THE ANGELS ARE SINGING

BISEXUAL, GAY, AND LESBIAN ALLIANCE'S MAGAZINE OF THE LITERARY AND VISUAL ARTS

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The Angels Are Singing

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Haverford College

This is a collection of the literary and visual arts, dedicated to giving the students of Haverford and Bryn Mawr Colleges a chance to express their creativity and to talk about the state of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual life on campus. We offer our sincere appreciation to those who made it possible for BGALA's first and very own magazine. We welcome all contributions from students, faculty, and staff.

May Mon Post, HC '95 and Shanta Denise Edwards, Villanova '95

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Class Night
By Theo Possett, HC '94
Spring, 1994

On Friday, April 1, two seniors presented a "Men on Haverford" skit at class night, to the amusement of much of the school. This skit, for those of you lucky enough to avoid it, is copied from a particularly revolting and low-quality running gag that appears on the television show, "In Living Color". In the original, two ugly parodies of gay stereotypes snap and lisp their way through an unimaginative idea of what straight men think gay men are like; similarly, the uninspired class night skit had two men dishing on the men of Haverford College.

I guess you can tell that I'm disgusted.

I should tell you up front that I wasn't at class night this year. I just didn't feel like going, which is pretty much par for my course; like many other open lesbians at Haverford, I've been pretty much forced out of mainstream Haverford social life. I don't go to Lloyd parties, I don't go to dances, and, after the first appearance of this dismal skit two years ago, I don't really have much interest in going to class night. I especially didn't feel like going on Friday. It was the end of a very difficult week for me, a week filled with realizations of how Haverford mistreats its lesbian students, and furthermore I had just spent much of the day thinking trying to deal with the power of the closet here at Haverford. So I retreated; I spent the evening withdrawn from Haverford, as did, I imagine, almost every other open lesbian.

When the people in my building came home and told me about the skit, I felt disappointment—not anger—coupled with a realization that there are some things I can't change about Haverford. I used to think that people at Haverford didn't understand what they were doing, and that if I played my cards right, I could make them understand what the effects of their actions were. But now I see that it's not that some people don't get it—it's that they just don't give a shit.

There's a certain serenity in this realization, especially for me; for, now that I no longer have to worry about losing political capital here at Haverford, I can finally speak my truth about this place. Life for lesbians at Haverford is a very disturbed contradiction. From the outside, Haverford seems like some sort of wonderland. It's physically safe, and that grants lesbians a freedom from fear that they wouldn't have in most places. It also seems to be socially safe, since open, overt homophobia is fairly rare at a liberal school like Haverford. Unlike most places in this country, an open lesbian at Haverford doesn't have to worry about direct physical or social attacks, and that's worth something.

Furthermore, Haverford comes with a lot of pretty words attached to it, words like "respect" and "community". For a queer man who has just spent four years being excluded and reviled in high school, these words have incredible power. They promise acceptance, and communication, and sweet peace.

The contradiction of Haverford lies in the lack of follow-through on this promise. I've found that safety is not enough; I know that others have felt this way as well, and for many, this discomfort becomes unbearable. They drop out or transfer; those who do stay learn to deal with it and generally don't make waves.

I'm sick of hearing the pain that the closeted students carry; I'm sick of the frustration that the out students feel; and, most of all, I'm absolutely repulsed by the hypocrisy of a school that prides itself on being a liberal, accepting community, at the same time as it covertly ignores all those with disquieting problems.

The dominant fact about lesbian life at Haverford is that the closet is huge. Of the people here who have told me that they're bisexual or gay, more than half are closeted or gone, and of the remaining, most are out only in the sense that most of their friends know. Only 3 or 4 in each class are willing to take
the chance of being open enough to talk publicly about their identity. Straight Haverford sees only a tiny fraction of the rest of Haverford, and, worse yet, lesbigay Haverford rarely ever sees itself, since all the closeted student are closeted from each other as well.

It's not like this at other, similar schools. Bryn Mawr is much more accepting, which is why so many lesbigays, especially women, disappear over there. Swarthmore has a much more vibrant community, as does Wesleyan, Oberlin, Vassar... the list is long.

It seems to me that there's something intrinsic to Haverford that is keeping people in the closet. Let me say this clearly: Haverford has problems. To begin with, hidden hatred does live at Haverford, as we all know. The hatred many forms: jokes, whispered lies about what happens at BGALA meeting, shocked questions like "did you know that there are queers here?", and, of course, class night skits. People in their arrogance think that they know who is gay, so they feel safe telling the stories behind closed doors, but the closeted students see all of this and take notice.

I know that there are straight students at Haverford that I can trust, and I treasure you. But I also know that these people only comprise part of Haverford.

But you shouldn't be too quick to pat yourself on the back. Unfortunately, even the kind-hearted, even my friends, even you and I act to keep the closet crowded. We do this by constantly assuming that everyone who isn't known to be lesbigay is straight, and even more by gossiping about anything and everything.

The norm is amazingly strong here at Haverford. Deviance, when it is obvious, is tolerated, but it is always intensely observed; where deviance isn't obvious, total conformity to the norm is assumed. There's no room for uncertainty or ambiguity here.

What this means is that closeted students are constantly being put in the category of straight. People make assumptions about them, and they are forced to play along in order to not make waves. At the same time, they see how much the out students are observed and talked about, and they realize that, by coming out, they would be turning themselves into objects of curiosity and conversation.

This process of marking deviance is what makes my life here at Haverford so uncomfortable. I've always tried to hide my discomfort in order to win political gains, so I can understand that most people don't know how I feel. But imagine: I go through my days with the constant feeling that I'm being watched. I know that people here have opinions of me, I know that any misstep mine will have repercussions, so I try to watch everything I do to make sure that I don't get turned into a caricature. I suppress my problems, since any admission of weakness would be a weapon that could be used to discredit what I say. I don't allow myself to speak too openly about the homophobia and sexual dishonesty I see around me, since speaking too often would make me predictable. Finally, I can never allow myself to be effeminate, or to show attraction for another man, for fear of being stigmatized.

At the same time, I am also surrounded by reminders that I am different. The closet Haverford is painful for me, and I think that every other upper-class, out lesbigay would say the same thing, except for the fact that we're all too scared to admit it. You see, the outside world seems worse yet, since the news in filled with stories of discrimination, legal inequality, and violence. Many of can't tell our families about our orientation, and our high schools were generally pits of homophobia. Haverford is a haven for many of us, an uncomfortable haven, to be sure, but a haven nonetheless.

Imagine how much more painful it is, then, for us to have our haven turn us out. Imagine what a rejection it is for me to learn that most of my school was gloriously entertained by two straight
men serving up an unhealthy dose of stereotype. As I said, I'm disgusted. Would this school have laughed if two whites had gone on stage in black face, and started recreating the black stereotypes that are also seen on "In Living Color"? Why is racism and sexism forbidden in public at Haverford, but heterosexism - the subjugation of sexual minorities by heterosexuals - tacitly accepted?

