

A View From The Lighthouse

Getting an accurate representation of the world?



Well, it is a new millennium and things are definitely changing. And as we progress through this new millennium, more change will be inevitable. As our world changes, we will definitely be affected, and thus it is necessary that we consider changing along with our world. We are beyond the days of the old ideal of America with clearly defined roles for its citizens. Underrepresented sectors of society such as women, African Americans, Latinos, Asians, gays, lesbians, and others have fought to defy these roles and continue to fight to make their presence known and address their needs. As America has come to realize these needs, the country has had to respond with several changes.

This melting pot called America has always struggled to justly reflect the colorful collage made up of its diverse citizens. As we move further into the new millennium, America will become even more colorful as under-represented groups grow and make their presence in all areas of society more prominent. With this, America struggles even harder to reflect a more diverse society in its ideals. As times change our country will have to be more careful that the ideals upheld are those which reflect a modern and rapidly changing society of diverse individuals.

We are at a time when cultural diversity is emerging, and thus it becomes crucial to ask ourselves if we are acknowledging this. Gays and lesbians, for example, have been making increased efforts to demand acceptance and enjoy the same freedoms that heterosexuals do. Their efforts have drawn America's attention to the prominence of gays and lesbians today.

However, with the recognition of their prominence, the question remains. Is society making enough effort to consider and include their culture? The same goes for other cultures as well. For example, one might ask if black and Latino cultures are justly reflected in today's various media forms? Is the media making enough effort, or is it

just impossible for the media to consider the various cultures, genders and sexual orientations simultaneously?

Catering to diversity is becoming a hotter debate today as everyone from the young to the old to the weak to the bold sound their voices as to how society should consider them with more regard. Some of these voices have been raised to promote more casual images of the physically handicapped in ads and publications, more images of independent women in television and film, and more regard to gays and lesbians in the social handling of relationship issues. While some are stressing the importance of being open minded and politically correct with these issues, others contend that we are becoming too sensitive and overly critical. What are we to do as a society in order to meet the needs of a more diverse nation and to justly and accurately reflect a multicultural society?

The fact that it is impossible to include everyone all the time is accurate. However, it is also true that the media is taking the strides to be everything to everyone. And even though the efforts may seem small to some, they are there.

The best way that we can suggest to change your world is to get involved with the people and things that you feel are under-representing you.

With that said, the *Beacon* is looking for people of all ages, races, genders, sexual preferences, political persuasions, and religions... to join the staff for the spring semester. You can contact us at almost anytime of the day here in the office. Or email us at behrcoll5@aol.com, or call us at 898-6488.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION: WHAT WILL EACH OF THESE GUYS DO WITH HIMSELF AFTERWARDS IF HE LOSES?



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No more ignorance at the *Beacon*

Dear Editor,

As much as I didn't want to make my letter on gender separation a big crossfire event, I was so very disappointed to have been dismissed immediately. This issue is not "small potatoes" to me! I was calm until I was told to calm down. The invalidation that comment conveyed was disheartening to me, to say the least. Instead of simply thinking about what I meant or where I was coming from, it seems that the editorial next to my letter sent out a little pat on the head and a brush under the rug. I do not, and did not, read something into your publications that wasn't there.

Last year an article was printed that ignorantly disqualified my intimate relations as "real." That is personal. I will receive it as such. I'm not saying it was vicious, just inaccurate and upsetting. No, none of these columns are written about me personally, but they are written about things that affect my life. They are written for me, being a member of the student body. Certain things will strike my interest or concern, and when they do, I might respond. My responses in no way, shape, or form are personal either, so who needs to calm down?

You are not sorry if your boy/girl column

offends me, so don't offer false condolences. If that were the case, I can see something like, "I just never thought of that. I'm sorry you feel that way" being printed. No, what I saw was, "calm down." Don't bother to validate the opinions offered, just run and hide behind your defenses. That's a shame. As far as people WANTING to put themselves within a gender stereotype, that simply isn't the case. Columns such as the boy/girl one in *The Beacon* do that for us. That was what annoyed me. Perhaps it wasn't created with those intentions, but that is the role it helps facilitate on campus. There is where my problem lays, not with "all" of the student population being blind and intolerant to diversity. I know that is not the case. It also is not true that ignorance and intolerance don't live and breathe here at Behrend. I will continue to point that out as I see fit, not because I feel the need to attack someone and something with names like bigot or homophobe, but because it makes my heart sad to see the continuous breeding of such attitudes.

We could decide to broaden our horizons and read and write about more than simple he said/she said bull. We could expand beyond the labels and boxed confines of rigid race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation stereotypes. Or, we could just

continue to promote them and endorse them with columns that sport cute little song titles and exploit the equality and liberation that so many have fought heart and soul for.

Sure, cute little song titles and antics that follow those themes can be amusing. I admit that. I'm not blasting any of *The Beacon* staff as wrong or bad. I simply felt an urge to express my dismay in the patterns I saw unfolding in an environment that I participate in. There's no need to get huffy. If my opinions "tork" someone so much, what are they hiding from? What are they afraid to see about themselves? Perhaps that's the bigger issue here.

In conclusion, and my last offer to defend my claims, the patterned gender separations I see in the paper are, I suppose, to be expected within the society we live. Still, I see humans being able to go far beyond that and live lives based on more than labels and stereotypes. That is where I aim to take my family and I just wanted to say that I see certain small things, such as the columns written with gender walls between them, a way to hinder society from progressing to that broader state of mind. Thank you for your time.

