

Coming Out Into Red Square

GU Pride Celebrates Heritage With Coming Out Week

By EMILY SOLIS-COHEN
Special to *The Hoya*

Students who walked through Red Square at just the right time on Wednesday afternoon caught a glimpse of three same-sex couples in the middle of very public displays of affection.

The display was the centerpiece of GU Pride's Coming Out Week, a schedule of events that began Tuesday evening to promote rights for the LGBT community. The initiative was planned around National Coming Out Day, which each year commemorates the anniversary of the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights on Oct. 11, 1987.

Scott Chessare (SFS '10), Pride's director of advocacy, took part in the kissing display. He said that he was pleased that the event created little controversy or displeasure from passersby.

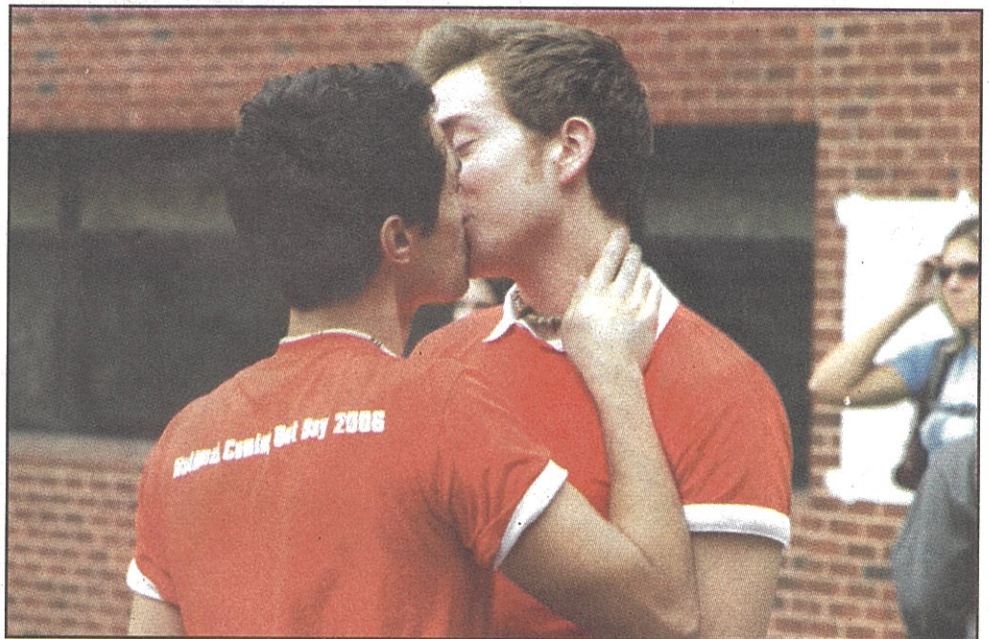
"I think what was most telling about today's kiss-in was what it did not do," he said. "If six people can express their identity in such an open manner in Red Square without fear, then certainly people can come out into the Georgetown community as LGBTQ—or whatever their self-identity may be—similarly without fear," Chessare said.

Donald Burke (COL '10), who kissed his boyfriend during the event, said that he wanted to highlight the strong support network that Pride offers to LGBT students.

"We wanted to make it especially clear that here at Georgetown you are safe, and that there really is a great community around to support you," he said.

Pride handed out orange T-shirts that say "I Am," the group's slogan for the week. Pride Co-President Nick Sementelli (SFS '09) said that the theme was chosen to welcome students of all identities to take part in the week's events.

"We wanted to move away from a more specif-



ANDREW MAHER/FOR THE HOYA

Three couples embraced Wednesday afternoon in Red Square as part of GU Pride's annual Coming Out Week. The group held several events each day of the week intended to raise awareness of LGBT issues.

ic label," Sementelli said. "It's about finding out who you are and being proud of who you are."

Shamisa Zvoma (MSB '08), Pride's other co-president, said that the group tabled in Red Square throughout the week and posted flyers around campus to encourage dialogue about questions of sexual identity, she said.

"Coming Out Week has always been a celebration more than anything else," Zvoma said. "It's about showing the amount of support we have on campus, from allies as well as queer students."

The week of events began on Tuesday evening with a showing of "Kissing Jessica Stein," a

movie about a woman who discovers her lesbian identity.

Wednesday's events included an open mic night in Uncommon Grounds and a discussion of "queer theory" hosted by the Critical Theory Society. Members of Pride attended a dinner yesterday evening with a group of LGBT faculty.

This evening the group will attend a screening of "Loving Annabelle," a film about a lesbian Catholic school teacher, at Washington, D.C.'s International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. The week's events will conclude Saturday night with a dance party in Bulldog Alley.