Since I came out my freshman year, I've tried to play the game by the rules that Haverford gave me. I, and every other member of BGALA, have held community meetings, only to have few people show up; we've organized a peer awareness group, only to have it be all but deserted; and we've tried to reach out, only to be voted the most annoying group in the school. Personally, I'm tired of taking all the blame. To be sure, some of this is due to missteps and foolishness on our part, but, I've been slapped enough, and I'm tired of reaching out. It's time for Haverford to stop being hypocritical. If you're going to laugh at homophobic class night skits, then don't expect me to feel comfortable around you; if you are going to ignore me, then don't attack me when I get angry; and if the Honor Code is meaningless--which it appears to be--then own up to the fact and discard it.
Anonymous
Spring, 1994

I say, "I think I'm bisexual,"
when I know who I am, when what is confusing
is not the attraction, but everything else:
the social construct (it is easier,
since I am attracted to men, to only pursue men.
I do not know how to meet women),
the power dynamic (does it exist if
I am with a woman? Where am I in it?)
Knowing this, I still infuse my words with doubt,
because I do not want to explain this
every time I come out to someone.
I beat myself up: I tell myself I
must be fair, equitable:
If I talk about het sex,
and those feelings,
then I must talk about what
little I have of the other.
Thought I must come out to my parents,
my friends right away.
I do not give myself space.
I am trying to change this.
I do not feel guilty, or shameful.
I am not afraid.

By Smoking
By Elizabeth Cho, BMC '96
Fall, 1994-95

By smoking, you'd think,
You'd destroy the unborn child
The voice that sang sorrow
and the disappointment
The voice that once was heard by all
and recognized by no one
The child was not applauded

You saw the gauzy blue film
thread the still wind-and
hover around your hair
And you'd think, by smoking,
I'll kill the child
whose voice creaks just to speak
I know the child inside
had never the time to grow
to howl at the wall
The smoke that you'd swallowed
Still lingers and chokes the child.
Crying Partner
By Elizabeth Cho, BMC '96
Fall, 1994-95

You are my crying partner
I've had others than you
But you're the only one who I can rely upon
It's not because you love me
Maybe you feel sorry for me
I don't know
Sometimes I think I love you
Or that I could love you
But I'd rather not love you
You are not my type
I want to call someone other than you
I want to cry with someone else than you
When I don't want to bother anyone else
You're the only one
Alone
So you can see why I cry with you
How does it make you feel about me?

Half Moon
By Elizabeth Cho, BMC '96
Fall, 1994-95

Half moon
Single in the sky
Of black night boxed
By my window frame

How startled at your sight I was
From my mouth
A single drop of water slipped

Like a picture undone
As if some stars should sprinkle
Around the curve of your pregnant belly-

Your light doesn't reach to shine
In the opposite corner

Half of you
Content in your own brightness
But the stark picture
Wants more than your satisfaction

You try to tell me
It's complete, don't you see?
A Letter To Myself . . .
As I Look Back At My Four Years At Haverford

By May Mon Post, HC '95
Spring, 1995

I guess I sort of knew, since I was in seventh or eighth grade, that I was attracted to both males and females. I always felt uncomfortable about it, though. My parents never told me that girls could be attracted to other girls. And I didn't know if anyone else felt the same way. I was so scared about being a freak. But then one day, I read a book about a young man falling in love with another young man. I still remember that book; it was by Sandra Scoppertone. Anyway, after I finished reading that book, I sat--motionless--for a long time, feeling light and free. I felt so happy because I felt a sense of belonging. In eighth grade, I wrote my research paper on homosexuality. My parents were surprised that I even knew the word.

And then I came to Haverford four years ago. I dated boys when I was in high school and had my first real boyfriend in my senior year there. So I decided that I was "normal--just like everybody else." But then I met a woman--let's just call her Claire to protect her identity--at Swarthmore who is now my best friend. As Claire and I spent more and more time together, I became more and more aware of my sexuality. She constantly told me how beautiful I was and how she loved my body. But I was too scared to admit how I really felt about her. I told myself that she was just being nice to her new best friend. And then she started spending more and more time at Haverford--it got to the point where she spent almost every night in my dorm. We shared the same bed, and we cuddled all night long. I didn't know about her, but I felt so happy--in a frustrating way. As I became more attracted to her and more aware of my sexual feelings, I became more confused about myself. Until one night. That night, I woke up in the middle of the night because I felt her fingers on my stomach. She started lightly scratching there, but her fingers went a little higher up. Of course, I was in heaven! I felt the same kind of feeling I did when I read my first gay novel. Only this time, it was much more intense. I wanted to hold her and kiss her and tell her I thought I loved her. But I didn't. What if she didn't have the same feelings for me? What if she was like that with everybody? Then I would surely lose her as my friend because she might feel uncomfortable if I told her I thought she was beautiful and she made me feel so happy and alive. I couldn't bear the thought of losing her; so I did the only thing I could think of. I pretended to be asleep and the next morning, I acted as if I didn't know a thing. Oh, but I did know something. That night, I knew something very valuable about myself. That night, I admitted to myself that I was bisexual!

The next day, I called my Mom. "Hi, Mom, how are you?"

"Oh, May Mon. I was just going to call you!"
"Mom, I'm bisexual."

"But I didn't call you because I thought you might be doing your homework--I didn't want to disturb you."

"Did you hear what I said, Mom?"

"No, I think I misheard you. What did you tell me?"

"You didn't mishear me. Bisexual. I said I was bisexual."

"No, you're not."

"Oh?"

"You're just going through a phase."

"It's not a phase! And if it is, it's been going on since I was in middle school."

"Let me make one thing clear, May Mon. You are not bisexual or whatever you call yourself. I know you. I know you too well to know that you like boys. So how can you like girls the same way?"

"I do like boys! But I like girls, too. Oh, by the way, here we say 'women,' not 'girls'."

"Look, don't mention any of this to your step-father. I'm telling you. You'll kill him. And don't tell any of your friends. If you really are that way, it's your private business."

That same day, I told one of my customspersons. "Hi, can I talk to you?"

"Sure, what's up?"

"I've been so confused. Especially now that I just told my mother."

"Why? Did you just come out to her?"

"What? No! I mean, how did you know this?"

"Don't you think I'd know you by now? And you know what? It's okay to be confused. Have you told your other friends?"

"No, should I?"

"Only if you feel ready, of course."

I didn't tell them, because I wasn't ready. For one whole week, I talked to the only woman I knew who was out and about on campus. She gave me the support I needed to come out, to myself and to my friends. She told me about BGALA. She gave me literature on coming out to parents and friends. She told me what it was like for her when she was coming out. By the end of the week, I felt ready to let my friends know. My customsperson gathered everyone in front of my dorm. "Ah, you guys. I have to tell you something," I muttered. "I'm bisexual."

"Oh, that's cool," one friend said.

