

## The Behrend College Collegian

published weekly by the students of Penn State Erie, The Behrend College

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### EDITORIAL

## Sororities too sensitive to negative remarks

Recently, many groups on campus have expressed discontent about the amount of recognition they receive for their various activities. The most recent seems to have been the sororities.

Sororities have been, in the past, extremely sensitive about any negative remark made about them or fraternities and sororities as a whole. They claim to be constantly fighting a negative image and anti-Greek students.

The most recent controversy occurred at the last SGA open forum that was held April 1st. When SGA President Michael Zampetti made a comment about sorority members attending the forum because they were forced to do so by their organization, it seemed to have spurred some anger among sorority members. Zampetti's comment was hardly anything that deserved as much backlash as it received. Like every other campus group, sororities must realize that their organization is not the most important on campus and must learn to take comments such as these with a

grain of salt.

In addition, the reporter who included this statement in her story received comments from members of sororities who said that she shouldn't have even included it in the story. It was that reporter's job to write about the forum, not to make the sororities look good. If there were unflattering remarks made about the sororities and a reporter reports on them, she should not have to deal with members telling her what to put or what not to put in her article.

Sororities need to take themselves less seriously. Would these members have attended the forum if their sororities had not asked them to go? This is not to say that it wasn't good for the sorority members to attend the forum. It was a great show of support for SGA that sorority members participated in the forum. However, it seems that any remark remotely criticizing sororities is enough for someone to be deemed "anti-Greek." Sorority members need to stop assuming that every group on campus is persecuting them.

## SGA candidate Testrake has experience and commitment

Many of the candidates for SGA senator are quite good and will probably do a great job. However, Charles Testrake has already proven he will work hard for the students. In his past terms with SGA, he has been actively involved with the organization, drawing up resolutions on students' concerns and communicating with administration.

Testrake has the experience and the ambition to fairly and effectively represent the student body. He is committed to listening to student concerns and working towards solving problems on campus.

Next Tuesday and Wednesday, keep Charles Testrake's record and ambition in mind. He is one of the strongest candidates for SGA senator.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Professor points out underlying meanings in student comments

Dear Editor,

The April 9 issue of *The Collegian* featured a much appreciated front page article on some of Trigon's recent activities. Coincidentally, student comments made in two other articles on this same page suggest how much more work is still to be done to educate the Behrend community about gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues. I am not suggesting these comments should have been stifled, either by the students or by the newspaper itself. Such censorship, particularly under the guise of "political correctness," only prevents us from thinking more carefully about some of the assumptions underlying our everyday speech. I hope that none of the students quoted here will take offense, then, if I tease out some of the implications of their words. I don't know any of them, and am not assuming anything about them personally. I am rather, trying to think a bit about what our language inadvertently conveys.

Specifically: in the article on Samuel Delany, a student noted that the novelist's announcement of his homosexuality "made it harder for

people to look at his work objectively." I don't deny that this was probably true for some audience members, and yet I wonder: when a heterosexual speaker — say, Lucille Clifton — speaks about her husband and children (as she did during her recent reading at Behrend), does this automatically prejudice straight people in favor of her work? If so, such audience members can hardly be presumed to be "objective," (unless "objective" is actually a synonym for "heterosexual.") If not, if simply speaking of one's heterosexuality does not prejudice an audience in favor of a writer, why would Samuel Delany's statement about his homosexuality prejudice an audience against him? Unless, of course, the audience was not "objective," but homophobic to begin with. To complicate matters even further: Delany is also a light-skinned black man who could easily have passed as white. Should he have failed to mention his race, so as not to risk offending the racists in the audience? Yes, homophobic and racist people were probably offended by Delany's simple statement, "I am Black and I

## That Strange House on Station Road

ANNE RAJOTTE

# SGA members not keeping commitment to students

Last week, the Student Government Association (SGA) finally issued their report on the possibility of attracting businesses onto Station Road. The Student Life committee was assigned last Fall to prepare this report by March. Their report was delayed due to the fact that it was not ready to be presented by their deadline. When the report finally was presented, it was not much more than the results of a survey that SGA sponsored earlier in the semester.

