

REVISED

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To: Vice-President R.M. O'Neil

Subject: Position Statement of the Ad Hoc Committee to propose the establishment of a Center for Gay and Lesbian Concerns at Indiana University.

Now that Bloomington has passed an ordinance prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual preference and the Indiana State Legislature has approved revisions (effective July 1, 1977) of the State Penal Code that will alter the sodomy statute to decriminalize homosexual acts between consenting adults in private, it is not only appropriate, but also imperative that Indiana University assume a position of leadership in furthering understanding of this crucial social issue. The list of learned societies that have made progressive, positive statements regarding the respectability of homosexuals and deplored discrimination against them is impressive and long. It includes such groups as the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Anthropological Association, the American Personnel and Guidance Association, and the American Federation of Teachers. Surely it is time for Indiana University to recognize and meet its obligations to do its utmost to dispel public ignorance and misinformation on the subject of homosexuality, to promote understanding and acceptance of homosexuals in our society, and to eradicate discrimination against and oppression of homosexuals within the University itself.

Indiana University has demonstrated its ability to function as an effective force for social change by forming departments of Black Studies, of Women's Affairs, and of Latino Affairs. Surely homosexuals are no less an oppressed minority, no less deserving of the University's concern.

Although thousands of homosexuals--administrators, faculty members, staff members, and students--are at present respected contributors to I.U.'s success as an institution of higher learning, the vast majority of them remain convinced that their professional and/or academic standing can be secure only so long as their homosexuality is kept secret. Admittedly, instances of patent discrimination against homosexuals at I.U. have been rare. But they have occurred; and until an unequivocal statement of equal opportunities for homosexuals on all levels of the university structure has been made, there can be no guarantee that discriminatory practices will not recur. But even more important: an open, positive, accepting attitude toward homosexuals, backed up by a varied program of progressive study of the subject, would enable Indiana University to do much to assure homosexuals, both inside and outside the University, the respectability which silence has so long denied them.

Further, the University could do much to alleviate the anguish of the thousands of young people who, while students at I.U., must meet the crisis of coming to terms with their homosexuality for the first time. Young homosexuals, having grown up in a heterosexual society, coming from heterosexually oriented families which offer them no adequate behavioral models, and as yet unaware that their isolation and alienation are

unnecessary, typically experience periods of deep despair which can seriously deter their academic and social effectiveness, as well as their personal well-being. As any counselor of the young can attest, no small number of suicides among young people is attributable to these tragically pointless circumstances.

The foregoing are but a few of the many problems the ad hoc committee has discussed at its several meetings. And we are certain that there are still other problems of which we ourselves at present are unaware. For this reason, we request that the University appoint a task force at the earliest possible date to undertake an exhaustive investigation of the problems of homosexuals at Indiana University and propose solutions for their resolution.

In the meantime, we wish to make the following proposals for the consideration of the University and of the task force to be appointed.

We propose that there be instituted at Indiana University a Center for Gay and Lesbian Affairs. We feel that the Center should incorporate at least the following five facilities.

1. Courses of instruction, interdisciplinary in nature, on such topics as homosexuality in art and literature, biological aspects of homosexuality, homosexuality and the law, philosophical issues in homosexuality, sociology of the gay community, etc.

We foresee the intent of such courses as twofold: to instill in homosexuals a firmer sense of self-awareness; and to enlighten the public.

2. A counseling service, offering counseling not only to homosexuals who are reluctant to utilize present facilities because they assume that to do so would be to acknowledge some psychological disorder, but also to assist in the handling of dormitory or classroom problems involving homosexuals.

3. A resource center, where educational materials of all kinds--printed matter, films, tapes, recordings--would be collected, stored, and made available to the public.

4. A speakers' bureau, offering the University and the community at large speakers articulate in topics related to homosexuality.

5. An ombudsperson, whose function would be to hear and act upon the grievances of homosexuals within the University who are reluctant to seek help elsewhere because they fear prejudiced reactions.

The members of the ad hoc committee wish to express to you our appreciation for your attention and concern. We look forward to working together with the administration toward the realization of our goals. We trust you share our conviction that Indiana University's endeavors to broaden an understanding of homosexuality and of homosexuals will result in mutual benefits.