

The Behrend College Collegian

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EDITORIAL

Safer Sex Cabaret took effective approach to sex education

By the time most people are college age, they have already made important choices about their sexual practices. Unlike high school, the choice between abstinence and being sexually active is one that, most likely, has been decided. With this in mind, a safer sex presentation should be aimed at those who are in the most vital need of the information: those who are having sex. Trigon and the Joint Residence Council (JRC) attempted to do just that in last week's Safer Sex Cabaret.

Statistically, most people of college age have had sex, though many don't know all of the basics of safe sex. Taking into consideration the percentage of people having sex, the only way a safe sex presentation can be effective is to talk candidly about actually having sex. By showing the audience how to be safe while still being romantic and sexy, the Safer Sex Cabaret performed a great service. What you can do safely rather than what you can't do is an area that seems to be overlooked by many safe sex educators.

After years of high school sex ed. classes, we all should know what a condom is for and how to use one. However, how many people know what a dental dam is for? This was discussed at the Cabaret, and was most likely new information for many audience members. The discussion of different types of condoms and which are better for different types of sex are not typical of a safe sex lecture. It is very important to know these things, because students need to know all they can about how to save their own lives.

Sexually transmitted diseases are rampant on college campuses. This fact proves that students just aren't getting something about practicing safe sex. Perhaps it has something to do with the clinical way safe sex has always been discussed with them. Eleventh grade health class isn't the sexiest place to effectively learn about safe sex. It seems that this sterile environment, where the actual act of having sex is all but forgotten, is putting the idea into student's heads that safe sex can't be good sex.

The Safer Sex Cabaret combatted these unsexy, high school health class images. Sex wasn't made into a sterile, taboo, shameful thing. Human sexuality was celebrated, and also respected.

One of the components of the evening was the discussion of gay sexuality along with straight sexuality. The straightforwardness of the presenters seemed to take away the awkwardness from what are usually difficult subjects to address.

Trigon and JRC took a wonderful approach to educating students about safer sex and should be applauded for their efforts. The frankness of the program may have shocked or upset a few, but if a discussion of sex is too embarrassing for someone to take, that person isn't mature enough to be having sex.

The Cabaret didn't ignore the fact that sex is intended to be a pleasurable experience between two people. By realizing why people so often ignore safe sex messages, they have, at least in regard to those in attendance, come one step closer to creating a more educated public.

More should consider state universities as an affordable option

By William P. Kovacs
Providence Journal-Bulletin
Knight-Ridder/Tribune News Services

AS A FATHER with a bunch of kids, I had to face the problem of providing for their college education. The options are: an Ivy League type of school, private and very expensive; a state university; or finally, a community college. A family could face a yearly bill for tuition, fees, room, board, books and spending money easily \$25,000 to \$30,000 a year at one of the "good schools." One could get by with less than half that.

Just what are some of the benefits of going to the big name, private university? What is in a name? A reputation? How does a school or university get "that" reputation? The "quality of a university" is largely based on the reputation of the faculty and the quality of their papers and articles, as published in archival journals, and books and poems, etc., for the world to read. Their published output is largely funded by research contracts/grants from various federal, state and private funding sources. All universities try to attract the best faculty to enhance the reputation of

themselves as well as the institution they belong to.

In addition to research and publishing, there is also teaching and service to the community. Each school's reputation is like a very heavy, slow-moving ship. Once it gets going, it keeps going even if the engine gets turned off. A reputation is hard to improve and just as hard to decrease with time.

It should be pointed out that there exist some very famous public universities that have a reputation just as good as those of some of the Ivy League schools. Consider the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Michigan and the University of Washington, to name a few. But that is getting away from the main point.

Some of the benefits of going to that big school are the connections made that can be used after graduation, and sometimes the enhanced reputation of the school will enable you to get that good, first job.

On the down side of attending the expensive school is primarily the large cost that may put a family in an undesirable financial position, especially if there are other kids waiting to attend college. Large loans

may also be present after graduation that need to be paid off, eventually. In addition, classes are often taught by Ph.D. students (many of whom are foreign-born and have difficulty with the English language), freeing the faculty to do research that will lead to publications and an enhanced reputation.

Attending a less costly state university has the benefit of not leaving a large loan to pay off. It doesn't have the big impact on family finances that the expensive school has. But here is where the main argument is to be made: in the actual education of your child. If you look carefully at the credentials of the faculty at many state-supported schools, you will find that many of the faculty have gone to those big name (and perhaps expensive) universities themselves, and they now use the same textbooks that are used at the big schools. Classes are taught primarily by faculty. What I am implying is that the education that your son or daughter receives at a state university is academically just as good and perhaps better than at the expensive schools!