"Well, if you need to talk, we'll always be here," my roommate continued.

"Thanks," I said, smiling. The whole weight's been lifted off me. I felt like I was dancing on air. Wow, I no longer had to hide my identity--well, except to Claire. Because I wanted her to continue sharing the same bed with me and I wanted to continue giving each other massages without her feeling self-conscious.

Claire dated man after man. She even got herself a boyfriend. Me? I, too, dated around. But for some reasons, I had the hardest time meeting women at Haverford. Men, men, and more men who wanted to prove their manhood. That's all I ever met at Haverford. That was, until I met someone from University of Pennsylvania in my sophomore year. I remember vividly the first time I was with her. During that time, I thought to myself, No, this must be a dream. It can't be
happening! But it wasn't a dream. She had hips and breasts. And her skin was so soft. Her kisses were tender. Her face was smooth. Her body was like mine, with familiar curves and scent. I really liked her. A lot. Everything felt natural. So I asked her to be my date at a Haverford dance. It was the last time I went to a non-BGALA sponsored dance with another woman. We couldn't bear the stares and the whispers we got when people saw us slow dancing together. We quickly left the dance when we heard people snickering at us. This was when I learned that not everyone at Haverford was accepting, that people were afraid of difference. Needless to say, I never went to a dance with any woman again, except the time BGALA sponsored a dance at the end of that year and a coming out dance at Bryn Mawr this year.

So, no. I never felt threatened when I wore my pink triangles. I never was afraid to speak out for what I believe in. I never felt strange about participating in the kiss-in or about being a panelist on sexuality peer awareness workshop or about relating my experiences at Out Talk. But I felt uncomfortable about the deadly silence that surrounded me. I felt uneasy about all the whispers and giggles. And I found out that although a lot of people didn't say anything to my face or threaten me, they talked about me behind my back. Well, not just about me—but about queer people in general. "Oh, God. These people are disgusting," they said. "All they think about is sex. All they do is flaunt. Oh, man. Did you see that kiss-in? The two fags ruined my appetite for lunch!" Really, those are the kinds of remarks I had to deal with.

As much as I was proud of my sexuality, I guess I wasn't strong enough. After my sophomore year, I moved off campus and lived in Ardmore with four other people—two of whom were openly queer, and the other two—well, let's just say that they were very queer friendly. Anyway, it was after my sophomore year that I met John, my fiancé. I love him more than I can ever describe and I can't wait to marry him this summer. He's been the most wonderful person anyone could ever be. Being engaged to him has made my life much easier to assimilate at school. I no longer had to explain to people, "Well, no, I didn't say 'boyfriend.' That's right, I said 'girlfriend.' What? Yes, I was going out with that guy before I met my girlfriend. I'm bisexual."

Now, my situation is a bit different. "Oh, yeah, I live with my fiancé John," I say, and everyone either says, "Oh, wow! It's so awesome you found true love," or "Oh, so you're straight now!" Well, excuse me, but do you stop being heterosexual or homosexual—or how about do you stop being sexual—when you're not dating anyone? Of course I'm still bisexual! I am even thinking about women as I write this letter. "You give bisexuals a bad name," says one bisexual Mawter when I admitted that I still think about women sometimes. How do I give a bad name, though? I would always be monogamous with John and would love only him—I love him more than anyone or anything in the whole world. That's more than what I can say
about a lot of other women or men who are also in relationships. "Well, why do you still want to call yourself bisexual? You're with a man. You're straight. Besides, you don't look like a bisexual. You look--normal," says one Haverford senior who gave me a lecture once, telling me why gay, lesbian, and bisexual people are not normal, telling me that God did not intend people to perform unnatural acts, telling me that queers do not know how to love--they only know how to fuck. I gave him a lecture on respecting each other's differences. But I don't think I convinced him because even the required social justice class he took didn't help him. It doesn't matter, though--because I am a strong person and because I will keep lecturing him and everyone else that to bring order and peaceful coexistence, we have to respect differences.
Lipstick
By Mike Ciul, HC '95
Spring, 1994
[names changed]

I sat down to dinner at Bryn Mawr the other night with my friend "Jen" and her roommate "Nora", who I'd never met before. The very first thing "Nora" said to me was:

"Um, I don't mean to be rude or anything, but...why are you wearing lipstick?"

I was surprised at her directness, but more than at almost any other time in the bi-co, I was relieved. So many times here I have walked around Haverford dressed the way I was because I got up that morning and just felt like wearing a skirt or something else that guys don't "normally" wear, and felt like people were watching me but refused to acknowledge it. I've heard things through the rumor mill - I know people don't pass by without noticing - I know they say things to their friends or in their classes, but almost never to me. The occasional rude comment from some drunk jock in the bathroom at a party, or the rare compliment from a friend is all I ever hear directly at Haverford. I get compliments more often at Bryn Mawr, but never has anyone so openly voiced their confusion as "Nora" did.

I told her I wear lipstick because I think I look better with it than without it sometimes. My reasons for wearing what I do are almost always that simple. I wear what makes me feel attractive or comfortable with myself. "Nora", and many people I know, dress mostly for other people - I don't just mean wearing what makes you attractive to the opposite sex if you're straight, for example, but what you are expected to wear by your peers, your family, or your culture. I think most people practice a mixture of dressing for themselves and for other people. The only thing really unusual about me is that I dress more for myself than other people do.

"That makes so much sense," "Nora" answered, "but it still seems so weird to me!" It went against what she'd learned all her life, but she didn't hesitate to question her old ideas in the light of new information. My style wasn't obvious to her at first - and it would take some getting used to. But she couldn't see any reason not to try. It was something interesting, worth learning about, it might even be fun.

So how come more people aren't interested in finding out why I dress funny? Maybe they are, but they're just too embarrassed to ask. If you're one of those shy people, take a hint from "Nora" - if you're curious about something, ASK! But be direct. Ask because you want to know the answer, not because you expect me to react one way or another. And remember that it won't be rude if you don't ask rudely. I'd be happy to talk to you about it.

Breaking Silence
By Erik Oliver, HC '94
Spring, 1994

If I have to summon a single image to describe my Haverford experience it would be one of deafening silence. Haverford is not a place which is safe and comfortable to be out. Unlike some places the lack of safety is not from hordes of violent and aggressive gay bashers; it is from an atmosphere of silence in which discussion and exploration of sexuality and sexual identity cannot take place.

Exclusion and isolation of openly gay students from the rest of the community is the de facto standard. Instead of inviting us in, there is silence and subtle hostility. Couple this with an administration that, while claiming to support gay and lesbian issues, has never assigned a full-time staff person to work with the students or provided us a space in the new campus center. We are the smallest and most isolated minority group on this campus. I am tired of Haverford and the self-serving nature of the student body at Haverford.

Let's be honest with each other, let's replace the deafening silence with attempts to initiate dialog. Recruit openly gay and lesbian students to apply to Haverford. Expand the Multicultural Affairs Office to include gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered students who also have a distinct and rich cultures.

