

Traverso speaks on Carmen Miranda and Latin America

by Anne Rajotte
managing editor

Did Carmen Miranda really exist? Dr. Soledad Traverso, in Wednesday's brown bag lunch, discussed Carmen Miranda, a Brazilian immigrant who became a movie star in the United States in the 1940's, and her involvement in United States-Latin American relations.

Dr. Traverso has a Ph.D. in Latin American literature and is Assistant Professor of Spanish at Behrend. She told the audience a little bit about the conditions in Brazil at the time of Miranda's rise. Brazil had a new president, Getulio Vargas, after the Revolution of 1930. The government was a dictatorship, complete with press censorship and death for dissidents. Miranda started to become famous after a manager from Victor Records saw her sing when she was just twenty years old.

Miranda came to America in 1939 and was meant to be a sort of political symbol between the U.S. and Latin America. Brazil was trying to promote a good image of Latin America, and in this, Miranda became a piece of propaganda. She was a symbol of the "Good Neighbor Policy," and some of the movies she was in depicted relations between the U.S. and Latin America.

Miranda's height of popularity was during World War II, when Hollywood produced numerous musicals to take citizens' minds off the war. The image of Miranda played off this by depicting Latin America as a relaxing and fun place, far different from Europe and the realities of war. By 1945, Miranda was the highest paid female in the United States. She wore a trademark fruit hat, which was taken from a Latin American group's female traditional dress.

While Miranda was popular in the U.S., people in her native South

America were angry at the image that Miranda was portraying to Americans. When a Miranda movie, "Down Argentine Way", was shown in Buenos Aires, moviegoers set fire to the theater and accused Miranda of being an impostor. After her time in the United States, Miranda became very unpopular in Brazil. Feminists and the Black African population believed that she made a mockery of their lives and their traditions. The upper class had never really accepted her, as she was a middle class immigrant.

She returned to the United States and was in a few more movies, but her novelty had faded. After enduring an abusive marriage, she died in 1955 of a heart attack.

Carmen Miranda, Traverso explained to the audience, was much more than a Latin American performer. She was meant to represent Latin America and to give the world a positive image of her homeland. In



photo by Jessica Trzeciakowski

Dr. Soledad Traverso discusses the stereotypes associated with Latin American women.

doing this she often upset the people from her country, and many times ended up ridiculing her culture. She would often make fun of her own accent, exaggerating the rolled r's. She created a stereotype of Latin American women that still exists today.

One of the main points of Traverso's lecture was that Carmen Miranda immersed herself so totally in the false presentation of Latin

American women that she became that stereotype. In that sense, it is hard to say if Carmen Miranda ever existed. Her stage personality, built out of different aspects of Latin American culture, many of which were not her own, became her own personality. Traverso described this as a "mask" that encompassed her and took over her life.

Dr. Traverso described an aspect of

Latin American culture and history that was new to much of the audience. With the use of old film clips from Miranda's movies and her extensive knowledge of Latin American history and literature, Traverso introduced the audience to a subject that increased the overall understanding of the relationship between the United States and Latin America.

Students express gripes about Behrend social life

by Jen MacKinnon
staff writer

While many Behrend students claim they transfer to University Park due to the superior social opportunities there, other students say they can find plenty to do in Erie. Playing sports, being in a fraternity or sorority, or just participating in activities on campus are just some of the extracurricular activities to become involved in at Behrend. Some of the activities on campus are: educational speakers, movies, dances, and comedians at Bruno's.

Many students had mixed views on the social life at Behrend. Chris Kuhns, 01 Engineering, states, "A lot of the social life depends on what you make of it." "I did not think that there was a social life," said, Brian Smith, 07 Psychology. Even though the students had mixed views, many agreed on how to improve the social life.

The social life can be improved in a variety of ways. Many felt that more activities on campus would create bigger social lives. This is mostly because one is very limited if he or she does not have a car. Angela Hudak, 05 Accounting, stated, "On campus there is nothing. If you want to have some kind of social aspect, you have to go off campus." Many students commented that there should be an increase of bands. Students also felt that the backroom facilities should be free. If the facilities were free then it would draw more students to use them. Brian Smith commented, "They should have a billiards league or a Ping-Pong league." Also, more students would be able to participate

in activities on campus because transportation would not be required. Angela Hudak replied, "The social life can be improved by putting a bar on campus." This would solve the problem of transportation. Not only would the bar be in walking distance, but no one would have to worry about finding a designated driver.

