

# CGLA: Who We Are and Why We Exist

This is an article which I direct to the "gay" as well as to the "straight" community. I feel there are some very basic questions which the student body has concerning the purpose of a gay and lesbian organization on this campus--and these questions should be addressed so students will understand both who we are and why we exist. Students need to know what it means to be accepting of those who identify themselves as homosexual, and the significance of joining the Carolina Gay and Lesbian Association.

Let me try to articulate why CGLA is so heavily wrapped in controversy, and why there is such a negative perception of homosexuality and CGLA at UNC. Here are some of the prevailing attitudes on campus:

- a) "No one I know is a gay or lesbian"
- b) "Homosexuality is a sin against God"
- c) "Kill the fags and queers!" or
- d) "CGLA is spreading AIDS."

I believe that these are poor, untrue assumptions which lie at the core of why an organization of gay and lesbian students is discriminated against.

"No one I know is a homosexual." Why is this statement untrue? Primarily because it is statistically impossible. You may, in fact truly believe that no one you would call friend, roommate, sister or brother could possibly be gay or lesbian, but approximately ten percent of the U.S. population is exclusively homosexual and the chances are good someone you know is gay. At UNC, there are gays and lesbians living in every single dorm, teaching in every department and curriculum, working in administration, health care, etc., and we can be found in all walks of life. Gays and lesbians are everywhere. One cannot alter or "convert" this many people because homosexuality is a social phenomenon--similar to being born left-handed, with green eyes, or with white skin.

"Homosexuality is a sin against God." It is important to realize that there are just as many theologians, scholars, and everyday Christians (including gay and lesbian ones) who would argue on the other side of the issue--that God does not condemn homosexuality or gay and lesbian people--as there are who would use the Bible as a plank for justifying homophobia. Also, I would remind those who would use the Bible to discriminate against unpopular minorities that the Bible has historically been used to justify slavery, anti-Semitism, and the subjugation and domination of women.

There has always existed a fundamental schism in emphasis in Judeo-Christian heritage: on one side, some believe that God is an old, white man sitting on a huge throne throwing thunderbolts at people he doesn't like; on the other side, those who believe God cares for all people and promotes the principles of peace, love,

and faith. I do not pretend to speak for one side or the other--I am sure there are those of other faiths who would disagree on particular points.

"Kill the fags and queers!" What does this interesting statement really mean? This attitude is representative of homophobia, or the irrational fear of homosexuals and homosexuality. Those who suffer from this illness may be uncomfortable with their own sexuality, leading them to attack those who are openly gay or perceived as gay.

If you know someone who has this attitude toward gays and lesbians (or if you have this attitude yourself) you can be sure that at least one of these things is true: this person may in fact have homosexual tendencies which he/she is emotionally unable to handle; or, if the homophobe does not harbor any homosexual emotions, then elements in his/her social environment have reinforced the belief that it is acceptable to degrade and brutalize gays and lesbians. This is, in fact, quite common, and the United States judicial system has only recently begun protecting the rights of victims of homophobic attacks. A year ago, three attackers who caused the death of a gay man in San Francisco in July of 1984 were convicted of second degree murder.

"CGLA is spreading AIDS." This is an irrational fear which is caused by a double whammy of ignorance about CGLA and about the disease called AIDS. CGLA exists as a support group and social activities network for gay and lesbian students at UNC-CH. CGLA IS officially recognized by the University of North Carolina, and has every right to exist and receive student fees. There is no way to acquire AIDS by being active in CGLA, and because of the organization's educational activities, CGLA's existence may actually prevent future cases.

Now about AIDS... There is probably not a more dangerous health threat to those who are sexually active than this mysterious, fatal disease. 15,000 have died of AIDS, but please note AIDS is NOT a gay plague. It is true that approximately 73% of those diagnosed have been homosexual or bisexual men, but the percentage of straight and female People with AIDS is on the rise. In Africa, the disease never had an association with homosexuality and is predominantly spread by heterosexual contacts to men and women in near equal proportions.

I hope I have dissipated at least SOME of the myths and rumors you may have had about gay men and lesbians, and about the CGLA.

-Mark Donahue