Alternatively, hire a full or part time staff member to work with sexual minorities as a liaison to the Administration a la Mary Lou Allen. Lobby the Administration to provide a quality lounge space to provide a house for our library of books in a public space. (Much like the new Women's Center or Multicultural Lounge.) In silence there is no discussion and no room for exploration. Let's work together to break the silence and begin discussion.
No Accident
By Lori Crawford, HC '94
Spring, 1994

male beings from Satan's head
spring forth thoughts and flames
in the hape of a woman
desire (hormones) and God
fashions Eve
from a rib
the blood streaming in a man's image
in a man's image

the men as usual initially afraid
th perfect image incestuous, yes
bone of my bine
woman the direct cause (no surprise)
and embodiment
immediate control (o big phallus)
responsible, and of course corrupt
corrupt

knowledge in her own reflection
answering looks more winningly soft
this forbidden Tree (big deal) dangerous potenital
inevitable, no?
Satan hardly needs
to tempt
render me more equal
Eve eats that pussy
Eve eats
A Place Called Paradise
By May Mon Post, HC '95
Spring, 1995
(With Love, To All My Friends In BGALA)

Someday you and I are going to live,
in a place called Paradise.
We'll sleep in clouds --
you know, big fluffy white ones that we can
get lost in.
And we'll pick stars for breakfast --
I wonder what a star tastes like;
I wonder if twinkling ones fizz in your mouth.
We'll play tennis with the moon;
Or if it melts, we'll make fondue.
We'll tie our hair back with comets.
You can have a gold one . . .
I'll take the pink.
And we'll play hide-n-seek in space --
Just stay still, and I'll find you--
somehow.
And we'll live together behind the sun.
It'll be our door knob.
No one will disturb us there,
or call us names,
And we'll never have to explain.

My Friend, My Fiancé
By May Mon Post, HC '95
Spring, 1995

How can I ever thank you?
You never let me down.
At times, when everything seems to go wrong.
You are always around.
When I need a friend, you are there--
To offer your friendship and show me you care.
During hard times when
the world is falling in on me,
You're always there to say, "Just let things be."
Even though we sometimes fight,
I'm glad you came into my life.
By being the wonderful, special you,
You have become so important
to me and my family.
And I often wonder, if without you,
I would still be here.
For deep down, you will always be the one
When I look back and say,
"Hey, you helped me to see and become
what makes up the beautiful, unique me,
to learn, accept, and love what I am."
Thanks, Honey. I love you!
Anonymous
Spring, 1994

I am a Haverford male who is attracted to other males. I don't know if I want to be gay or homosexual or whatever, all I know is that the feelings I have towards men are real and they are valid. Most importantly, I know that I am not the ideal Haverford heterosexual. And unfortunately, many people here are ignorant and insensitive to the fact that people around them may be homosexual.

Take a second and think about it, think about the fact that you most probably assume everyone you know is heterosexual. The major problem with this is that people here act on the assumption that everyone is heterosexual. This assumption of heterosexuality generates enormous feelings of difference in those of us that are not. In the course of a conversation, don't tell me that I'm going to be a wonderful husband to my wife. As much as that is a compliment, it is an insult. You assume that I am going to fit perfectly into your heterosexual world and you are wrong. My body is not going to allow that; am I to blame myself for that? Is it fair for you to put me in a position in which I am blaming myself for something not within my immediate control? I don't think so.

Recognize that a person like me exists at Haverford and perhaps countless others who don't feel comfortable openly declaring that they do not fit in the Haverford heterosexual world. Recognize that by making this an oppressively "straight" place, you are depriving yourself of the opportunity to know me and to know others like me. You are also not making it comfortable for me to be myself. This is unfair. It is not consistent with the advertised "spirit of community" which made Haverford such an appealing place to me.

I challenge you to question what mainstream American culture has taught you. The mainstream has not provided for the acceptance nor recognition of countless minorities. And aren't we here to finally question all that we have been force-fed for the first eighteen years of our lives? This is why I ask you to not assume anything of anybody.

I am aware of the fact the I am asking a lot more from you than what this country is willing to give me, but I think Haverford has the potential to be a very special place. But its going to take a little work and a little consideration, and I'm just not sure if people care that much. I challenge you to show me that I am wrong.
By Seth Hollander, HC '96
Spring, 1994

For those of you who don't know me, I am a card carrying member of Haverford BGALA, and I happen to be straight. For several reasons, both personal and political,
I feel strongly for gay rights and gay pride.
I also, as a straight 'Ford, think I can help.

Unfortunately, there are still too many people out there who think that lesbians, gays, and bisexuals are radical, mentally disturbed, or freaky,
which is a sad and unfortunate reality of American life.
Many view the gay rights agenda as a gay issue. A "let them handle it" issue.
Odds are, nobody will achieve anything that way.

As a straight member of the community, I would like to offer my help in destroying the "they are them...over there...not near me and my heterosexual...left earring only self" mentality. We need to all work together.
I am honored to be asked to write for The Angels Are Singing,
emphasizing that this is not a gay problem,
and that straights should be involved.
I hate to say it,
but the sad truth is that an uninformed straight person might be more receptive
to another straight person.

Remember,
Thousands of white people marched for civil rights.
Thousands of non-Jews spoke against the Nazis.
Thousands of men participate in a woman's right to choose.
Straight people need to become active in BGALA and gay rights issues world wide.
By Ilana Krakauer, HC '95
Spring, 1994

It's Sunday afternoon, and I am sitting at the computer center, staring out the window and waiting for a flash of inspiring. I have been planning to write something for a while, but it is difficult to know where to begin. I think that part of the problem lies within the topic itself—what is it like to be a sexual minority at Haverford? This is a difficult question for me to answer, because it is an oversimplification. I am many things here at Haverford. I am a junior, active in drama, dance, club sports. I have participated in the Customs program. I have many wonderful friends who are an integral part of my life. Oh, yes, and I am a lesbian. All of these are part of me, and it is difficult to talk as if I were only one thing—a sexual minority. So when I describe my experiences as a lesbian, please bear in mind that this is not all that I am.

I arrived at Haverford in the fall of 1991, meeting my Customs group for the first time and joining wholeheartedly in Haverford life. I played soccer, I danced, I grew close to my Customs siblings. At this point in my life, I was identifying myself as straight. In fact, coming from a small southern town, I didn't know that I had any alternatives.

My first year was really wonderful—I felt that I was meeting so many exciting new people and learning new ideas. I took my first Feminist class during the second semester of that year and began to open my eyes. If someone had asked me before then if I was a feminist, I do not know what I would have responded. The idea that I would be sharing my experiences as a lesbian just two years later would have floored me. It would have been unthinkable. During my first year, it didn't worry me that I had no interest in men—I was still dealing with loose ends from high school and definitely felt that I had a full life here.

