

University warnings stifle plans

Gay Lib Front fails to organize

By KARIN BURCHSTEAD
News Editor

He said that for most of his life he has lived in a closet.

His name is Michael; he didn't want his last name published from fear of losing his job.

Michael is part of Columbia's homosexual or "gay" population and was part of an attempt to organize a Gay Liberation Front at the University of South Carolina to help gay people break out of their closet community existence.

The attempt was almost successful, but last minute paranoia and warnings from University officials stifled the plans.

Scott Harrison, a USC freshman, said the group ran into "all kinds of snags" in attempting to obtain a charter. "We had meetings with Dean Alexander of Student Affairs and President Jones and they told it to us straight," he said

'They told it to us straight'

"They told us they weren't going to let us get a charter," he said. "They said that South Carolina isn't ready for it yet and that by some technicality in the state constitution they could get us on conspiracy charges," Harrison said. "We found that we were getting a lot of straight support

from the students, but not enough from gay people."

"A lot of gay people are paranoid, and they were afraid this would only stir up trouble," he added. Because of this fear, it may be another year before another attempt to organize is made, Harrison said.

He said such a group would be a profitable addition to USC. "We want to help people find out about us; the conception of homosexuals has been so distorted, and there has been only superficial thought about this."

"Straight people associate neurotic behavior with homosexuality, which might be true," he said. "If they had to hide a major part of their lives, they'd have mental problems too."

"We're classified as perverts; to straight people we're considered smut." Charges of homosexuality are "always something used against the University," Harrison added.

Michael, a senior at USC, said the purpose of the group would be educational. "People are afraid we're going to encourage other people to become homosexual," he said. "All we really want is for gay people to come out of the closet."

Michael said he is tired of putting up fronts. "People should respect our right to be what we

are."

He said homosexuals face losing their jobs if they are honest with straight people. "In South Carolina homosexuals can't teach, and homosexual doctors can be sued

'They find ways To get rid of you'

for malpractice," Michael said. "They supposedly can't fire you for being homosexual, but they find other ways to get rid of you."

"What they don't realize is that there are people within their own group who are homosexual," Michael said.

A Kinsey study reported that 10 per cent of all American males have long periods of exclusive homosexuality and estimated that 2.6 million men and 1.4 million women in this country are homosexual. However, a 1969 Louis Harris poll showed that 63 per cent of the nation considers homosexuality "harmful to the American way of life."

"We are also fighting for heterosexuals; there are sex laws pertaining to straight people, too," Michael said. "Our struggle for freedom is intertwined with yours."

"But I'm in such a rut now that I don't want to contribute anything to this society until they accept me," he said. "I'm not ashamed of loving another boy."

Michael said he "evolved" into a homosexual; "I never had an interest in girls."

"In high school I was under a lot of parental pressure to date," he said. "I felt so 'outside' and strived to be 'inside' out of desperation to compensate for feelings of loneliness."

'Most of my life I've lived in a closet'

"I was involved in a gay marriage for three years after I got to college, still there was a lot of pressure," Michael said. "For most of my life though I've lived in a closet."

However, Harrison said he has associated with other gay people since he was 16. "But it was a lot worse in high school. I had to play the straight role during the day and then put on my mask and cape at night, and it's always been 'in' to beat up queers," he said.

Another backer of the Gay Liberation Front, Rita Fellers, a former USC student, blames the oppression of homosexuals on the "prick psychology" of society. "Straight men are afraid—they're afraid of being pushed into a female role that they feel is degrading."

"All people are basically bisexual," she said. "Prisons are a great example of how homosexuality is a natural part of life."

"People in prisons turn to homosexuality because they need

the feeling of being loved, and they get that feeling from being gay," she said. "It's a method of survival in prisons."

Fellers sees homosexuality as a kind of natural method for ecological balance; "If society had not oppressed homosexuals there would not be a population problem."

"Homosexuality exists in all species as a population control," she said. "And it's one of the natural methods of birth control that is built into the human race."

Dan, a music major who did not want his last name published because "there's a better way for my parents to find out," said there are three gay bars in Columbia.

