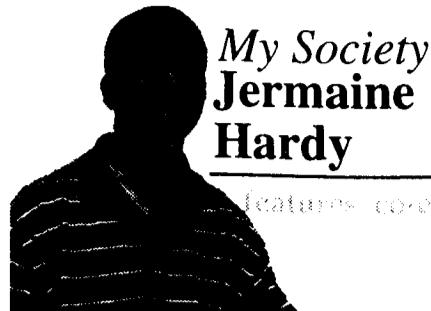


Police decrease peace in minority communities



**My Society
Jermaine
Hardy**

features co-editor

As the producer and director of the hip-hop musical, "The Hip-Opera," which was presented on the Behrend campus this past February, I am hitting the road this weekend with the rest of the cast and crew to perform the play for Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. As the date quickly approaches, I am being struck with feelings of uneasiness.

These feelings are not due to stage fright. Rather, my uneasiness is due to recent controversy and mayhem that happened in Cincinnati. If you've been following the news lately, Cincinnati has been the site of violent protest and riots in reaction to the shooting and killing of 19-year-old Timothy Thomas by a white police officer on April 7. Thomas, the fourth black man to be shot by a Cincinnati police officer since November, was unarmed when he was killed.

Protestors and rioters, made up of mostly teenagers and young adults, have expressed disgust and outrage because of the mistreatment by Cincinnati police. Due to the unjust circumstances, protestors have turned Cincinnati into a site of arsons, looting and attacks on motorists. Also, four black officers have resigned in protest to statements made by the Fraternal Order of Police. Although a curfew imposed on the city decreased some of the mayhem, the problem isn't solved and the tension hasn't disappeared.

It is not a trivial question, whether or not minorities are the disproportionate victims of police brutality and harassment. In a city where the police force is 28 percent black and the total population is 43 percent black, 15 black males have been killed by police officers since 1995. This is totally unacceptable. In the eyes of a predominantly white police force, the lives of black males are of lesser value. Various names like Abner Louima, Amadou Diallo, and Rodney King come to mind when we think of various instances in which police have unjustly used their force on minority victims. Racial profiling and "stop and frisk" policies have turned urban and poor black communities into prison-like atmospheres as police officers and detectives treat the majority of these community members like criminals.

The community cannot sit back and let such practices by the police department continue to be the norm. The time to make a change is past due and something must undoubtedly be done now. The riots in Cincinnati are the result of a people fed up with the intolerable treatment they have received from police. In Cincinnati, the 15th black victim of a shooting by police marks a time that calls for the civil disobedience, which will bring attention to the problem.

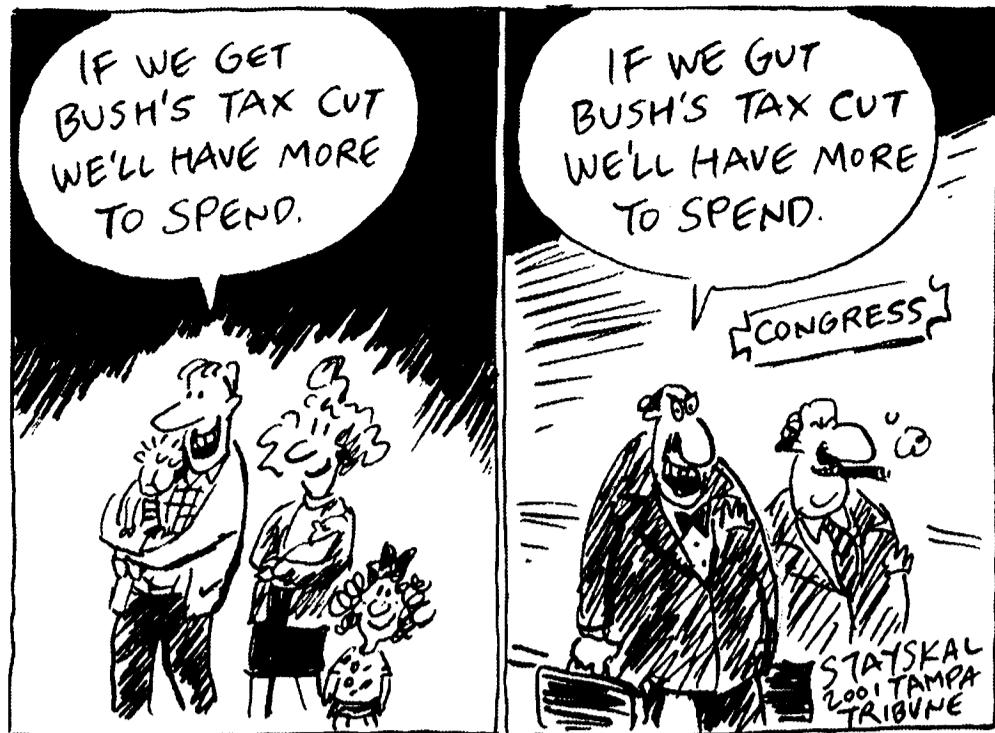
Something drastic must be done when police feel it is all right to shoot down unarmed and innocent blacks. The police departments of Cincinnati and many in the rest of the nation are losing the connotation of their motto, "to protect and serve."