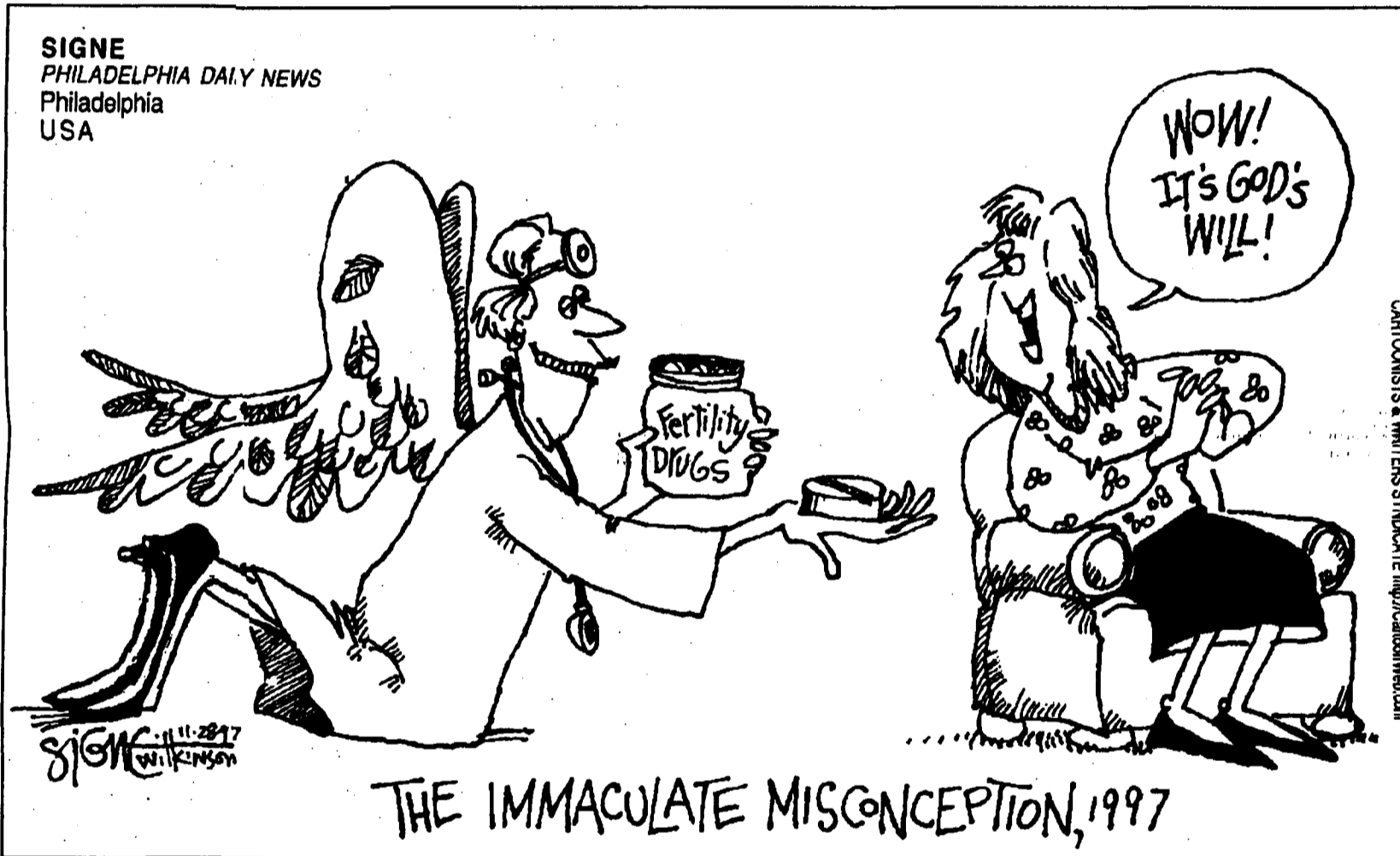
A third alternative is to go the cheapest route — living at home and

commuting to the community college for two years. Then transfer to a larger school and live on campus, as that also is part of the overall education experience.

If your son or daughter is that good, academically, he or she will flourish at the state-supported university just as well. If the big name school is that important, then go there for that graduate degree after one has received good grades and a bachelor's degree at URI. But don't forget, students themselves have to work to get those good grades.

If you want to pay double or triple the overall cost to send your child to college, send them to the big name school. If you want to have your offspring receive a good solid education for a reasonable cost in Rhode Island, then a state university will do a great job. Why not take advantage of this great resource — right in your own backyard!

William P. Kovacs is a professor of civil engineering at University of Rhode Island. He graduated from Cornell University (G.I. Bill) and the University of California at Berkeley. Three of his seven children have graduated from URI; the youngest is now a sophomore there.



Putting historic images in their rightful place

By Elmer P. Martin—Special to The Baltimore Sun

Recently, Christie's, the famed New York auction house, became the target of a decades-old struggle of blacks: The fight for black cultural survival.

