

Letter to the editor:

Response to "Lifting the Embargo" by Adam Levenstein

Mr. Levenstein skillfully paints a prosy picture of Cuba's "Revolutionary Government."

Tell me, Mr. Levenstein...Why would thousands of Cubans attempt to flee such a utopian environment? Surely it couldn't be human rights violations...

Ed Wittmann
Junior, MET



Apathy threatens current state

--R. Carl Campbell III

Entering the second half of the nineties, there are a lot of obstacles that college students are going to have to overcome. College, local and national newspapers report a growing trend that makes higher education more of a privilege than a right.

These headlines; "Student loan cut-backs," "Student activity fee passed," and "SGA president resigns," have a direct effect on the student body. The discouraging amount of apathy that regards these issues threatens the current state of higher learning.

Maybe there's just not enough time in the day to read the newspaper. However, juggling a part-time job to pay for a full load of classes doesn't leave much time either.

If you believe the trends, college life is going to be exclusively for higher income families. The government wants to cut back on the money lent to students, while the universities continue to raise tuition costs. This will happen if student voices are not heard.

The situation is like the much tougher football team who wants to run up the score. However, there is no battle if the other team doesn't show up. It's called apathy. Understandably, it's much easier to slip onto the couch than to slip into pads and a helmet. But, it doesn't win ball games.

Apathy suppresses the student voice. There is power in numbers. The student activity fee was passed with little to no opposition. However, most of the students I've talked with either do not know what the activity fee is or are against it. So how did it get passed?

On a local level, the Behrend administration passed a clause, without Greek representation, that Greeks would no longer be allowed to rush first semester freshman. Who's next? The varsity sport teams? Such a restriction would have a sour effect on recruitment. "Sorry, kid. You can't play this semester, but eat your Wheaties and drink your milk and by the time next season rolls around, you're in."

This spectator attitude that allows administration to have absolute control is turning college life into a revival of "in loco parentis." The university is able to stifle the voice of the student through their own apathy. The administration, in a sense, becomes the parents and the students become good little children who don't throw temper tantrums, but sit back and pout until the next party. Maybe students are looking for familial support because the dual household careers are finally catching up with society.

One of the most powerful mediators between student and administration is the Student Government Association (SGA). These individuals are representatives of the student body. If they

appear to be padding their resumes with a dubious title, then they are lacking student support.

Without student support, the SGA members have their hands tied. They can be easily manipulated by administration. Not that administration doesn't have the best interest of the student in mind, it's just that they are not the students. Only students know what they want and through SGA change is possible. However, when SGA fails to become that collective voice, then SGA fails.

Student apathy has left the organization that represents them in shambles.

The sixties proved that students can have a powerful voice in social and political structures. That is, of course, if they are organized, committed, and have a goal to achieve.

The 1992 election showed students that they still have a considerable amount of power. The voter registration movement elected Bill Clinton because he signified change. He appealed to students and ventured to appear to us on MTV and Arsenio Hall.

Can Clinton be the source of student angst because he promised change and never produced?

Or could it be that everybody just wants to be themselves and can't. The path to individuality and non-conformity has become molested by industry. By non-conforming, the individual is conforming to the "norms" of non-conformity. Everyone wants to be different, but to be different is to be labelled, and to be labelled is to be put in with a group...

Tatoos, body piercing, flannels, goatees, which at one point may have been in the waves of American counter-culture, now flood the shores of American mainstream. The term "alternative" is now a misnomer.

I'm not saying that there's a whole generation of poseurs and sell-outs roaming the streets of America, buying the latest Green Day album. I am saying that industry knows what people want and that they want to be different, so they appeal to it. Whether it is signing garage bands to major record contracts or reaching people through advertising, media and prime time television, the industry knows what they are doing.

Regardless, of the source of angst, there needs to be a time when the student body unites to take charge of its own needs. Walt Whitman wrote that the "powerful play goes on and you may contribute a verse." "May" is the key word here. Apathy is crumbling the freedom that the sixties had established. No one is forcing any one else to speak, but it is a decision of whether to rule or be ruled, or in contemporary terms, plug in or unplug. This decision is crucial, your future and mine depend on it.

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