Abbey Atkinson
GAS, 04

Why can't smart do as smart does?

What is so bad about being smart? Go ahead and snicker, think about how geeky of a question that was. But then give it a little bit of serious thought. Now, I realize that by seriously thinking about it you may have to throw off the stupid aura for a minute, and since I'm sure you don't want anyone to know you can intelligently think about stuff, you might want to go somewhere where no one else can see you. Okay? Now let me repeat the question.

Why is there such a negative stereotype attached to being intelligent? Now, in high school, it was cool to make fun of the smart geeky kid who had the greasy haircut and wore the dark blue floodwaders, thick smudged glasses, and the cool blue-and-green-striped, skin-tight shirts. You know who I'm talking about - he answered every question, was president of every science club, and screwed up the curve by getting a 96% on the final everyone else got a 69% on. I guess the ridicule can be chalked up to the insecurity of most high schoolers, and the fact that conformity is the rule, and all exceptions are to be eliminated or humiliated at the very least. Hell, even the teachers made fun of those kids.

But we are in college now, right? In theory the people going to college are supposed to want to be here. I am pretty sure that college is supposed to be about the pursuit of higher knowledge, not the pursuit of loose girls, hot guys, and cheap beer. So why is it still taboo to be smart? Why should I be made to feel ridiculous if I get 100% on a test? Why do I get accused of having "sexual relations" with my professors when I cough up another A? Why do people get mad at me when I don't go to class and still get a decent grade - when they'd do the same thing if they could?

I know some people who don't procrastinate, go to every class, and actually study for tests -

Beyond the Cheap Colored Lights Liz Hayes



sometimes they even study a few days before the test, not the hour before.

I envy them - I can't seem to do anything on time. Hell, I'm writing this editorial at 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, and it was due at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday. But I keep hearing people laugh at those who have projects done ahead of time and have only missed one class... all semester. (I've missed seven classes this week, and it is only Wednesday!) But why are they the weird ones?

I guess I just don't understand why being stupid, or at least not smart, is so acceptable in this country. Hell, even I am guilty of it. *Tommy Boy* is my favorite movie. That movie is the ultimate celebration of stupidity. "I got a D+! I got a D+! I passed!" "It's called reading. Top to bottom, left to right, group words together as sentences." "See these letters after the city? That's called a state!" "Lots of people go to college for seven years." Now, other than showing off my superior and pathetic knowledge of the movie, what do those quotes show you? That the smart people aren't cool. "My fellow nerds, and I will retire the nerdery with our calculators."

Here's another perspective for you (get ready, I am about to make my presidential endorsement). People are now busting Gore's balls because he's too smart. Excuse me, but wouldn't it be a good thing to have a really smart President for once? One that can spell and

actually does have a firm hold of all his faculties? I mean, when some foreign minister of some country that we don't have best relations with is talking to us about some treaty or law, I want the President to know what he is talking about. Now, I have heard the argument that Bush is getting a bad rap because he can't speak well, but that he probably - PROBABLY? - knows more than he lets on. But isn't being able to communicate effectively with

others just one of the many skills that a President should have? I'm pretty sure that our diplomats are supposed to be able to represent themselves and our country adequately. Hell, not just adequately, excellently.

I must be honest - I really fear that people are planning on voting for Bush because he's not as much of a showoff as Gore. But that goes back to my former point - why is letting the world know you are smart surrounded with negative consequences? As far as I'm concerned, Gore hasn't really insulted Dubyah (notice how that gets spelled phonetically - can't Bush pronounce his middle initial either?) the way he could. But we think Bush is cool because he is more like a regular guy. Hey, I know a lot of regular guys - that doesn't mean I would ever vote for them for President (sorry, Jason). I don't think I should choose a President because he is more like me. Of course, since I'm so smart, maybe I'd like to give it a try (sorry, I had to get in one last *Tommy Boy* reference). Anyway, I guess my final point would be that it should be okay for smart to do as smart does, not just for stupid to do as stupid does.

Hayes' column appears every three weeks.

THE BEHREND BEACON

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

Editor-in-Chief
Jason Snyder

Managing Editor
Michael Frawley

News Editor
Liz Hayes

Editorial & Health Page Editor
Katie Galley

Features Editors
Karl Benacci
Jermaine Hardy

Arts & Entertainment Editor
Deanna Symoski

Sports Editor
Doug Smith
Abby Long (assistant)

Wire Service Editor
Rob Wynne

Photo Editors
Jeff Miller
Becky Weindorf

Associate Editor
Christine Kleck

Copy Editor
Paige Miles



Money Page Editor
Amorya Sinha

Advertising Manager
Kim Zuck

Business Manager
Kristine Harakal

Office Manager
Kevin Bruner

Public Relations Manager
Ainslie Ulmer

Secretary
Melissa Proba

Advisor
Robert Speel

Postal Information: The *Beacon* is published weekly by the students of Penn State Erie, The Behrend College; First Floor, The J. Elmer Reed Union Building, Station Road, Erie, PA 16563. The *Beacon* can be reached by calling (814) 898-6488 or (814) 898-6019 (FAX). ISSN 1071-9288.

Letter Policy: The *Beacon* encourages letters to the editor. Letters should include the address, phone number, semester standing and major of the writer. Writers can mail letters to behrcoll2@aol.com. Letters must be received no later than 5 p.m. Tuesday for inclusion in that week's issue.