The committee was also supposed to contact local businesses and national chains about the possibility of locating around campus. They claim to have already done this. However, in the five months they have been working on this, not one business has replied.

The possibility of businesses near campus is one of the few campus issues that students have any interest in. What do they get for this interest? A committee that has obviously not done the job they were meant to do. If these businesses had been contacted three or four months ago, they surely would have responded. What owner of a Taco Bell or a McDonald's doesn't want to have a restaurant across the street from over a thousand college students who don't want to eat at the dining hall? A convenience store owner would become rich on selling just cigarettes alone. But mysteriously, none of these businesses felt it would be worth their time to express their interest to SGA.

The Student Life committee did not spend an adequate amount of time on this issue. If they had done their jobs properly, there would have been a more thorough report to present and students would know how this campus might change in the next few years. To a freshman, knowing that there will be access to stores and restaurants in the next few years may make the difference between staying at Behrend or transferring to University Park.

SGA elections are next week, and I urge voters to keep the work this committee has done in mind. This is an is-

ue that is very important in attaining and retaining students and also to the quality of life at Behrend. If this committee has produced little more than survey results in five months, how long

lot about the commitment of our senators.

The issue of the establishment of businesses across from campus will only become more important as the

ence over future development in the Behrend area.

The development will surely happen with or without SGA's involvement, but the only way to ensure that this change will be well received and beneficial to the students is to have our student leaders influencing decisions. The new highway will bring about great changes to this area, including the destruction of several houses and buildings near campus, including the Behrend child care center.

Another building that will be likely be destroyed is a house a few blocks from Behrend; the strange house that this column is named after. The front door of this house is about five feet off the ground. This historical and certainly beautiful piece of architecture may well be destroyed for the sake of a McDonald's or a Country Fair. *That Strange House on Station Road* has appeared every three weeks in *The Collegian*.

SGA elections are next week, and I urge voters to keep the work this committee has done in mind. This is an issue that is very important in attaining and retaining students and also to the quality of life at Behrend. If this committee has produced little more than survey results in five months, how long will it take for any real change to happen?

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SGA senators are elected to represent student needs to administration. When a committee wastes time and produces few results on a project that is so important to students, it says a

public water system is extended to land across from Behrend, and the Eastside Access highway begins construction. SGA should certainly be involved with the changes on campus. However, if their commitment remains at the level it is at now, SGA will have no influ-



photo by Andrea Zaffino

### That Strange House on Station Road

am Gay." But such people could hardly be considered "objective." And perhaps one of Delany's goals was precisely to make it "hard" for some audience members to forget his race and sexuality under the guise of a phony "objectivity."

Describing his frustration with Housing and Food Services, a student in another article is quoted as saying, "It feels like Housing and Food Services makes you drop your drawers and touch your toes." Unless I misunderstand the metaphor, this is a euphemism for being penetrated ("screwed") from behind. Another student adds, "Housing and Food Services, why you riding mine?" The speakers here are apparently assuming that being penetrated is something unpleasant, painful, and humiliating, or at the very least, not desirable. What is interesting about these statements is that they don't distinguish between anal and vaginal penetration, given that either can occur "from behind." The metaphor is thus both homophobic and misogynist, expressing disgust and ridicule for the way some people — some gay men, some women — have sex. Is this what heterosexual men imagine they are doing when they have intercourse with women — causing them pain, humiliating them? Are the speakers simply projecting onto gay intercourse their own fantasies about what it feels like to be a woman? I've always found anti-porn feminist Andrea Dworkin's writing to be "excessive" in terms of its depiction of all heterosexual intercourse as rape, yet Dworkin apparently shares with these students the belief that being "screwed" or "ridden" is degrading — apparently as degrading as having to eat at Bruno's. And to the sexually active heterosexual female students of Behrend, I can only ask, "Would you want to be intimate with someone who thinks that sex with him is equivalent to the 'screwing' he gets from Housing and Food Services?"