There are a few moments in my life that stand out as landmarks, when time stood still and my innermost self awakened me with yearning to its need. I had one of these experiences during the fall break of my sophomore year. A close friend of mine—I'll call her Kate—came home with me on the train. She had recommended the novel Ruby Fruit Jungle, by Rita Mae Brown, and I read, fascinated, as we moved south. She slept. The novel, which is (for lack of better description) a lesbian coming-of-age story, amazed me. It is also hilarious. But when I read the scenes where Molly Bolt made love with women, my heart quickened. Of course, this scared the hell out of me. I was not ready to accept such longings.

At my house that evening, Kate and I talked for hours. I do not know exactly what we talked about, or what, if anything, she remembers, but I know what was on my mind. I wanted so much to tell her what I was thinking, but I couldn't. Mostly, I think that I myself was not prepared to own up to it, but I was also terrified that she would be too uncomfortable to continue a friendship with me. The same weekend, my family rented the movie "Fried Green Tomatoes," and we all watched the growing closeness between Ruth and Idgie. Again, Kate and I talked, and I was trying to convince myself that I could want my Idgie and still be straight. I returned to Haverford with my mind full of questions, both elated and terrified. You see, the women that I had read about and watched on the screen seemed very happy to me. Lesbianism seemed beautiful and almost sacred. At the same time, I knew that it was not "normal," and I fought against it. Sophomore year was difficult for me. I had a few crushes on various women, but I spent most of my time attempting valiantly to like some guy. Any guy. To no avail. I have never been more at war with myself, never struggled so arduously to deny parts of my innermost being.

The year ended. I went home. As the summer went on, I realized that I was exploring my possibilities more and more. Always a great lover of books, I read Rita Mae Brown until there was no more to be read, then searched the catalogs for anything with a lesbian theme. With every book that I read, I grew more confused, and paradoxically, more sure. I fought with my best friend, making her to be everything inside myself that I was rejecting—sometimes I am amazed that she still talks to me. We went to the movies—"Benny and Joon" and "Sleepless in Seattle." After the latter, we had a blowout fight. She thought it was romantic. I did not. This escalated, and soon she was saying "You are such a feminist!" I countered with an attack on her lack of political consciousness. I don't know if either of us really understood the nature of our argument. It was that night, however, that I first uttered aloud the possibility of lesbianism. As we were winding down, I said that it was partly my
fighting with myself, that I didn't want the standard of male/female relationship but also didn't know if I wanted the alternative. I don't think she caught my meaning. As the summer wore on, the issue enveloped more and more of my consciousness. I was preparing to go abroad, and it suddenly occurred to me that it would be the ideal time to figure things out--I would be completely separately separated from both home and Haverford.

This brings me to last semester. On my fifth day abroad, I met the woman who was to become my first lover. Of course, I did not know it at the time. We met in class, and, as fate would have it, became partners on one-month-long project. As the month went on, I realized that not only were we becoming closer, but also that I was wanting to know, very badly, if she was gay. Finally, on the night before our big presentation, she revealed to me that she was. I was absolutely elated; I was floating on the clouds. I told her that I thought I was a lesbian, also, but that I wasn't sure. Even as I uttered the words, however, I realized that I was on the road to finding out. We grew closer. We spent as much time together as humanly possible, finally taking a weekend trip in the middle of October. It was here that I realized that I was in love with her, this Michigan woman with the most beautiful green eyes that turn to crescent moons when she smiles. I was hit hard. We grew closer over the weekend, touching each other more frequently, slowly becoming more comfortable with ourselves and one another. A week later, we were lying on her bed, arms around each other. I felt as if I was dreaming; I felt safe and warm and loved. Suddenly, she pulled away from me, just slightly. She looked me squarely in the eye. "Do you know," she asked, "what it is that you want?" I couldn't breathe. It was the most conscious decision I have ever made. "I want to kiss you," I answered. We have been together ever since, although we are now separated by Ohio and most of Pennsylvania. We hope to live together after graduation, but that is a long way off and it is difficult to predict the future.

Returning to Haverford was very strange. While abroad, I wrote to some friends, so my roommate at least would know my big news. By the way, I lived with Kate the second semester of my junior year. I did not scare her away. In fact, living with her is one of the best things about the semester. The fact that she is straight and that I am a lesbian does not represent a barrier between us. Rather, it highlights some similarities. We are friends in the best way, both open to learn from each other and grow together. It is largely she who taught me that "straight" does not equal "homophobic," and has given me the support I needed to come out to other people. At this point, almost all of my close friends here, and many other people as well, know that I am lesbian. It has not been an easy road, but I feel good that my friends know who I am. I have found that most people react calmly, that I am not scaring my friends away. I am still me. In fact, I am more myself than ever before, for I am finally allowing myself to live in the best, true sense.

This is not to say, however, that I do not suffer times of insecurity or fear. For I do, unquestionably. Sometimes, I will be with a group of people, especially women, and we will all be enjoying the company of one another, and then I realize that I am presumed straight. I try to let people know, but I don't want to bring my sexuality into every conversation. It is part of me, but it is not all of me. So there are times when I let it slide, when I participate in a discussion of boyfriends and feel like an impostor. Sometimes I mention my green-eyed woman only as a friend. At risk of preaching, I would like to remind people not to make assumptions. I don't look like a dyke. I wear dresses occasionally. I have close male friends. I won't lie to you, but I may not tell you in an introductory conversation that I am gay. So I suggest that we all try to keep open minds--that we never assume conclusively that someone is straight. I am guilty of this, also. I have friends whom I assume are straight because I have never heard otherwise, forgetting that this is just what my friends thought of me. You see, I had boyfriends, too.

One of the best things about coming out is finding other people in the same or similar positions. I have found that several of my friends are bisexual or questioning. I feel as if we are creating some safe spaces here--spaces where we can search for our truest selves without fear of rejection. This is strengthening and empowering. I know that the Odyssey of coming out is intensely personal, but I believe also that we can help each other by our presence and support. Coming out is a process. I have started it, but I am far from finishing it.
By Kevin McCulloch, HC '94
Spring, 1994

Deciding to come out at Haverford was one of the harder decisions I've made here. When, sophomore year, I acknowledged the fact that I was attracted to men as well as women, the realization brought with it an intense mixture of relief and uncertainty. Finally, I could stop fretting and embrace my desires as a part of my sexuality and my personality. Yet, at the same time I found myself face to face with an enormous identity crisis. Having relationships with members of both genders is one thing. But what does it really mean to say, publicly, "I am a bisexual person?"

I was never afraid to come out at Haverford. I knew that I wouldn't lose my friends, and that while I might open myself up to the prejudices of a segment of the community, I never felt threatened by open harassment or violence. What worried me about coming out at Haverford was not fear of being hated or shunned, but fear of being misunderstood. When I opened my mouth and said those words: "Incidentally, I identify myself as a bisexual person on the basis of my pattern of sexual desire," my position in the community changed completely. Suddenly, I felt like everything I said would not be my opinion, but the opinion of a bisexual person, and, as such, could either be more easily dismissed ("oh, there goes that queer again") or be given an authority that it did not merit ("you're bisexual, and therefore your personal opinion is unique and valuable in a way that other people's opinions are not."

