

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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Gender Awareness Day Challenges Conventions

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Yesterday's Gender Exploration Day encouraged students and faculty to challenge their ideas and expressions of gender and traditional gender roles. The day was part of a series of events which will be taking place throughout February, sponsored by Bisexual, Gay, and Lesbian Awareness Days (BGLAD). This year BGLAD is focusing on gender as well as other queer issues.

Tom Hughes, CC '01 and the coordinator of BGLAD, said the event has three main purposes.

"First, to raise awareness of the presence, concerns and culture of queer students; second, to give the queer community a chance to learn more about itself; and third, to give people a chance to have fun."

Hughes said that all organizations are welcome to contribute to the Awareness Days and are not limited to any particular theme. Funding is provided from a variety of organizations ranging from Alice! to the Undergraduate Student Council, which are sponsoring activities such as Encyclopedia of AIDS Panel and the Deans' Dinner with Queer Sophomores, respectively.

"Though we usually do not have a theme for BGLAD, this year the theme of gender seemed to have

developed because we are having many activities relating to gender," Hughes said.

The organizers of the Gender Exploration Day set up tables on College Walk and Barnard Walk offering students hot cocoa and information about gender issues. BGLAD committee members offered make-up, clothing, and foam to those who wished to challenge their gender and dress in clothing traditionally designed for the opposite sex.

"Today and everyday is a day to look at our interactions with one another from a perspective of our gender, asking ourselves what a woman or a man traditionally would not do or would do," Sabina Neem, BC '00 and BGLAD committee member said. "The whole gender theory is very new. For example, sexual orientation and gender identity are two different things. A woman may be attracted to a man but feel more masculine than feminine."

Other activities of the day included the viewing of the classic transgender/drag film *Paris*

is *Burning*. Activist and author Riki Anne Wilchins spoke at the keynote address. Rosalyne Blumenstein of the Gender Identity Project and Barnard graduate Stacey Meadow led workshops on transgenderism and gender categories.

Rebecca Machalow, BC '02, stressed the relationship between gender identity and violence.

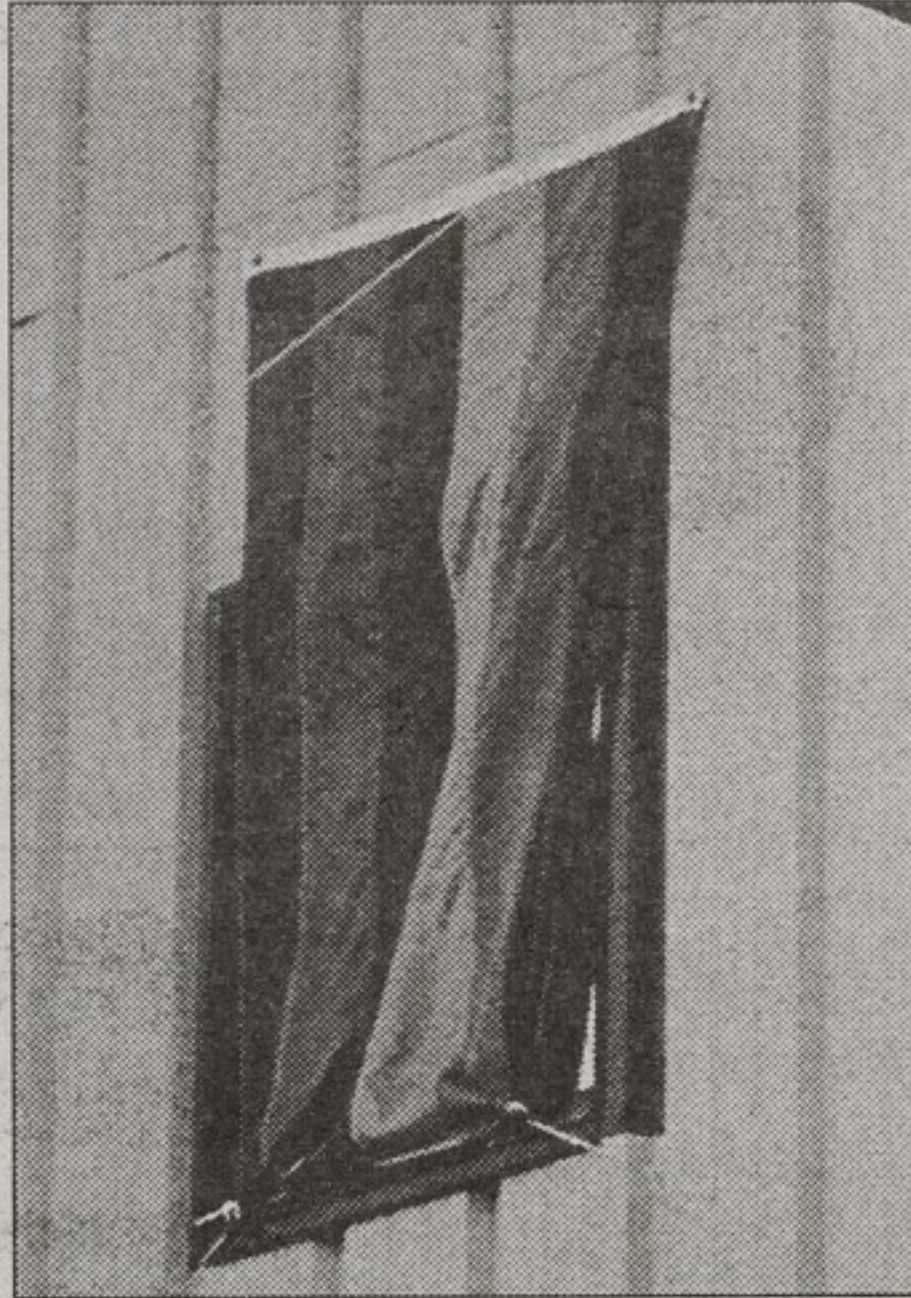
"A lot of the violence against women and homosexuals occurs not because of who their sexual partners are [or] their sexual orientation, but due to how they act and dress, their gender identity," Rebecca Machalow, BC '02, said.

The remaining BGLAD events are Baby Queers: Ice Cream Social, Encyclopedia of Aids Panel, Deans' Dinner with Queer Sophomores, the Queer Alumni Career Panel, and the Queer Community Art Exhibit. They will be occurring through the month of February.

Winnie Varghese, the program coordi-

nator for queer students for the chaplain's office, said she was happy it was even possible to put together such an event.

"I think it is great that people have the nerve to put out a table in the middle of College Walk and challenge gender issues. I went to a school in Texas where something like this would be unreal," Varghese said.



STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER—KIM HARRIS

**A rainbow flag adorns
Lion's Court for BGLAD.**