

Surviving a Straight Roommate

So, you're gay and living on campus. In my years of working on college campuses, I've talked with many gay students concerned about living with a straight roommate. Listed below are some commonly-asked questions followed by my "words of wisdom."

1. Should I tell my roommate/suite-mates that I am gay?

I'm a strong believer that one should not get into the "Hi, my name is ___ and I'm gay" syndrome. Why? Mainly because "timing" is extremely important when discussing one's sexuality. If someone gets to know you as an individual and a friend first, they may not respond quite so negatively, if they respond badly at all, to your revelation. Hopefully, they will think, "Gee, I knew ___ before they told me about their sexuality; why should it matter now?" Remember, there's a time and a place for everything.

If you do tell them, you may find that they are extremely inquisitive: Why? How? and, my all time favorite, What do you do? Answer openly. These are steps toward destroying myths and defusing homophobia. It's also a step toward understanding.

2. What should I say when someone asks me if I'm gay?

Your choices are: Yes, No, Maybe, and What's it to you, bucko? Seriously, this is a difficult question. Play it by ear. Some famous, "earth shattering" responses that you may want to consider are: Why do you ask? and Would it make a difference if I were gay? Once again, timing is important.

3. Should I tell my R.A.?

Tell your Resident Assistant only if you feel comfortable with her or him. You and you alone know if your RA can handle discussing gay issues. However, please remember that you have an Area Director who is trained to be supportive.

4. Should I join the CGLA?

Myth #1 is that the CGLA is only for politically active gay people. CGLA has many components, including being a "support mechanism" for the Carolina gay community. The least you can do is drop by, visit, and see for yourself if it's for you.

5. I can't find anyone else who's gay. Where do I go?

Give it time. Gay folks may not be constantly knocking at your door, but in time you'll develop your own gay network. CGLA might be a resource too.

6. I'm in love with my roommate. What should I do?

How many times have I heard this? Yes, your roommate could be gay, but she or he could also not be gay or not in love with you! Please remember that you supposedly have a friendship going; don't put it in jeopardy out of your own selfishness.

Some things to remember:

- Take what I've said with a grain of salt. All gay people are individuals, and only you know what's best for you.

- Talk with other gay people. They may (and probably will) have different responses to these questions. Find out their experiences. It will also help you to relax and feel comfortable with yourself.

- Once you begin to "come out," you must be ready to accept the consequences of your openness. These consequences will initially be both positive and negative. Only you know when the time is right for you to make the decisions that will ultimately affect you.

-Vernon A. Wall, Area Director
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Harvey Milk's Killer Commits Suicide

Convicted murderer Dan White committed suicide in his San Francisco home on Oct. 21. He died of carbon monoxide poisoning from the exhaust of his car. He was 39 years old. A note taped to his windshield read: "I knew you were going to find me this way. Sorry you had to find me in this condition. Sorry for any inconvenience."

White was released from prison in January of 1984 and, after serving parole in southern California, returned to the blue-collar Sunset District of San Francisco in January of this year. He grew a beard, dyed his hair, and lived under an assumed name. He had been

advised not to return to the Bay Area, and apparently remained at home.

When he was released, White had served almost five years of a seven and a half year sentence for voluntary manslaughter in the shooting deaths of San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and openly gay Supervisor Harvey Milk. White shot the two to death on Nov. 27, 1978 in a fit of anger at not being reappointed to his position on the city Board of Supervisors.

The deaths of the two officials were mourned by the entire city; 40,000 people (see HARVEY MILK on page 10)