

# COLUMBIA SPECTATOR

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Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXV, Number 162, 11 October 1991 — LBGC sponsors Coming Out Day [ARTICLE]

## LBGC sponsors Coming Out Day

By Cheryl Prince

Columbia and Barnard students will gather today to celebrate National Coming Out Day with several events sponsored by the Lesbian Bisexual Gay Coalition (LBGC).

National Coming Out Day, which was established approximately five years ago, was set aside to celebrate lesbians, bisexuals and

gays making their sexual identity known, or "coming out of the closet."

"It is a day for people to show their support for people coming out of the closet. It's also a day to be supportive and happy, not like most events where you're walking around protesting and boycotting something. You can be a gay activist in a positive way. There's a definite lack of happy, gay activists," said LBGC Co-Chair Shannon Hal-kyard, CC '94.

National Coming Out Day functions as an awareness event, according to Stephanie Yeung, BC '93.

"National Coming Out Day is not merely directed at gays and lesbians but also on a much larger scheme of making people aware and making it known that we're here and we're proud," she said.

LBGC, the largest undergradu-

ate gay organization on campus, is also the first gay student organization in the northern hemisphere, said Halkyard. As well as sponsoring its own variety of activities, it helps fund a majority of other gay and lesbian groups on campus.

Halkyard said he recognizes the need to have a major organization devoted to undergraduate students because they need more support than graduate students.

“Most graduate students are fiscally independent of their parents and there’s a big difference,” he said.

According to Halkyard, there are a number of gay and lesbian students who are reluctant to tell their parents that they are gay for fear that their parents will no longer pay their college tuition.

Yeung said she feels LBGC is a good support system as well.

“A good way to form a community and get in touch with other people is joining organizations like LBGC and WOW [Women Oriented Women],” she said.

LBGC leaders want to make the organization more accessible to students, Yeung said.

“We’re going to bring LBGC down from Earl Hall to the student body,” she said.

The organization is scheduled to set up tables today on College Walk on the Columbia campus and in front of Lehman Lawn on Barnard’s campus.

Halkyard said LBGC members will distribute flyers and pamphlets with information on

groups such as the Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLAD), Queer Nation, New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence project, Gay and Lesbian Community Services, Identity House, Dyke Action Machine (DAM), Women's Health Action and Mobilization (WHAM), and the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP).

Lists of LBGC events will be passed out, as well as "Silence Equals Death" buttons and stickers. There will also be sign-up sheets for the lesbian and gay discussion groups, Women Oriented Women, and Men Oriented Men (MOM).

According to Yeung, there will also be a sign-up sheet for a new support group, Lesbians at Barnard and Columbia (LABC).

Halkyard said he plans to present literature about the Gay Health Advocacy Project's various services on campus, such as HIV and Hepatitis B testing.

The main event, sponsored completely by LBGC, is an open pizza party in the Dodge Room of Earl Hall planned for Friday night, and flyers have been posted inviting all to attend regardless of sexual preference. Halkyard said he hopes that since both heterosexuals and homosexuals alike will be invited, students will feel more comfortable attending.

"It's an easy way for people who don't want to be labeled lesbian, gay or bisexual to come and show support, but they don't have

to deal with getting labelled for coming to the event,” Halkyard said.

Yeung said she understands men and women who feel reluctant to come out to the public because “it’s hard being in a college environment because much as Barnard and Columbia are in an urban environment, in New York City, there isn’t that much support.”

She also said she thinks homophobia is particularly a problem at Barnard.

Halkyard said that people should feel safe about coming out at Columbia.

“Columbia is the best place to do it. If I had gone to any other college, it would not have measured up to Columbia,” he said.