

October 18, 1977

The following letter was received in Student Council office on Oct. 14, 1977, and was sent by a student who has been silenced by the fear of harassment, something this student has already experienced plenty of. I have reprinted it for review by Council members as a Community Concern. The student expressed to me in the Council office a few days prior that he felt that Gay Affairs was potentially a very important contribution to our community and then proceeded to tell the problems he has encountered. I asked him to provide a description of these problems if he was afraid to address Council directly. Thus this note.

*J. Hoch*

Dear Jim:

You asked for a short description of what it is like for gay people at the University.

First, it means the term 'gay' itself becomes a cruel joke, since once anyone finds out, the taunts and ostracizing begin, and the only solace a gay person really has is with other gay people. I know this to be true because even people who are sympathetic to my sexuality think nothing of picking around in my private life for curiosity or questioning its validity in terms of what the Catholic Church or Anita Bryant or Mark Ward have just said. Hence I cease to be a person and become one of 'them'- the effeminate, the molester, the damned. Friends innocently ask if indeed gay people recruit kids, or if 'we' all hang around mensrooms. Another favorite is how one can 'tell' someone else is gay. These particular problems are not confined to UVA however-but they are intensified to a degrading degree by the atmosphere here.

How can a gay person maintain a sense of self respect if in the knowledge that society as a whole disapproves of his/her sexuality he/she is harassed constantly by verbal abuse and physical threats? If faculty members slide in editorial comments that are denigrating? If student leaders are dragged in front of tribunals and the public solely because of their sexuality? (Want to guess who suffered this last insult-not I, but his name is on everyone's lips). How about the effluvia that YAF preaches? By quoting specific passages in the Bible to suit their own ends they berate the public with assertions that homosexuality is a sin and disease in one. This is a godsend for a community looking for excuses to condemn.

Probably the most frustrating aspect of all of this is the YAF & harassment of CCHS. It is in the booklet that this group puts out that there is hope for sexually uneducated people at this school-not only people who are suffering an isolation(that I hope to never undergo again) because they know they are homosexual and have no information or person to talk to about it, but also this booklet provides information to the ignorant many who aren't gay but whose first response is hate or fear.

Student Council can help.

First, by realizing that theGSU is not a political and religious organization. Does anyone really know how frustrating it is to be told you are making a political and religious statement by your sleep with someone of the same sex? Second, by working through the Office of Equal Opportunity to make sure someone can't be fired solely on a basis of sexuality. Can anyone really function comfortably in an environment where you must always be covering up your personal life and still keep looking over your shoulder in case someone finds out? There are more ideas also- including but not discounting the radical concept of an advisor for gay people. Fat chance, eh?

Distill what you can from this haphazard missive. I won't sign a name because I am tired of the above, and the best solution down here is to hide, along with the other 500 or so of us, away from the fraternities, the CD publicity, and the enmity of the administration.