Let's hope the sisters are doing it for themselves. (I hope I have not offended readers with this discussion; I don't see, however, how it is possible to respond to this metaphor — a metaphor the editors of *The Collegian* chose to highlight in the story — without raising these issues.")

As any recent graduate of English 015 knows, our language has much to teach us about cultural mores and values. It is perhaps fitting that a visit from a writer as brilliant and brave as Delany should provoke a discussion of how our language might reveal the prejudice we assumed we had conquered.

John Champagne  
Assistant Professor of English  
Co-Advisor, Trigon

## SRTEs should be taken seriously by students

Dear Editor,

I would like to relay a concern of mine that concerns the perceived importance of the teacher evaluations handed out at the end of every semester by every professor. I learned from my academic advisor (AA) that she wouldn't be teaching next semester. My AA then went on to tell me how many professors are in the same predicament as she every year. It seems that what a student feels is an adequate response on the teacher evaluation (5-6) is not what the various department heads view as adequate (6-7). Many students, myself included, do not feel that anyone should receive a "7," or strongly agree, on the positive aspects of the survey. Some department heads, which decide if professors stay or leave the faculty list, feel that any LESS than a "7" on a positive aspect is too low. I would like the department heads to accept the way many, if not a majority, of the students grade. What I ask is not for the department heads to lower their standards for the

professors, but for them to come back down to reality. Too many great professors have been lost because of this "misunderstanding," and it should be considered an offense to Behrend's dignity and pride should the department heads continue in their "unachievable" expectations of both students and professors, in part. NOTE: I am not saying that the department heads are wrong in their judgements of the evaluations, I merely suggest that they realize what many students consider a "good" evaluation.

David Grygier, 03 MIS

## SGA Senate candidate explains qualifications

Dear Editor:

BRING STUDENT GOVERNMENT BACK TO THE STUDENTS! That will be my major goal if I am reelected to a third term as one of your SGA Senators. My name is Charles Testrake and since my freshman year I have been a Senator on the Student Government Association.

Throughout my two years as a Senator, I've worked hard for YOU the student body. Last year I presented a resolution to alleviate the parking problem on campus and a resolution condemning Housing and Food Services prices. And this year I presented a resolution calling on Penn State to institute a Fall Break, which is now seriously being considered by the administration. But now it's time to BRING STUDENT GOVERNMENT BACK TO THE STUDENTS!

I feel the way to do this is to redesign the Student Life Committee, a subcommittee of SGA. The goal of the Student Life Committee is to research student problems and concerns, find solutions to alleviate them, and then present legislation before SGA to do so. Unfortunately, throughout the past years, the Student

Life Committee has, for the most part, been open only to SGA members. If I am reelected to SGA, I will see to it as chair of the Student Life Committee, that this committee will be open to the entire student body.

Next year the Student Life Committee will hold weekly or biweekly open meetings in which all those who are willing may come and be a part of the committee. The committee will be divided up into subcommittees, each to deal with one particular issue or concern of students. The Student Life Committee will then take the findings of the subcommittees and present them before SGA.

To be honest, it is unlikely that the Student Life Committee and SGA will be able to fix everything that is wrong on this campus in one year's time. However if YOU the students get involved, the greater impact we will have. We can become a powerful lobby to the administration, local Harborcreek government, and even the state of Pennsylvania. So I encourage all those who read this letter to come to a Student Life Committee meeting and an SGA meeting with your problems and concerns about Behrend. On this Tuesday and Wednesday vote to BRING STUDENT GOVERNMENT BACK TO THE STUDENTS. Reelect CHARLES TESTRAKE as your SGA Senator.

Respectfully,  
Charles Testrake  
SGA Senator

Letters to  
the Editor

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