Neither option seemed particularly appealing.

I was tempted to just come out, quietly, to a few friends and leave it at that. I wouldn't mind if people heard about my sexual orientation, but I certainly didn't want to make a big deal out of it. Who wants to be publicly constrained to an identity which, for most people, is next to meaningless and which really says nothing at all about who I am? If I were homosexual, at least I could come out in order to fight the stupid stereotypes that people have about gay men. But bisexual? Who knows what a bisexual person is supposed to be like? Bisexual people certainly don't. I've found so little information about other bisexual people, and so few images of bisexual people that seem to have anything at all in common with me, that I wonder why I bother to call myself anything at all. Of the bisexual people I know, the ones with whom I feel an affinity are the ones to whom I can relate on levels besides a sexual one. In fact, the more exposure I get to lesbigay literature, news, music, and so forth, the more I wonder whether sexual minorities aren't kidding themselves when they imagine that they have anything in common at all. Picking up the Philadelphia Gay News every week and flipping through pages and pages of advertisements aimed at leathermen, sensitive new age gay men, drag queens, Gay Urban Professionals (yes, "Guppies"), gay lawyers, gay doctors, gays who play softball, gays who go to clubs, gays who hate clubs, and lesbians (with whom I feel I have next to nothing in common), I constantly ask myself, "where am I in all of this? I'm nothing like any of these people. They seem to think that they understand each other in some strange way that eludes me completely". I just don't feel
much like a member of the club. For starters, although I recognize that coming out could threaten my welfare in many places in this country, I have never really felt personally oppressed. I did not spend my childhood in traumatic isolation. In fact, I was so certain of my attraction to girls when I was a kid that I managed to put my attraction to boys almost completely out of my mind. When I got older, I didn't find coming out to myself or to my friends particularly difficult. Coming out to my family has been harder, but it certainly hasn't been the traumatic affair that you see on made-for-TV movies. And I don't feel a particular affinity with gay culture, either: disco makes me ill, I think rainbow flags are obnoxious, and I'm completely indifferent towards Judy Garland. I happen to think that Oscar Wilde was brilliant, but I also think that he would have looked at the campy gay culture that one finds at most Pride Parades with utter contempt. So why the hell would I decide to come out as anything, knowing that it would mean people making assumptions about my lifestyle and how horrible things must have been for me growing up? I faced being marked for life (or, at least, for my time at Haverford) by something which, in the long run, is nowhere near the most interesting thing about me. Yuck.

Well, I came out for the same reason that I don't turn my back on gay culture in general. Sure, I lack most of the heartbreaking experiences that make "coming out" novels such a dramatic read. But just because it's silly for me to claim that I'm "fundamentally like" other gay, lesbian, or bisexual people doesn't mean that I'm not personally invested in a supportive social climate and equal rights for sexual minorities. Sure, maybe the other people working at the gay teen suicide hotline had rougher teenage years than I did, but if, for example, a white Madison Avenue gay man believes that he can understand a poor, black gay teenager just because they both spent their teenage years "in the closet", I think he's deluding himself. And if other sexual minorities think that I have nothing to add to the cause just because I'm a bisexual man who has had a long pattern of relationships with women, they've overlooked what we really do have in common: a personal commitment to liberty and justice.

Why did I come out at Haverford College? Because so many sexual minorities here feel like they can't come out. Because, no matter how poorly the labels "gay", "lesbian", "transsexual", "transgendered", "bisexual", or "queer" might reflect who we are, the social climate at Haverford and elsewhere will not change, and justice will not be served, until sexual minorities are visible and people realize that we're here, in all of our variety. It is only when we are recognized as a category that we can begin to question how well those categories capture our unique experiences and personalities. Until Haverford College is a completely safe place for all sexual minorities, however, I decided that being misunderstood was worth it if, by coming out, I could raise people's awareness, not by allowing myself to speak with an authority which I don't deserve but simply by standing up and being counted. I am here and I am queer. No, you don't know what I mean by that, at least not until you've talked to me, gotten to know me, and given me a chance to answer that question personally. But you'd better not forget it, either, because I'm not going away until all of the queer people at Haverford feel comfortable saying the same thing.
By Eve Chosak, BMC '94
Spring, 1994

This essay is a stream of consciousness. I didn't want to organize the positive and negative aspects of being queer at Haverford, into some false structure. Please read this as if I were talking directly to you as a friend, without rhetorical motivation.

BGALA, bi-pace, my friends, and the queer-friendly environment at Environmental-House have saved me from depression. The community within the community works just fine for me, provided that I ignore the bulk of white, straight, moderate Haverford mainstream culture. Just knowing that I'm a queer and that I'm not the only one, has healed me from all those times growing up, when I felt different. Yes, I wanted to touch my female friends in high school. Yes, I repress those desires out of a survival instinct. I am not alone here. I've had dates with Haverford women. It may have been behind closed doors, away from scrutiny in the DC and on Founders Green, but I have held her hand and held her close.

As a dyke living at Haverford, I rarely get the opportunity to celebrate with the community at large. Like all my queer fiends, I feel isolated and excluded from the majority of Haverford functions. Snow Ball and other couple events are clearly a straight space, where I would not feel at home slow dancing with another girl. Most of my social networking goes on a Bryn Mawr. Because of Bryn Mawr, it is relatively easy to come out, if you are female. Where women have an instant support by virtue of a critical mass of dykes out and about, Haverford gays seem to come out after college, or they quietly seek out boyfriends at Penn or Swarthmore. To my brave queer brothers, I offer a warm shoulder and tons of respect for owning your identity.

The suppression of queerdom I feel at Haverford incites me to radical action. When I practice guerrilla tactics, like roaming the campus in drag, I'm met with support from friends and a few strangers, but mostly I get strange looks. I'm tired of struggling to exist as a whole person in male-dominated, heterosexist institutions. I desperately want my queerness to be accepted here. It hurts to be labeled as a freak, and yet I identify with my label.

TIME CAPSULE. Date: Spring, 1993. BGALA Club Heaven, he best time I have ever had at a Bi-Co event. I dressed like a femme slut, was showered with the attention of women, and flirted like a total babe. I felt liberated from a straight campus where I assume myself to be perceived as clunky, unappealing, and unnatural. People from completely different social groups grooved to the beat with the least amount of pretense I have ever witnessed on a dance floor. There was something special in the air. I actually didn't feel different. I let down my hair completely and painted the campus red. For once, Haverford campus was mine.
By Eva Milstein, BMC 94
Spring, 1994

This is a poem about a class I'm taking this semester at Swarthmore; but I think that despite the different location, much of the message is applicable to how I've felt being queer at Haverford. For the record, I am a Bryn Mawr student (senior), but, in the best bi-co tradition, have roughly split my socializing between the two colleges. I've been living off-campus in Ardmore, right on the edge of Haverford, so I've been spending a lot of time here. I was also dating an on-campus Ford for a good portion of the year, which was an added incentive to pay attention to the way things go here.

