

The Behrend College Collegian
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That Strange House on Station Road

ANNE RAJOTTE

Behrend's bookstore: room for improvement

This semester was the first that my parents didn't help me out with buying my books. Previously they had paid for all or most of my books. This semester, however, I was on my own. I came back to Behrend with about \$400 that I had made working nearly everyday over the semester break. Within two days half of this money was gone.

Now, I realize that buying books is a necessary evil and these books are essential to an effective education. What I didn't realize is that Behrend students are hit harder than students at some other colleges.

Our bookstore is part of Barnes and Noble College Bookstore Corporation. It also is involved with the Missouri Book Service (MBS). These two corporations dictate the price of new and used books and also the book buy back prices. Basically, the bookstore has no real control over how much we pay for books.

However, the Gannon University bookstore has the same sort of setup as Behrend's bookstores, but the prices of their books are considerably cheaper. Gannon belongs to a corpo-

ration called Follett Campus Resources. More than 500 bookstores belong to this corporation and they are able to use each other for a resource for used books. The main advantage Gannon has over Behrend is the sheer number of used books. The new books are a little bit cheaper, but the real savings can be attributed to the amount of used books.

Eileen Jolls, the textbook manager at the Gannon bookstore explained that in addition to the books sold back by the students, more used books are obtained through Follett. Jolls also stated that there is rarely a problem with not having enough books for students. She has a computer program that keeps track of how many students have taken the class in the past and how many are scheduled for the coming semester. In the few cases when there is a shortage of books, it takes around two to three days for the books to come in. This is mainly due to the fact that there are over 500 stores that she can access to obtain extra books.

In contrast, it seems that there is always a class where only half the students have the book. Often, this

causes the class to fall behind, as students without books cannot keep up with readings and assignments. According to Mike Clarke, the acting manager at the Behrend bookstore and a student at Behrend, over enrollment often leads to a shortage of books. This may be the case some of the time, but there are classes where a good number of the students don't have the book. This can't be entirely due to over enrollment. In addition, it should be taken into consideration that students will over enroll and an appropriate amount of books should be ordered.

Also, there are classes where the book has been used in previous semesters and there still aren't enough in stock for the class. Where are all these used books going? Of course, some students chose to keep books, but it seems that, especially if a book has been used before, there should be enough for the entire class. It is detrimental to the entire class when there is a shortage of books.

Another reason that books are often out of stock, Clarke explained, is that sometimes professors fill out the

book order forms incorrectly. If the form is filled out incorrectly, the wrong book could be ordered. Now, if these forms cause such a problem each semester and lead to numerous classes with book shortages, revise the system. Make it easier for professors to avoid mistakes or double check with them before any books are ordered.

Somehow, Gannon seems to be beyond these problems. Whether their methods of knowing which books professors want or just the fact that they are involved with a different company, the fact remains clear: Behrend students are paying unnecessarily high prices for books. In all fairness, our individual bookstore can't do anything about the prices that Barnes & Noble sets for them. They can, however, anticipate that the supposed over enrollment problem or even consider the possibility of becoming involved with another book corporation.

"That Strange House on Station Road" will appear every three weeks in The Collegian.

EDITORIAL

SPC events lack support, attendance

Each weekend, the Students Programming Committee (SPC) holds several events that range from laser tag to comedians to bands. At most of these events there is a conspicuous lack of people. Though there are constant complaints of students about the lack of things to do on the weekend, few people take the obvious solution.

SPC works very hard to bring entertainment to campus and hardly anyone takes advantage of it. These events are often fairly early in the evening, before students go out. There have been excellent bands of all types playing in Bruno's, but only a few sit down to listen. SPC has also started to hold a few events during the week, so that students who normally go

home on the weekends would have an opportunity to participate.

These bands and comedians are often as good or better than acts that one would see around town or in bars. Moreover, all ages can see these bands and they are totally free. There is a huge variety of acts brought in from magic to jazz bands to karaoke. On any given weekend, there is bound to be something that most people will enjoy.

So on Friday nights, when there is nothing on TV and there are a few hours to kill before going out, don't just pass through Bruno's to get something to eat. Support SPC and take advantage of something that your tuition and student activity money is providing.

The High (and Violent) Price of Losing Choice

By Paul Ruffins=Special to the Los Angeles Times

Every January, my predominantly black neighborhood is inundated by battalions of people from out of town. These folks, virtually 99 percent white and middle class, come to Washington to protest the Roe vs. Wade decision upholding a woman's right to choose an abortion.

The protesters seldom spend any real time in Washington, which, they might justifiably conclude, has too much crime and violence. They just pass through on their way to the Supreme Court, where they decry the pain and suffering caused because they lost. However, it is my family and community, not theirs, who have to live with the pain and suffering caused by the fact that in Washington, the anti-abortion supporters have won.

"Forcing a really poor woman to have a child she can't afford virtually guarantees an increase in crime in her neighborhood," says Tanya Murphy of the Washington office of the National Black Women's Health Project. "Welfare payments are never enough to get a child through a month, and women will do whatever it takes to provide for their kids."

