But banning the group's activities without consulting the peer educators doesn't make any sense. Barnard students are denied crucial facts, while valid complaints may be left unresolved. In this era, a workshop can make the difference between life and death. AIDS isn't pretty, but Barnard's policies are even uglier.