This poem is entitled "Classroom Situation," and it is about a specific set of classroom dynamics; but if there's one thing I've learned after nearly four years in college, it's that academics are no more separate from life than someone's head is from their body. When you go into the classroom, you take your life experiences with you. I was raised in the best scientific traditions of "objectivity", but have had to discard them. Individual differences are highlighted in a course taught around a theme of group politics/personal identity, as illustrated in this poem.

I have seen homophobia at Haverford; I've heard more faggot and Bryn-Mawr-dyke jokes that I can count: in the weight room, in the D.C., on the path running by Founders. I feel people's eyes on me when I take a copy of the Philadelphia Gay News from the foyer of Magill. I would say that I'm very out to the school at large (i.e. from participating in this year's and last year's Kiss-Ins, publicly holding hands with my past lovers of whatever gender, facilitating the Lesbian Bisexual Support Group two years ago, having my name on queer posters, wearing buttons on my backpack and dyke-positive tee-shirts, writing things on the Comment Board and VaxNotes, etc., etc., etc.). I notice that students at Haverford who know about me but do not know me are afraid to express anti-queer sentiments near me because I am so open about being bisexual and dyke-oriented.

Being Jewish, white, female, and upper-middle class, gives me a whole other perspective on the State of Queerness at the Ford. I'm super-aware of the ways I fit the mainstream power structure (white, upper-middle-class, able-bodied) and the ways I don't (Jewish, not-skinny, female, dyke). Within the American queer community there is a strong feeling of radicalism, a pride that we are turning the world on its heels. The unfortunate part is that old habits - like racism, anti-Semitism, classism, bi-phobia, ableism, sexism - die hard. We can't rid the globe or Haverford College of anti-queer sentiments without making our proud-to-be-queer selves aware of these other kinds of hatred and actively working against them. I have experienced as much ignorance about my ethnicity/religion, gender, and bisexuality from other queers as I have homophobia from non-queers. I have witnessed as much ignorance by queers about queer friends' ethnicity/race, class, religion, physical ability, gender as I have witnessed them experiencing homophobia from non-queers. This is extremely, extremely painful for me.

To be honest, at this point I have no solution for this ignorance. I don't have magic words -- only angry ones. I'd like to think that my anger is righteous but not self-righteous. After all, I'm only a little bit less stupid than I was four years ago. I wrote these words of anger as much for me as for anyone.
"Consequently, we can say that for a given quantity of gas the pressure (P) is inversely related to the volume (V), so as one goes up, the other goes down (P=k/V). Therefore, the product of the two remains constant..."

from Isaac Asimov's *Understanding Physics*, Vol. 1

**Classroom Situation**

*(For Aisha and Tim)*

These days it feels like fifteen against three
when we're all supposed to be in it together

These days the fifteen grunt about cliquishness
while the three of us huddle desperately

What they see is the only thing they get:
  Two of us are Native, Black
  One of us is adamantly Jewish
  Two of us are female.
These facts they are too polite to attack.

This is a class on Lesbian and Gay Theories and Literatures.
These white people should know about pain breathing in silence,
cold salt poured on hidden wounds
about being backed knife point into a small corner.

Yet other invisibles are still their fair game.
Behind our teeth the pressure builds and builds
  The more we hear from these fifteen
how poor equals a cut below poor wouldn't know how to hold a wineglass
  or a conversation at an office party, or herown in the classroom
  The more we hear
  a woman who loves women and men
  is a slut she's a traitor all she wants
  is to suck cock sashay down the aisle
to the tune of *Wedding March* & heterosexual privilege

The more we see them constructing some patchwork quilt of diversity
  with a blade-sharp cookie-cutter pattern

One of these days we three will burst
shards of our beings flung ricocheting hard
against these four walls, ceiling and floor:
  and they will be the ones left
to crowd into a small space.
By Dan Smith, HC '95
Spring, 1994

I am gay. I have no qualms whatsoever about saying that--here at Haverford, at least. I mean, I say that now. But it does get more difficult. Saying it for the first time to my roommates a year-and-a-half ago was not that bad. Saying it to my parents two years ago (I am fortunate to say) resulted in a much closer relationship with them. Worrying that I will have to say something to one of my unsuspecting co-workers at the Physical Plant, however, is a problem. Because, if they ask, I will not lie. I will not pretend to be another person just so that they can accept me. I know who I am, and I am proud of myself.

Being honest about my sexuality (or coming out) necessitates a lot of headaches, patience, and chutzpah. The term "coming out" has always been troublesome for me, though, because its implications seem so negative. It implies that I was never a whole person before I chose to let others know how whole I had been all along--that I was, in essence, a closet whole person. As you can see, this is ridiculous. More than that, it is offensive. Were I born straight, it is a process that I never would have had to go through in the first place. Just imagine: "Uh, Mom, I--I think I might be...er...attracted to...um...w-women.... But please understand. Don't hit me. I am still your son. You'll still love me, won't you? It's not a decision I made, Mom. I have been heterosexual ever since I can remember." Or, there's always the brutal, scare tactic approach: "Mom. Dad. I won't mince words--I have cancer.... No, I'm kidding! I'm just straight!" Of course straight men and women never had to go through that. But queers do. And not just once. It happens EVERY SINGLE TIME WE MEET SOMEBODY.

EVERY TIME! For every person that I meet, I have to decide whether it is safe for me to tell him or her that I am gay. Every time I meet someone I have to decide whether or not I have the energy to take that risk, the energy to explain what being gay means, the energy to put on my best face so that I can show that I am not the perverted social deviant or fang-toothed nightmare he or she has been taught to hate since Day One.

I, unlike those not yet ready to put everything they trust in jeopardy, have no problem telling you who I am. I would invite you to come talk to me about whatever you wanted to talk about. I would even tell you what kinds of sounds my ex-boyfriend used to make during sex, if you really wanted to know. But remember that just because there aren't a lot of people talking about their ex-boyfriends' libidinous utterances, it does not mean that there are no other queers. We are your friends, your classmates, and your roommates.

I'm saying: Don't assume everyone you know is straight. But don't assume everyone you know knows whether he or she is straight or not. Moreover, as much as you make yourself available to that person and as much as you present yourself as a safe person to confide in, please don't pressure. My Customs person once told me that if I were gay, I could feel comfortable telling him about it and that he would have no problems with it. This made me very happy, but I wasn't ready to tell him about my sexuality at that time. I think he resented the fact that I could not come out to him. So please bear in mind that being ready to listen should also mean being ready to hear that the other person doesn't feel like talking. Maybe she isn't ready to tell you. Or maybe he just needs some time to
get comfortable with the idea himself. Do make it known that you are an accepting person and an unconditional friend.

