

Dear Editor:

For you readers who haven't already heard, the CGA is discussing changing the name of the organization. One popular suggestion has been that we add an "L" to the initials and call the group the Carolina Gay and Lesbian Association. I am not convinced that CGLA is the best choice.

I have heard second-hand that some people are under the impression that I want to change the name to anything that does not include the words "gay" and/or "lesbian." I have also been told that the people who believe this are telling other people that I want CGA to appear to be an organization for "human rights," so that we can trap non-gay people into joining and then... Who knows?

In any myth there is a grain of truth. I do believe it would benefit CGA to publicize the fact that we accept support and input from everyone willing to give it -- gay and non-gay. Our bylaws state that we do not discriminate in membership practices according to sexual preference. I would also assume that we would be open to ideas and support from nonmembers and potential members, whether they be gay, non-gay, or unsure of their sexuality.

With this in mind, I suggested to the CGA members present at the Sep. 26 meeting that we try to find a name that not only includes lesbian women, but also non-gay men and women. My point is, since we are making ourselves appear to be more inclusive via the new name, why not make ourselves appear to be all inclusive?

One important reason for adopting a name which conveys all inclusiveness is that people who are either unsure of their sexuality or who are not comfortable being sexually labeled at all may feel more comfortable participating in our programs. If people know that the organization is made up of lesbians, gay men, and non-gay people, they would not feel any pressure to identify themselves with any particular sexual preference and may associate themselves with us more freely.

Unfortunately, I don't have a name in mind that clearly identifies the organization as one whose purpose is to educate the community on gay issue but is open to support from people of gay and non-gay orientations. I suggest that we ask the public for suggestions.

At the meeting mentioned above, a decision was made to solicit ideas for a new name only from gay publications like Lambda and The Front Page. I think this is a terrible mistake. I was shocked to see such a heterophobic attitude. What do we have to be afraid of? Certainly we would receive lots of negative replies from people who might respond if our request was printed in the Daily Tar Heel, but we might also learn a great deal about what the UNC population is thinking about CGA. We would also be contacting a large

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number of gay and non-gay people who might be interested in helping but who do not ever read gay publications.

Restricting our communication to gay publications is the antithesis of our purpose. We're supposed to be raising the consciousness of everyone about gay and lesbian issues. The use of non-gay publications, in addition to the gay press, would certainly allow us more visibility.

A final point to remember is that if we do finally change our name, the process of making the public aware of the change will be involved and expensive. Letting as many people know as is possible now that we are discussing a name change is a beginning of this process and, more importantly, it's free!

I am not opposed to a name change, but I am opposed to a name change that is done haphazardly. I think that it is important to realize that we shouldn't be a separatist organization. If we want to influence people, we have to communicate actively with them. Restricting our communications to the gay press limits not only our resources, but also are capacity to influence.

--Jerry Salak

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