

Statement on 'Motion 408: Defending Safe(r) spaces and No Platforming', Passed by the NUS on 17/03/2016

The committee of the Union Southampton LGBT+ Society for the academic year 2015-16 has unanimously voted to oppose Motion 408, passed by the NUS LGBT Conference on the 17th March 2016.

Statement as adopted by the committee:

The Committee notes that,

- I. the National Union of Students recently adopted 'Motion 408', which resolves 'to encourage LGBT+ Societies that have a gay men's rep to drop the position' (resolution 4, clauses 5, 6 & 7),
- II. Gay men still face abuse, discrimination and stigma in general society, both in the UK and abroad,
- III. University of Southampton Student's Union (Union Southampton) is not affiliated with the National Union of Students and this committee is not bound by its policies or decisions, but that we want nonetheless to contribute to the wider debate,
- IV. Gay men have never been a minority within the LGBT+ community, but some societies have chosen to provide dedicated reps nonetheless,

The committee believes that,

1. The decision to recommend the removal of gay men's rep risks dividing the community, particularly within the university environment.
2. Resolution 4 undermines the ability of LGBT+ Societies at NUS-affiliated student unions to function as safe spaces for all members of the LGBT+ Community, which the committee believes to be an important function of any LGBT+ Society.
3. The advocacy and support provided by LGBT+ societies to students is a vital in furthering LGBT+ rights and supporting individuals, and that the removal of a dedicated rep for gay men sends a damaging signal that gay men no longer face discrimination in wider society. It potentially removes time, effort and representation dedicated to those issues specific to gay men and so denies them a key avenue through which their rights can be advocated and protected.
4. Removing dedicated representation for gay men does nothing to address concerns about racism or transphobia from within that group and that the justification provided by the Conference for resolution 4 of Motion 408 is inadequate, vague and lacks the empirical basis necessary for such a measure.
5. That the concerns highlighted by clauses 5,6 & 7 of the Conference could be better resolved without removing gay men's representatives, and further that the leadership and example set through such a role should be *beneficial in* tackling these issues.

6. Overall, Motion 408 and the divisive sentiment behind it is detrimental to the welfare of the LGBT+ Community at large, but particularly within students' unions where we should have the time and energy to be advocates for *all* of our members.

The committee concludes that,

1. We believe that individual societies should determine the roles necessary to support their students with regard to external advocacy and support as well as issues within the LGBT+ community, without external interference.
2. We remain steadfastly committed to tackling discrimination – through any appropriate means - against any member of the LGBT+ community, regardless of where that discrimination comes from, and whether it occurs within the safe spaces provided by the society, or outside of them.
3. We are committed to responding to demand from our members and assisting, in partnership with members themselves, in creating events aimed at specific minorities within our LGBT+ community, as well as creating inclusive events that all of our members can take part in.
4. We are even more glad than usual that Union Southampton is not affiliated to the NUS.

ENDS