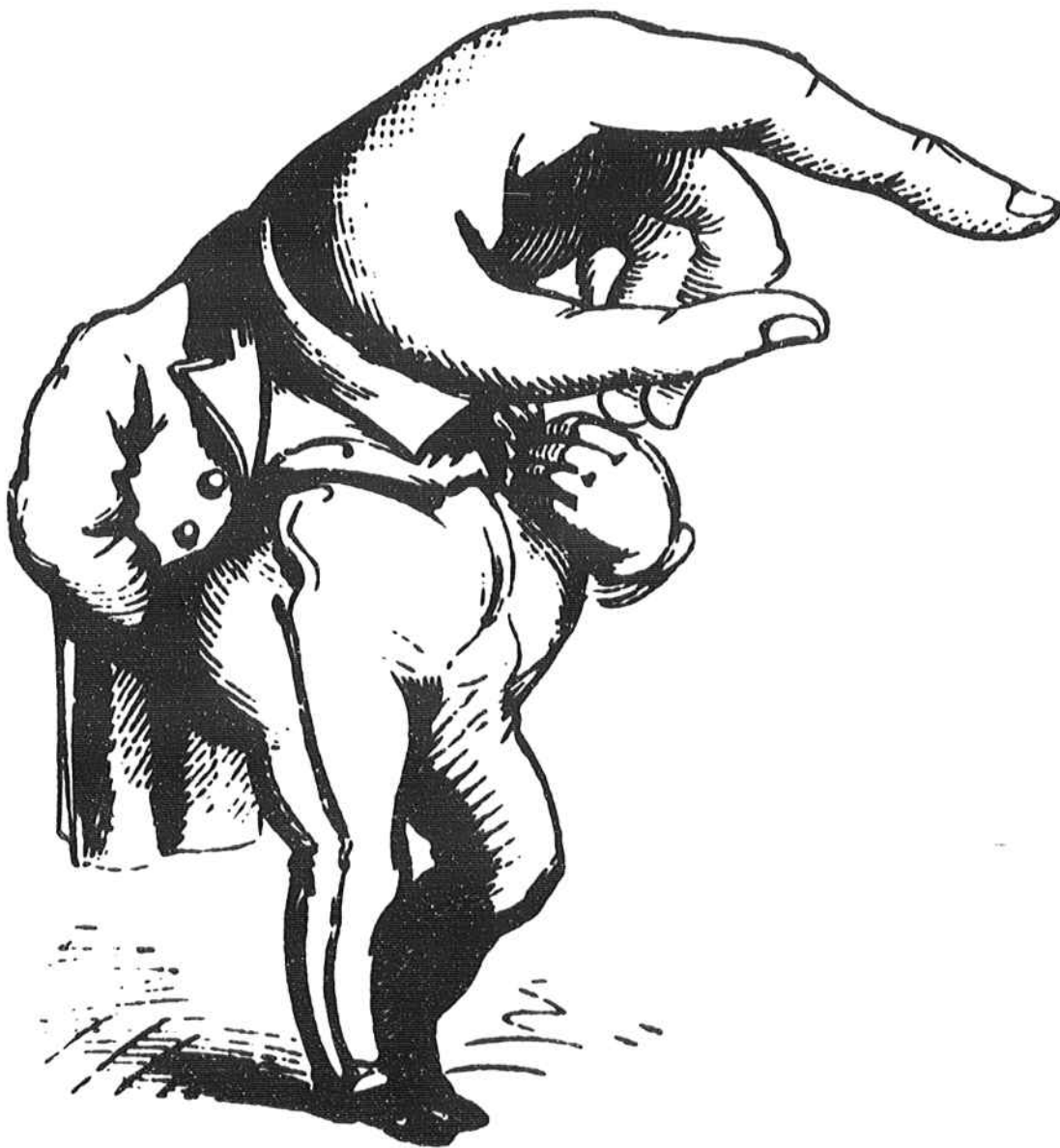
'Gay people have their own underground network'

"Gay people have their own underground network," he said. "When the police approach a gay bar, the lights are blinked and everyone changes partners to look straight."

"We want to get back our own culture, to get all the gay people who have been ripped off back into the books as major contributors," he said. "The books don't mention that people like Walt Whitman and Michaelangelo were gay."

'Straight people don't understand'

"Straight people don't understand that we want their friendship, not their bodies," he said. "Most people would be insulted if a gay person loved them, but really it's a fantastic thing to love anyone."

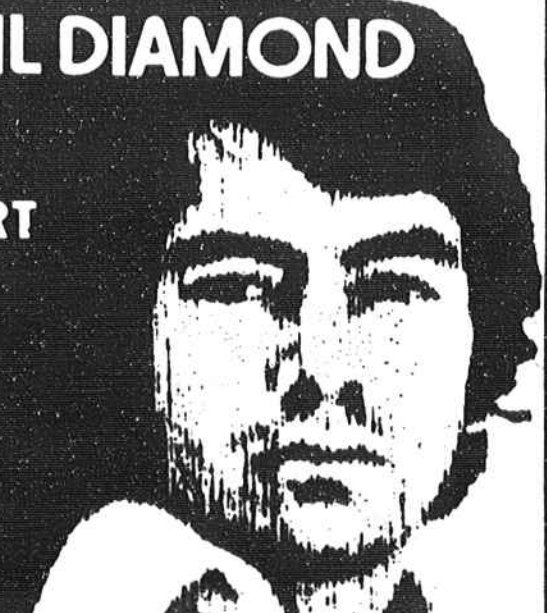


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