

Asian gays start stepping out

One of the main characteristics of the gay community is its diversity, which may reflect the various ethnic minority gay groups in the community itself.

For a long time, homosexuality has been seen as an "exclusively white people phenomenon." However, in recent years, gays and lesbians from ethnic backgrounds — especially the Chinese and others of Asian origin — have become more and more visible. There has been an increasing awareness of racial and cultural minorities within the North American gay community. About eight Asian gay groups have been formed in North America, two of them in Canada. They are the Gay Asians of Vancouver and the Gay Asians of Toronto. To many straights, it is surprising that gay men and lesbians of Asian origin exist at all!

From this development, it is clear that Asian gays and lesbians have made a difficult, painful and complicated decision of coming out. They are now slowly beginning to assert themselves, looking to each other for support and identification, to understand their own homosexuality.

However, to be an Asian gay is no easy task. Here I use Chinese gays as an illustration. It is really difficult for a Chinese gay to be both Chinese and gay simultaneously. Why? Although evidence of homosexuality has been found in China for at least 3,000 years in the form of historical documents, ancient Chinese pictures, novels, figures and mythological stories, modern Chinese (whether they live in Mainland China, Taiwan or Hong Kong) use silence as a gay policy which in turn is a method of control.

The mass media rarely mentions homosexuality, but when it does, it does so in stereotypical terms.

As a result, the vast majority of Chinese really believe and feel that "there are no homosexual Chinese. This kind of sexual activity is only a foreign vice. It's just like social disease. We should try our best to prevent it from entering our society, which is based on the ideal of Confucism."

Confucism has been the base of Chinese values and morality for the past 5,000 years. It is extended-family and male-chauvinist oriented as well, so no wonder Confucism is so homophobic!

Western Judeo-Christian, psychoanalytical and behaviorist tradition also reinforce the homophobia of traditional Confucist Chinese. When Europeans arrived in China, they saw men holding hands in the streets. Feeling uneasy, they said, "Look! What a barbaric and primitive culture this is! Man loving man! This is a foreign vice, a mortal sin. We must civilize them and save them through Christianity!" Although the Chinese did not convert to Christianity in large numbers, the harsh Christian attitude toward homosexuality did reinforce the already anti-gay prejudice of the Confucist Chinese, which lasted into this century in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Communist China.

Thus, under such conditions, how can a Chinese gay accept his/her own orientation? After all, "only the foreigners do it! You betray your own family, friends, race, culture and even your country if you are gay!" It seems that a Chinese gay must make a painful and unfortunate choice between two identities: Chinese or gay, but not both! As a result,

most Chinese gays just escape from their true self.

and self-oppression are strong. Most just lead a lonely, isolated and unhappy life.

Unfortunately, an Asian gay in North America bears the burden of being a double minority. Double minority means that we are marginal men, both to the gay community and to our own ethnic community. And racism sometimes occurs in the gay community. Ethnic minority gays are ignored and feel alienated. It is hopeful that the gay community should be more sensitive to that issue. In Australia, ethnic minority gays have been denied access to certain gay establishments and a new group emerged, called Gays Against Racism.

But times are beginning to change. Asian gays and lesbians are beginning to find their "roots" and identities. At present, Asian gays in North America are not only starting to assert their roles within the gay community, but also try to contact their own ethnic community as well. Gay Asian groups should not be seen as "separatists" within the gay circle. Instead, it is a revelation of our own rich legacy: diversity within the community. It is also a chance for mutual dialogue, mutual respect, understanding and cultural exchange.

After all, homosexuality is an international minority issue, and there is a basic unity among gays whichever race is concerned.

Finally, as a member of a double minority, I should say that the visibility of an Asian (Chinese) gay in *The Gateway* should not become an excuse (for certain highly prejudiced people) to develop a negative stereotype for all Asian and Chinese foreign students.

To do so is not only unjust to me, but also to all Asian and Chinese students.

GATE: Gays Organize

By Gilbert Bouchard

The Gay Alliance Toward Equality (GATE) is entering its 15th year of organizing and supporting the Edmonton gay and lesbian community.

"GATE was formed almost 15 years ago near campus in the Garneau area," says GATE education director Barry Mills.

"GATE was originally formed mostly by U of A professors and has had various locations over the years. We eventually moved downtown to be more accessible to the community at large."

Mills said GATE's first mandate is to "provide social services with information counselling coming a close second."

"We do allow access to those who want to get involved in civil rights, but our first duty is to provide services," said Mills. He added that several other groups like Vocal Minority, a gay choir, Gay Fathers of Edmonton and Gay Alcoholics, said Mills. "GATE does have that facility of offering the umbrella to people who want to start up a new group."

"Our organization has no one leader," said Mills. "We have a very extensive (30 pages) constitution and a very elaborate structure, including 10 executive positions for 250 members. Decisions are made by consensus on the executive and we're guided by the membership."

Executive positions include social services director, library director, social events director, education director and women's issues director.

The social services director is in charge of peer counselling," said Mills.

The director trains his counsellors using a course by psychiatrist and psychotherapist Tom Meed. "The counsellors don't prescribe behavior or tell people what to do. We just help gay people who have problems."