This situation breeds crime all over the United States. But it is particularly acute in Washington, where, as the anti-abortion Family Research Council proudly announced in its publication Washington Watch, "Pro-family members (of Congress) have stopped federal funding of abortion in several areas ... federal health care plans of government employees including the District of Columbia, and for Medicaid patients (including HMO plans)."

Washington has the nation's highest percentage of federal employees. Under their health plans, thousands of hard-working women cannot receive abortions or even IUDs. Although they pay for this health-care insurance out of their own salaries, abortions are not paid for, even if they have more children than they can afford or have health complications.

District citizens have consistently voted pro-choice, yet Congress will not allow local taxes to fund abortions for poor women. Conservative politicians can tout their anti-abortion credentials by forcing their choices on Washington, without the political risk of burdening their own constituents with a dangerous pregnancy or a severely deformed child.

But the most significant way the anti-abortionists have won in Washing-

ton is by convincing too many women to choose illegitimacy over abortion, even if it destroys their prospects of a stable, family life.

It's hard to imagine anyone suggesting that a white middle-class girl drop out of high school to go on welfare and have a baby by a man who has been to jail. But, in many parts of Washington, where, according to the Sentencing Project, more than 25 percent of all the young black men have been through the criminal justice system, hundreds of girls do this every year.

In Washington, 66 percent of all babies are born to unmarried women. In the two poorest wards, 7 and 8, the figures are 83 percent and 84 percent, respectively. One in five births is to a teen-ager; 49 percent are to women with inadequate prenatal care. Because many women are anti-abortion, they may opt to have the child, despite the fact that they are on welfare, addicted to drugs or abusing children they already have.

The results: Washington's homicide rate is at least six times the national average, with an infant mortality rate two to three times higher. The public schools are so poor the local school board was stripped of its authority.

Liberals say it's unfair to blame all this on too many illegitimate children. However, the anti-abortion activists say a woman should have a baby even though she knows it is condemned to violent streets and terrible schools.

This feeds the black speculation that the real anti-abortion agenda is not to "protect life" but to pressure white women to have more children so they do not become a minority. Murphy doesn't go that far, but does say, "We certainly know that these anti-abortion laws weren't passed by African Americans, and aren't intended to benefit the black community." She adds, "Black folks make up a large percentage of the people who are personally anti-abortion but who are politically pro-choice because they see what happens to a neighborhood when people have children they can't feed or supervise."

The dirty secret of the conservative right is that some of the same groups who have made it hard for poor black women to obtain abortions have also conducted the clearest research on the death, bloodshed and violence that occurs in black neighborhoods when women choose illegitimacy over abortion.

The Heritage Foundation's senior policy analyst, Patrick Fagan, author

of "The Real Root Causes of Violent Crime: The Breakdown of Marriage, Family and Community" writes, "Of all the social indicators, the one which is tied most closely to serious violent crime is illegitimacy." He continues, "Each 10 percent increase in single-parent families produces a 17 percent increase in violent teen crime." Fagan asserts that 50 percent of girls who have a baby out of wedlock before age 18 will be long-term welfare recipients.

A similar conclusion was drawn by the conservative theorist William J. Bennett, who co-wrote the book "Body Count," documenting the large percentages of young black and Latino men victimizing their neighborhoods, driving out jobs and stable, tax-paying families. Like Fagan, Bennett believes this violence is not caused by racism or economic discrimination, but "moral poverty," defined by children growing up in an environment without responsible or caring adults. According to Bennett and his co-authors, the results are "super-predators" so remorseless that protecting society requires nearly 100,000 more prison cells to cage these boys when they enter the violent teenage years.

What about adoption? For poor black women in Washington, it's not a real option. According to Harold Singletary, who counsels abused and neglected children in the District, "Because of religious and cultural biases, less than 10 percent or 15 percent of young black women consider adoption. And, if there were enough homes for these children, we would not already have 35,000 abused and neglected children in D.C.'s foster-care system."

That system has been so mismanaged and overwhelmed, it was forced into receivership. "Conservatives don't really think it's important for black children to find caring homes," say Singletary. "If they did, why are they fighting to stop gays from adopting?"

One person who understands illegitimacy is Leon Dash, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his research on Washington's underclass. "The most common outcome is the perpetuation of an intergenerational cycle of violence," Dash explains. "Most young teen mothers constantly slap, push and scream at their children - just like their own mothers did. By the third grade, these kids, particularly the boys, respond to any frustration with physical aggression, becoming a problem for the schools and a threat to the community."

The real tragedy is that, even when a young woman understands how an illegitimate child can threaten her life and her neighbors, the anti-abortionists are insisting that she have the child anyway. Yet, as both the Heritage Foundation and Bennett have proved, by encouraging illegitimacy, anti-abortionists are responsible for much of the violence outside my house.

Ruffins is executive editor of the Crisis magazine, published by the NAACP.

