

Live From Guyana

AYODELE JONES

Love should be expressed everyday

Here we go again. It's only three days from Valentine's day, and all the hoopla has begun. Every year around this time we are bombarded with pictures and images of roses, chocolates, and, of course, LOVE.

Valentine's day honors love and those in love, yet the origin of this holiday is the death of a saint. Valentine's day is named after a Roman priest, Valentine, who secretly married young couples against an emperor's decree. He was arrested and beheaded on February 14 for defying the orders. After his death, Val-

entine was made a saint. Whether or not Valentine envisioned a holiday full of Hallmark cards, mylar balloons, and Godiva chocolates, one will never know. Nevertheless, that is what the holiday has become.

After the Christmas decorations are taken down, hearts and cupid are abundant everywhere. The upcoming weeks are filled with anxiety; how much do I spend on my valentine, how do I let my secret crush know how I feel, and how much is too much?

Before we begin our shopping

sprees for the right cards and the perfect gifts, let me ask a question. Is Valentine's day the only day we think of expressing our love to those we care for? Isn't the love we share supposed to be expressed every day of the year and not just the fourteenth of February?

Love is the everyday things that we do for each other, like calling a friend when they're down, giving a word of encouragement, or even a shoulder to cry on when needed.

There are three kinds of love; eros (romantic love), philia (reciprocal

love), and agape (overflowing love for all).

Love is not a robe from Victoria's Secret or a pair of boxer shorts from the GAP. Let Valentine's day be a celebration of the love that we should celebrate every day of the year and not just February 14th.

Ayodele Jones is the managing editor of the Beacon. Her column appears every three weeks.

The Lobster and the Music to the Dance of Life

MIKE PERKINS

How many planets do we have?

Every child in elementary school learns that our solar system is made up of a star and nine planets, Neptune, Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Pluto. However, that number may be soon reduced by one.

The planet Pluto may be soon downgraded to the status of minor planet, in the same class as asteroids and other large objects that orbit in the solar system. The downgrading of Pluto is causing quite a commotion in astronomical circles, notably among Americans, because Pluto is the only "planet" discovered by an American.

But why drop Pluto into a lower classification? The reason is not too difficult to understand. First, is its size; it is smaller in size than the United States. Pluto's orbit is also not

normal. Many people know that Pluto and Neptune occasionally switch places as the farthest planet from the sun. No other planets have orbits that cross each other, so this is strange. Also, Pluto is inclined to the other planets. That means that while all the planets orbit on roughly the same level, Pluto goes above and below all the others. This further separates it from the pack of normal planets.

However, Pluto also has factors that distinguish it as a full-fledged planet. First, while it is small, it is bigger than most minor planets. It has a thin atmosphere, is spherical, and has a large moon.

The Minor Planet Center, which classifies and keeps track of all minor planets, currently has 9,999 objects classified. On March 2, they

want to classify Pluto as number 10,000 in a large ceremony. When it was announced that the Minor Planet Center wanted to list Pluto as number 10,000, there was an uproar. Immediately an anti-10,000 group was founded to oppose the transition, while the Minor Planet Center appealed to amateur astronomers for support. While temporarily the Secretariat of the International Astronomical Union has announced Pluto will not be downgraded, the fight continues on, and it raises an interesting question.

Has national interest and pride become more important than scientific truth and classification? If it has then the future is grim, since science should not be based on national influence at all.

I feel that the decision to rename

Pluto should wait for awhile, until we know more about the asteroid fields that lay beyond Neptune's orbit. We know that there are many objects similar to Pluto that orbit far out in the solar system. But until we discover if any of those are larger than Pluto, have atmospheres, or a moon, we should leave Pluto alone. However, I do agree that this confrontation over Pluto's future has forced astronomers to come up with a more concrete definition of what a "major" planet is. Only then can we prevent future conflicts over classifications like this.

Mike Perkins is layout editor of the Beacon. His column appears every three weeks.

Bribery may be routine but I don't have to like it

By Leonard Pitts Jr.
Knight-Ridder Tribune

So, I'm working for a certain nationally syndicated radio show, where one of my duties is to sift through the hundreds of letters listeners send each week asking us to dedicate songs to their loved ones. And I open one of those letters, and money falls out. It's not much money — maybe a buck or two. Just a little inducement to give this letter special attention. I tuck the bills to the bulletin board, intending to send them back to their owner. Never get around to it, though. As best I can remember, the money was still on the board when I left that job for this one, eight years ago.

The sender was a young person, which accounts for the modest size of the attempted bribe. But I always felt there was some minor insult implicit in the notion that our favor could be bought for money, two bucks or two hundred. I guess that only goes to show that I have absolutely no future as a bellhop, a maitre 'd or a member of the International

Olympic Committee.

If you had asked me six months ago how the members of that committee went about choosing host cities for the Olympic Games, I'd have assumed they weighed relevant factors and made responsible decisions. Silly me. Turns out that you get the Olympics to come to your town by plying the decision makers with lavish gifts, including scholarships for their kids, fancy cowboy hats for their heads, and hookers for their, um ... stress. At least, that's the unmistakable inference of the mushrooming scandal surrounding Salt Lake City's winning bid to host the 2002 Winter Games.