After a public outcry, Christie's withdrew from sale several 19th-century slavery documents slated to be auctioned to the highest bidder. Instead, Christie's will donate the items to museums. Equating Christie's aborted sale with cultural exploitation is a continuation of a cultural war that gained momentum among black people after Emancipation.

At the turn of the century, the battles on the cultural front took many forms as black people were bombarded with negative images of themselves everywhere. In minstrel shows, whites blackened their faces and performed as imitative black folks. Circus side-shows, called "nig shows," depicted black people as "missing links," America's consummate freaks. Movies like "The Birth of a Nation" portrayed the Ku Klux Klan as heroes and black men as rapists of white women. Many advertisements depicted big-eyed, jet-black "darkies" eating watermelon with wondrous delight.

Early in this century, black people from all walks of life joined in the struggle for black cultural liberation

just as they would do later during the better-known civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Black educators waged war on children's literature featuring such characters as "Little Black Sambo" downing piles of pancakes, "the Ugly Ducking" decrying its blackness and the popular "Ten Little Nigger Boys" fated to be killed one by one.

Black scholars combatted the scientific racism of the time, which claimed to have developed irrefutable, scientific proof of black genetic inferiority.

Many black intellectuals complained loudly about the hypocrisy Europeans displayed when they characterized Africans as inferior and degenerate, while stripping Africa of invaluable artwork and artifacts to enrich their own civilization.

Those black people who kept an eye on Europe were outraged over that continent's practice of taking Africans from their homelands to be exhibited as freaks and alleged proof of white supremacy.

As recently as a year ago, South African government representatives appealed to the French government to return the remains of Saartjie Baartman, a woman who was billed as the Hottentot Venus and paraded naked around 19th-century Europe. Baartman created a national sensation in France that was on a par with that

created by the famed black dancer, Josephine Baker, in this century. But throngs paid not to see Baartman dance, but rather to ogle her huge protruding buttocks.

They could pay more for the opportunity to touch her - to see firsthand that she was not padded. Baartman was a member of the Khoi-Khoi people, known as Hottentots by Dutch settlers in South Africa. (The Khoi-Khoi tended to store fat in their buttocks, not stomachs and thighs.)

After Baartman died in 1815, Europeans remained riveted to her anatomy. Her skeleton and body parts, including her genitals, were preserved and put on display in the French Museum of Mankind until 1986, when they were placed in storage.

The Christie's affair must be seen in the context of black people's efforts to gain control over how they were and are depicted and represented in both European and American popular culture.

Earlier efforts to gain control over their own cultural products centered on getting world, state and local exhibitions to highlight black achievements. For example, Maryland's Frederick Douglass vociferously protested black exclusion from the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago; but the question white exhibition officials constantly asked was: "What achievements?"

The next step black people made was to reform white museums. The goal was not only to get these museums to stop advancing stereotypes in exhibits, but also to get them to grant full access to black museum-goers - without Jim Crow accommodations.

The black museum movement grew out of black people's frustrations with the practices of white museums. But this movement developed late, during the turbulent 1960s, when authentic black artifacts were scarce (often hidden in the basements of museums like the Smithsonian).

Even when black cultural products and artifacts are up for auction at places like Christie's, black museums are generally too financially strapped to outbid the larger white museums.

Christie's should be commended for responding in a positive manner last week to the voices of black protest. Hopefully, Christie's pledge to donate the slavery-related items to museums will set an example for others to follow.

It is a small step but an important one since the cultural war, like the black struggle for first-class American citizenship, is continuous and protracted.

Martin is a sociology professor at Morgan State University and co-founder of the Great Blacks In Wax Museum.

EYE ON ERIE

Christmas decorations lacking more than radiance

1997, the year the Grinch almost stole Christmas

by Nathan Mitchell
layout editor

Every winter, annual holiday lights are displayed at Perry Square in downtown Erie. This year, however, the original sponsor backed out and First Western Bank stepped in to support all ornaments, except for those on the gazebo, which Gannon University sponsored.

Not everyone, however, is impressed with the plain white lights and uninspiring solid colors. Shirley Dows, a mechanical engineering major at Behrend and a resident of the Erie area, was very disappointed with the park lights this year. "They're dull, they're boring, they're not invigorating. They are a poor expression of the

holiday season," she said.

There are lights in the west park as well as the east park, which are less abundant, and compared to years past, what lights do exist still leave something to be desired.

Christmas isn't just about the decorations, though; there is religious significance behind the meaning of the holiday which the sponsors have ignored. With the absence of menorahs and mangers, there is no sign of a religious connection at all. There are dozens of Christian and Jewish organizations alone whose beliefs and opinions are not being represented. It would be a more meaningful and impressive display if some sort of religious connection could be made.

Not every Who down in Whoville, the tall and the small, sang without good Christmas lights at all.