Lately, I feel self-conscious about how other people perceive me and how they act towards me based on their perceptions. This happens every time I pass anyone in the hallway, every time I speak to a professor, every time I walk across campus, and every time I sit in the dining center. I pass someone in the stairwell, for instance, and I wonder if he looks away because he is uncomfortable or because he just doesn't like me. Situations like this makes me feel so self-conscious that I can barely stand it sometimes. I hate the feeling that I have to fit into a particular role in order to be accepted or even listened to. The dilemma is that you will never listen to me if you don't respect me—or if you don't think I'm "normal". And, unfortunately, at Haverford these are not mutually exclusive. I have to fit into stereotypes of straight men just to have a conversation with someone about astronomy. I have to fall under the "norm" image to learn the meringue. I have to meet the straight standard to feel confident that I won't make my professors (or my UCA, or the guy in the urinal next to me, or the woman that stares at me with unrequited expectations of I-really-couldn't-tell-you-what) uncomfortable.

It is no surprise then that I have this horrible dread that I will never stop saying "Wow!" at two men holding hands in public or at a Banana Republic ad with two men with their arms around each other or at a dyke commitment ceremony headlined on the front page of the New York Times. When will I reach the point where I am no longer impressed or pleasantly surprised by something gay? I fear that I will never stop being impressed that some straight guy didn't flinch when I mentioned my boyfriend; or impressed when someone comes up to me after class and tells me that I don't have to feel like I need to defend what I wrote about in my paper that I read aloud. That I don't have to feel I have to prove to everyone in the class that gay-bashing is real or that being closeted doesn't feel like a blessing even if it might save me from being trounced. That I have to stop trying to prove that homophobia is a form of prejudice. Forget trying to show people that they make heterosexist assumptions (as I do). I'm talking about the fact that people seem to think that homophobia is not particularly worthy of anyone's attention. That it isn't as hurtful as racism or anti-semitism. Imagine the pain involved in being told that you are worthless, that you deserve to die because of who you are and who you love. But imagine the pain that I feel when you tell me that I am not experiencing pain—that my pain is not real. That hurts a million times more than when you call me faggot or tear down my signs or make jokes about me after I walk by, not really taking care to see that I am out of earshot. You don't just hate me and cause me pain, but you turn around and tell me that my pain isn't important. I'm lucky, you say. I can change; I can hide my sexuality to protect myself when I go to the mall to go shopping. What the fuck are you saying? I can deny a part of myself until I find a pair of jeans that fits. I can pretend that what I love and cherish about who I am doesn't exist. I can even take precautions so that other people won't suspect me of harboring some secret. But don't you realize that that secret is me? How long can I continue to hide my secret and my pride, telling myself that i'm just doing it for everyone else? When does the real me start to become hidden even from myself?
You know, when Theo first asked me if I had anything to submit for Out Talk I thought that it would be really easy. I'd just take the essay that I wrote for Herstory in '93, polish it up, and drop it in campus mail. It turned out not to be so easy. That essay, written over a year ago, seemed lacking - it didn't say all the things that I want to say and this is my last chance. In case you hadn't figured it out yet, I'm a queer Haverford woman. I graduate in forty days and never have to see this place again. But even if I never come back to campus certain things will always remain with me.

I guess I'll start with the oldest stuff. My graduating class will be the last class that was around during the harassment of an out lesbian at Bryn Mawr. This happened at a time when I wasn't out - in fact, couldn't be out because I wanted to enter the military after graduation. Some things have changed, I guess. I could head on over to the nearest recruiting office and they wouldn't be able to ask me about my sexual orientation. Some victory that is - they can still do all the background checks - find out what my extra-curricular activities were and who I was friends with. Anyway, I remember the sick feeling I got when I read the harassment notes and wondered how anyone could hate another person so much for such a pointless reason.

Oh yeah - you're probably thinking - that was at Bryn Mawr, not at our open, accepting, wonderful Haverford. If you are that idealistic, I guess that's fine, but you should realize that this place is not so great sometimes. I'm not Haverbashing here - Haverford is a better place for me to be than many - for example Villanova which is ranked as one of the worst places at which to be a queer student. And I could tell you about all the cool, neat, wonderful people that I've met since I've been here, but you get to hear that all the time from out admissions propaganda.

So what's wrong with Haverford? My sophomore year I remember meeting a senior woman who was queer. She had moved off campus after her frosh year because of the atmosphere.

I also heard about a queer frosh woman who was out in high school, came here, and realized that she could no longer be out. Nay, you say, couldn't have been because of homophobia.

No? Well then explain to me all the cases of homophobia that I have encountered. Some of it general, like the fact that the administration would never let the BGALA lounge reside in the campus center and much of it from people who I guess didn't realize that I'm queer. Not that it's that hard to figure out...And it's not that I'm
particularly quiet about it, but I'm also not particularly loud. My dating life has always been private and always will be. That's just me, I guess.

So I haven't been quoting specific instances here... Well, in some ways there are too many and in some ways it's just too painful. Do I need to tell you about listening to a guy in my customs group talk about that "annoying faggot" in his math class? Do I have to tell you about the people in my Narratives class who were loudly disgusted by a homosexual scene in the readings? Do I have to tell you how many times I have heard the line, "Well, what people do with their private lives is fine with me, but I think things like 'that' should be kept behind closed doors"?

And I'm never quite sure if the comments are aimed at me or not. All I know is that people at this college assume a lot. They assume that if you mention a boyfriend and you are female you must be straight. Bisexual doesn't enter their world. They assume that anyone who

doesn't rent audio equipment and spend a week broadcasting, "I'm gay," across Founder's Green must be straight.

All I can say to that is "Get a clue." There are many Fords - men and women - who are not out for whatever reason - and when you don't think and you spew your homophobic comments it hurts us.

Maybe that's the intent. But I bet that a lot of you would be more accepting of queers if you realized that you know a few.

When you silence us you are drawing a line over which no friendship can cross. I will no longer subject myself to friendships in which people have a problem with my sexuality. Maybe I'm losing out. Maybe you are too. I'd consider it if you were only willing to discuss it in some meaningful way. But that doesn't happen around here. Instead we hide behind the "We are accepting of everything" attitude and avoid dealing with the topic entirely.

It occurs to me that the audience at Out Talk is not really the one that this needs to be said to. Oh, well. In some ways I've given up. But I still get angry when I hear certain things said when I know that people don't go to BGALA because they are afraid of being labeled (despite the fact that a good number of BGALA attendees are quite straight).

Well, this bi woman is leaving the hell out of here, but there will be many more queers here after I leave.

Haverford, unlike the military, does not throw away talent and potential based on who one find sexually attractive. Theoretically, of course.

For all I know if I'd shown up for my interview wearing a gay pride shirt they might have found some way to keep me out.

We'll never know about the admissions process, but we do know about the student body. And if the student body on this campus cannot find it within itself to be a little more accepting, so be it. You'll just never know me.