Naïf that I am, I seem to be one of the few people who's been taken by surprise here. A Time magazine report indicates that this kind of thing goes on all the time. The Miami Herald recently editorialized that any surprise over this affair belongs to "a more-innocent era." And a columnist for the Washington Post suggests that vote-buying and bribery have been staple features of the Olympics

for a hundred years.

OK, point taken. Here's my problem: I don't want them to be right. Oh, I accept that corruption happens. What I'm having difficulty with is the suggestion that I ought not be surprised when it does. I find it difficult to be that jaded. Difficult not to wonder what I'll next be called upon to consider unremarkable. Maybe it'll be the politician who belongs to the corporate donor. Or the judge whose ruling was purchased in chambers.

I don't want them to be right because even if these things happen every day — and yeah, they do — it seems to me that we can't afford to regard them as expected and unsurprising. To do that is to cross a line we don't want to cross, to abrogate the sense of outrage, which is our best defense in the face of corruption.

I don't want them to be right ... but maybe they are. Maybe surprise is beyond us now. Maybe a sense of outrage is like a sense of smell — it weakens if you use it too much.

You know how it is, after you sniff

a few perfume samples in the store, your nose loses the ability to distinguish between them? Well, this ain't perfume we're smelling here. It's gamier, an odor of cynicism and pessimism and the smug assurance that the person who hasn't yet been bought is the one who has nothing to sell.

I keep thinking of the kid whose money I left tacked up on the bulletin board. We never used her letter; it was disqualified on its merits. But I remember wondering where on earth she might have gotten the notion that cash could render those merits irrelevant. Where did she get the idea that this is the way the world works?

But maybe that's the wrong question. We routinely see judges, cops, and politicians nabbed for peddling influence. We're learning now that the Olympics have been sold to the highest bidder.

Maybe the better question is this: Where could she have gotten the idea that the world works any other way?

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A view from the lighthouse

What's the deal with the lack of participation?

There seems to be a total lack of participation by the part of students on campus. Activities, programs, and extracurricular activities are held on a continual basis throughout the campus, and only a small proportion of students attends these events.

\$220,000 will be allocated for student activities for the 1999-2000 school year. This amounts to approximately \$75 per year that each student is charged. Each student is charged this fee whether they are involved or not in activities in campus.

Students should get involved with how their money is being spent and should also join clubs that are being funded by the student activity fee. Without their input, decisions, as to what the money should be spent on, will be made by others. Students may not concur with these decisions made, however, they have no right to complain. It's similar to the voting concept, if you do not get involved, you have no right to bitch and complain concerning the problems that arise through the lack of input.

So, why are students displaying such a lack of motivation? Maybe their academic schedule is too time

consuming. Maybe they are too busy partying. Or maybe they just don't care.

Behrend has a lot of resources and opportunities to offer. We were very lucky to have such events as the Goo Goo Dolls concert and the speech given by Jerry Greenfield. The Blue Bus, which may not be run next year due to the lack of its usage, is also funded by the student activity fee.

Campus activities enrich our classroom experiences. They raise the awareness and knowledge of students. They are integral to our development as students. They are necessary for future career growth; employers are looking for more than just academics on a resume.



Letter to the editor My View

This country has been transfixed by the Clinton-Lewinsky affair for over a year now. We have been flooded with literally thousands of media-driven stories that have quenched a thirst for more tabloid journalism.

Our nation is governed by the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary branches. These are maintained by checks and balances preventing the dominance of any single branch. The system was not established to let polling data, or powerful media moguls dictate our people's sense of ethics.

President Clinton, in my estimation, has worked well in managing our domestic affairs, and foreign affairs. I believe that he has received the "lion's share" of the credit for the robust economy.

Like many presidential administrations in the past, the president has had his share of scandals. They include such names as Paula Jones, Gennifer Flowers, and the Vince Foster incident among others. In addition, he lied to an army officer about entering Vietnam, by not following through in the ROTC program.

President Clinton is one of our most consummate politicians we have had in the oval office. His character, or lack of, is the focal point of this issue. I remember in the 1992 and 1996 election, the major media, in reference to Bill Clinton, said that "character doesn't count!" Most Americans believe it does. In the President's defense, I have thought of several points that other "political pundits" have not covered:

1. If Hillary and Bill had divorced before this or been separated this

would have been a moot point.

2. If the President were not a practicing Christian, apathetic about religion agnostic or an atheist; or if his personal convictions allowed this, he could remain vigilant that he was being true to himself.

3. If the President had committed what the general public thought was clearly out of bounds of legal or moral decency, perhaps if had relations with a minor child, a foreign national, someone that could have "compromised" national security, this could have had a different spin.

This whole incident will clearly, in a historical context, taint whatever the President has accomplished. I believe, however, that the eroding morality of this entire country in the last generation cannot be pinned on one man. As Americans, we must look to unite, whatever color, creed, or country of origin.

Accepting the behavior of the President in such a cavalier fashion has definitely "lowered the bar" for what is expected of any future Presidents or politicians. If my memory does serve me well, Senator Packwood was drummed out of the Senate for harassment charges and Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas was grilled and scrutinized for his "supposed" joke telling and innuendoes with Anita Hill.

In closing, we, as a nation, cannot expect our leaders to be as pure as the driven snow, however there must be a standard that must be met to maintain the public trust in our elected officials.

Michael Coursey
Senior Political Science Major

