

(FRESHMEN REVISITED, from page 7)

The gay community seems to be just as involved as the straight community in making good grades, getting a job, and having a good time. They can be very apathetic, though. In a number of ways they really are helping each other by forming a number of small communities. There's a definite women's community, a white gay male community, and a black gay male community. The lines are not that strict, but there's not a unified community. The black community has to be invisible for the most part because gayness is dealt with in a different way in the black community. Coming out for black people is more difficult because they aren't going to find the same degree of acceptance in the black community as they would in the white. Also, they feel like they're already dealing with being a minority on this campus and don't want to have to deal with being another. I think that black gays are more willing to socialize with white gays than black straights are willing to socialize with white straights.

John: I think that there are a lot of really supportive straight people. There are also a lot of people that just don't care; they have never looked at it or confronted their feelings. I tend to like to confront people with the issue. The bad experiences I had in the dorm (having my room trashed and people writing obscenities on the door) were because of my particular roommate. There are a lot of people like him around. It's made me more scared than I would have been, but I'm not crushed by it. It was simply his upbringing and situation. He probably thought I wanted to molest him, which is a big joke.

I feel comfortable around straight people who know that I'm gay, but if they don't know I feel nervous because they're assuming that I'm straight. Basically if someone asks, I don't deny a thing. But it's not a "Hello, I'm John and I'm gay," and I don't go out of my way to publicize it.

As far as the gay community goes, there are a lot of little gay circles, but no big community. I'm a part of many little circles but not part of a unified community. It's strange that there's a campus with so many gay people, but all of the potential strength is diluted.

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DO PEOPLE IN STUDENT GOVERNMENT KNOW THAT YOU'RE GAY? HOW MUCH DID BEING GAY INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION TO RUN?

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Stephen: I think they know about me since my name has been in the Tar Heel a few times. Being gay had a lot to do with it for me. I really think that gay people should stop allowing sympathetic straights to talk for them; they can't speak for us

from experience. I'm gay, and I'm going to talk for myself. I'm proud of being gay, and it was a major reason for running.

John: I'm not sure how many people know. I did put down CGA on the sheet for "Conflicts of Interest," which is on public display. No one was running from my district, and I realized it would be a good way to have a gay person on the CGC; I felt like I could do so much. I didn't know of any gay people in CGC then. I'm very proud of the clause that came through our committee for the Office of Student Life [a recommendation that groups include sexual orientation in their non-discrimination policies]. When the clause first came to the committee, it didn't have the sexual orientation clause in it. I looked at another SEEDS [Students Effectively Establishing a Democratic Society] person on the committee, and we felt that it wouldn't get out of the Rules and Judiciary Committee without the clause about sexual orientation.

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WHAT IS YOUR OPINION OF CGA?

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John: I have mixed feelings about CGA. It's good that it's there, and it's picked up a lot since the new chair started. In a lot of ways, it doesn't reach the people it should be reaching. It does reach people who are out and already know things in the gay community. The main event that shaped my perception of CGA this year was when I went by the office at the beginning of the year. There were three people sitting there who were extremely rude and not helpful at all. That really turned me off. I've done some outreaches and had really positive experiences doing them.

John, it seems like you've focused your energies on groups that can improve things for gay people outside CGA (like CGC, and the Sexuality Education Counseling Service) while Stepehn has gone for improving CGA itself. Is that true?

John: Yes. I have a lot of straight friends here, and whenever they hear those three letters together, they freeze up and say "those people." I don't feel like I needed to deal with that preconceived notion if I could go through other channels and get around to it and show them that gay people aren't that bad. Then they would realize that CGA isn't so horrible.

Stephen, do you disagree?

Stephen: Yes, because I think we are deluding ourselves as gay people if we work with other organizations that don't deal directly with gay issues. It's time to stand up for ourselves. We're more (see FRESHMEN REVISITED, page 9)