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The BGLAD Organizing Committee

touch, even in the middle of a thriving gay community. This is especially true at Columbia, where communication between different branches of the University is minimal. To combat the sense of loneliness many lesbian, bisexual, or gay people experience, particularly when they're just coming out, we've paid special attention to creating accessible channels of information and communication within the community: the lesbigay notesfile, an online news and announcement file that's accessible through Columbianet; a monthly newsletter called Community News that we send throughout campus; and CALIPSO, an informational resource book for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people at Columbia.

Out of all this organizing has come (among many other things!) BGLAD—a week for us to celebrate our pride and communicate our concerns. We decided to schedule the week to coincide with National Coming Out Day on Oct. 11, a day when lesbian, gay, and bisexual people across the country affirm our identities, increase our visibility, and celebrate our communities by proudly speaking our names as queer women and men. Like Black History Month, or Latino Heritage Month, or other

commemorations that grow out of a community's shared consciousness, BGLAD speaks in many voices.

One voice is educational. We recognize the urgency of stemming the increasingly overwhelming tide of homophobia that threatens to engulf this country: President Clinton's backpedaling on lifting the ban on lesbians and gay men in the military, the terrifying number of anti-gay ballot measures in states, counties, cities, and villages from Texas to Maine; and the continuing indif-

Next week marks a first for the lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities at Columbia—we will celebrate our first annual Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Awareness Days (BGLAD). From Oct. 9 to 17, BGLAD will offer panels, entertainment, discussion groups, and just plain fun to the entire Columbia community to raise awareness and respect for lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people on campus.

It's not surprising that queer Columbians are organizing together now in 1993. Columbia has a long history of gay activism—the first gay student group in the United States was started here in 1967. And we have more than history to inspire us. There has been an upsurge of organizing for lesbian, gay, and bisexual civil rights, and liberation around the country, and Columbia students, faculty, and staff have echoed and become part of that wave of activism.

Over the past year, Columbia has seen the growth of an amazing number of lesbian, bisexual, and gay groups: OutREACH, a counsel-

ing, informational, and referral phone line for people with questions about sexuality; GABLES, an organization of gay, lesbian and bisexual faculty and staff; JAGL, a group of Jewish, activist lesbians and gay men; a discussion group for bisexual women and men; and monthly community meetings in which all branches of our communities, come together and share information.

Among the obstacles to forming lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities are the shame and silence that homophobia forces upon us. Often queer people feel isolated and out of

ference and fear expressed towards people with AIDS. We think it's essential that you know about these things too, and how homophobia affects us every day of our lives.

Another voice is political—a call to action to all members of the Columbia community to respect and honor the multitude of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people: your roommate, your teacher, your sister, your parent. BGLAD also speaks in the voice of community building among gay people, of making Columbia a safe and supportive environment for people of all sexual orientations. It's also going to be a lot of fun—our best defense against homophobia is always celebration!

We've scheduled events to appeal to all kinds of people, such as Queer Carnival, a rally on Low Plaza, Queer Coffeehouse, and several panels and discussion groups.

BGLAD is for all members of the Columbia community: straight, bisexual, and gay, as well as for people questioning or exploring their sexuality. It's a week for celebration and affirmation. And there's something for everyone. You can support BGLAD in a variety of ways. We'll be selling pink triangles—the sign used to identify gay men in Nazi concentration camps that lesbian and gay men have appropriated as a badge of pride—throughout the week. Wear one to show your support. Come to BGLAD events. Buy a stylish and comfortable BGLAD shirt. And, most important, come out and be proud.

The BGLAD Organizing Committee is in charge of the Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Awareness Days occurring next week.