

# COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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[ARTICLE]

## Asian American Alliance Hosts Talk on Homosexuality

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In an attempt to organize the gay Asian American community, the Asian American Alliance sponsored a performance about sex and homosexuality in the Asian community last night.

Members of various groups and coalitions familiar with the situation of gays in the American Asian and Pacific Islander community addressed an audience in Hartley Lounge.

Christine Lipat of the Filipina Lesbian Collective Kilawin Kolektibo, Michael Ng of the Asian and Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS (APACHA), and Bert Wang of the performance group Peeling the Banana participated in the event.

Asian American Alliance (AAA) member Jerome Chang, CC '99, said the event produced an important dialogue "revolving around Asian and Pacific-Islander identity, sex and sexuality, and how they intersect."

Lipat said homosexuality is a difficult issue for Asian Americans to address because there is a "wall of silence around sex and sexuality [that] constructs the closet."

Eng added that some gay Asian Americans lack role models.

"There are very few role models for gay Asian American men," Eng said.

According to Eng, mainstream prevention programs are not reaching Asian Americans.

"There are 50,000 self-identified, transgender, lesbian people in New York," Eng said. "Gay [Asian and Pacific Islanders] show the second highest [HIV] infection rate amongst gay men."

He added that there is not enough intervention to combat AIDS in the American Asian and Pacific Islander community.

"Early intervention needs amongst Asians are not being met," Eng said.

In order to combat the problem, gay activists have worked to assemble different ethnic gay communities.

Eng said new programs like APACHA and performance groups like Peeling the Banana should help provide gay Asian Americans with a community.

"HIV prevention is a model for community building," he said.

After the show, Manzur Ahmed, SEAS '01, said, "I feel these forums are a good way for people to find about the Asian American gay community."