Many students felt that Bruno's should be used for more social events rather than just comedians. Misty Holt, 06, Psychology, states, "Now that Bruno's has been remodeled they should have more dances. They should also get the Greek organizations more involved in having activities there rather than just comedians." Nadine Cross, 04 History, stated, "The social life would be improved if more students were willing to be involved in various trips and programs that are offered. I think that the large commuter base damages student participation because many students go to classes and then go home."

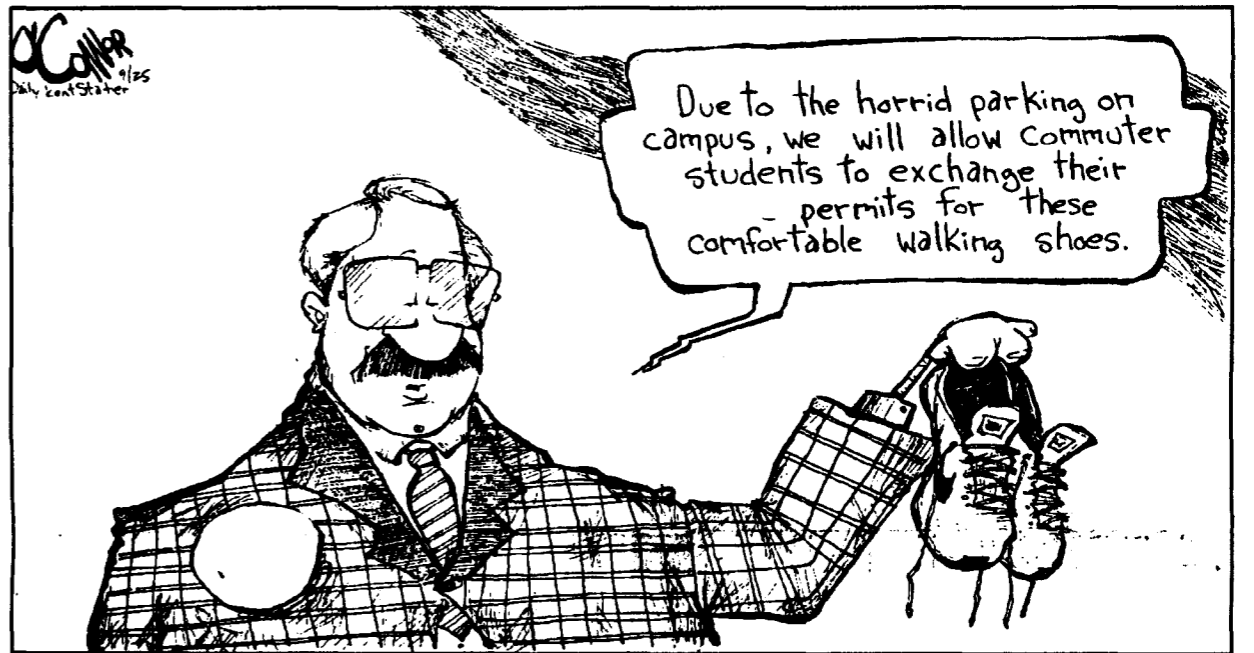
A lot of students feel that people transfer to University Park to improve their social lives. Kelly Onink, 05 Accounting, states, "There are so many people there and not everyone knows everyone. There are a lot more activities like football games, bands, and organizations to become involved in. Everything is within walking distance." Angela Hudak, comments, "I think that they move because of their major and there are more opportunities to have fun, but some people get caught up in it." Chris Kuhns stated, "There is always something going on no matter what time of the day it is."

Students also had various views on social life during the week as opposed

to the weekends. Some people thought that there was more to do on the weekends and others thought that there was more to do during the week. During the week, students are busy doing their own thing. Shane Hostetler, 05 Plastics, said "I do not really think that there really is a social life during the week due to such strenuous classes."

Misty Holt, 06, Psychology, commented, "I think that during the week the biggest social life is fraternities having parties or people drinking in their rooms." She added, "A lot of people go to State College on the weekends. The only thing there is to do on the weekends in Erie is to go to the movies, go bowling, or bars if you are twenty one." Jermaine Keenard, 05, Management, felt the exact opposite, "The social life during the week is alright. There is more to do on the weekends like go to parties, the mall, or a movie." Also, there are not as many people around on the weekend because many people go home.

Despite the various views of social life, a social life is what one makes of it. If you are unhappy with your social life, may students advise that you try to become more involved in activities. The more people that you know the better it is. Chris Kuhns states, "Money and your willingness to have a social life go hand in hand."





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