Problems that can't be helped by just talking are referred to gay positive psychiatrists. "We're very distressed by psychiatrists who too often try to change behavior and sexual orientation," said Mills.

"Psychiatrists and psychotherapists see all of gay life as problematic. They have a set approach to gayness and aren't even aware of the health of the gay community. As peer counsellors we provide that area of calm and quiet where people can discuss their problems and we try to destroy the myths about sexual orientation," said Mills.

GATE's library director organizes GATE dances and other social events," said Mills. "GATE dances are for men and women. We like to get together and have uproarious times — both lesbians and gay men."

GATE also has a civil rights director, but this position is vacant at present.

The education director also works with the social services director to "organize and help educate the community at large with the facts of gay life."

"We have a speakers' list of people we send to speak, not as spokespersons for the gay community, but to share their experiences as gay men and women," said Mills.

"GATE also has a woman's issues director who organizes contacts, information and events specifically for lesbians," he said. "It seems that

it is more complicated for women who are not only exploring their homosexuality, but they are also involved in feminist issues. So it's very important to have this position."

GATE is located at #104 10173-104 st. and offers a drop-in

resource room for people who want to be with other gays. GATE is open Monday through Saturday from 7 to 10 p.m. and Sundays from 2 to 5 p.m. "You don't have to be a member of GATE to avail yourself to the services," said Mills.

Gays organize at U of A

By Suzette C. Chan

Although it has been in operation since October, Gays and Lesbians on Campus (GLOC), the organization for U of A students, staff and faculty, has built up a large membership and has set out to fulfill many goals.

"Our organization exists to provide a gay-positive meeting atmosphere for the students, staff and faculty," says Tony, a GLOC organizer and founder. "We exist to promote the gay and lesbian lifestyle through education and awareness campaigns and to work with other gay positive groups."

Tony says most of the activities GLOC has engaged in this year are

informational. "We've had an information booth set up in SUB, which was very well received. After Reading Week, we will be bringing in speakers (a talk on gays and spirituality is in the works) and we'll bring in an NFB film in mid-March."

GLOC also plans to participate in off-campus events. "We're sending a delegate to the Coming Alive '85 conference in Vancouver, which is sponsored by UBC for campus gay and lesbian groups," says Tony. "Also, we'll be participating in Gay Pride Week (June 20 to 27)." The group has also worked with the GALA (Gay and Lesbian Awareness) Human Rights committee.

Tony doubts GLOC will plan to set up a counselling service. "GATE (Gay Alliance Toward Equality) has excellent counselling services, so we don't feel the need to set up one ourselves, especially with the limitation of our resources."

GLOC will approach the Students' Union Board for operating funds and money to set up a library. "We would carry books and magazines like *Rites* and *Body Politic*."

Tony says if the group was made aware of a case of discrimination against a lesbian or gay man on campus, "we'd refer it to the ombudservice. We would support them (those who file complaints), but we don't have the skills to counsel them. We might offer educational services on discrimination at the same time the ombudservice looks into it."

With 75 members, GLOC is welcome by the gay community on campus and it is also getting along with the university administration and the SU. "We've been getting really positive response from the SU and we may get office space," says Tony. "The important thing to remember is that GLOC exists to maintain visibility for lesbians and gay men because they are an integral part of the university."

"The gays and lesbians on this campus are so invisible. I think the university might be marginally more liberal than the rest of the community, but it depends on which part of the university you're talking about. In terms of response from the administration and the SU, it's been neutral in most cases, positive in some. I don't think we've been singled out."

Students, staff and faculty wishing more information on GLOC may contact the Students' Union at 432-4241 or Student Help at 432-4266.

Parts of You

As the fragments of your heart
Fall slowly to the floor
The last tear drops and fades away
Begging for no more
A sunset passes through your soul
The shadows look so bright
All your past has fled by now
Reduced to black and white

Parts of you will scream and shout
and rock the empty sky
Parts of you are true, I think
But parts of you are lies

No one ever said to you
The words you need to hear
No one ever thought of you
They let you disappear
The only hope that's left for you
Is wrapped up in your pride
Emotions you once freely dealt
Are all locked up inside

Parts of you are cold as ice
And parts are tenderness
Parts of you are fading fast
While others try their best

And so it's passing after all
Exhausted every need
You'll never know these things again
No matter how you plead
You're indisposed, a brick, a stone
You've nothing left to say
But you know it doesn't matter
No one hears you anyway

Parts of you will walk on past
And parts will stay behind
Parts of you are losing ground
And lost inside your mind

Doug Kaiser

GAY ALLIANCE TOWARD EQUALITY
presents:

PINK TRIANGLE DANCE

February 23rd, 1985

Bonnie Doon Community Centre

92 Ave. & 93 Street • 8:00 pm to 1:00 am

Music by ANNIE — Members \$5, Non-Member \$6.

The *Gateway* presents its second annual Women's Issues Supplement to commemorate International Women's Awareness Week. If you have any ideas for the special section, or if you want to contribute articles, poems, photographs or layout and design time, contact Suzette or Gilbert (afternoons) at 432-5168, room 282 SUB. Submissions through the mail should be marked "Women's Issues Supplement." Please double-space articles on one side of each sheet of paper. **Deadline for submissions is Feb. 28.** The supplement will appear Mar. 7.