They are doing more to instill fear in the black community than to protect it. Thus, respect for the Cincinnati police department in the black community is taking a serious plunge. To regain this respect, lawmakers, judges, community members, leaders and good cops as well, will have to stand up in opposition of bad cops as much as they are in opposition to criminals. However where these factions fail in Cincinnati, the younger generation picks up as the primary voice of outrage as they argue that adult leaders have failed to do their job to change the situation.

"The older generation could have prevented this," said Derrick Blassingame, 14-year-old president of the newly formed Black Youth Coalition Against Civil Injustice. As Blassingame encourages movement by the younger generation we should take his advice. The young generation is the predominant body which encounters the unjust end of the law-enforcement stick, so it is we who can best speak on the perils of such injustice and fight for change.

As I take my play to the students of Xavier University, I hope to motivate a concerned fraction of my generation towards a change.

Hardy's column appeared every three weeks.



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Send a letter to the Editor!

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'The Hot Debate of The Week' To watch or not to watch?

Should families of the victims of the Oklahoma City bombing be allowed to watch McVeigh's execution on closed circuit television?

Some people believe in an eye for an eye, however when someone has been murdered, it is against the law for the family of the victim to take it upon themselves to carry out justice. That is why we have the court system in America.

Some of the families of the victims of the Oklahoma City bombing want to watch Timothy McVeigh's execution. It is good enough for them to know that they cannot create peace with the loss of their loved one until they see McVeigh put to death. And the courts are offering them that chance by watching the execution on closed circuit televisions set up in Oklahoma City.

The healing and closure process is different for everyone, and some people feel that they need to see the man who caused them so much pain die to be at peace. The courts are not the ones to tell them that it is wrong for them to feel that way.

Families of murder victims have always been allowed to view the execution of the convicted, should they choose to. Why should this time be any different? There are more victims than just a single murder. One-hundred sixty-eight people died in the explosion. Why shouldn't the families be allowed to end their pain if they feel the need to do so by watching the execution?

The courts made the correct decision in allowing the set up of the closed-circuit televisions for the families.

Oklahoma City was one of America's greatest tragedies in the past 50 years. There's no doubt that the families of the victims should be sad, angry and hell bent on getting retribution.

But some things cross the line. It's one thing to have capital punishment in this country, but to have a debate about it to glorify death while trying to argue that it makes no sense.

Showing a closed-circuit television is wrong and flat out disgusting. To want to see someone die while trying to argue that you are punishing murder is hypocritical.

I'm not arguing this point because I feel bad for McVeigh. He will receive the worst punishment that our law allows which should be good enough for the families that pushed for his execution.

It seems as if we are going backwards in terms of a humane society. We cringe at the thought that people used to be killed by being drawn and quartered or decapitated. We look at these methods as inhumane.

One-hundred years from now, people will look back at this and say how inhumane it was to promote death by televising it.

These families and friends should be so disgusted by the thought of death that the mere sight of it disgusts them.

But to ask to see someone be killed? That's outright sadistic and should not be allowed. McVeigh will die. Closure should come with that.

K. Galley

J. Snyder

Every week, two editors from the staff will debate a topic that is hot. Students, faculty and staff are encouraged to email suggestions for the hot topic. Send ideas to behrcoll2@aol.com

21 and in the bag; enjoy it while you 'can'



**Coffee Talk
Kristin Rodgers**

Recently, I turned 21 and I'm sure we all know what that means. Yes, it's the time in life when you are actually allowed to step foot inside greasy bars. So this article is dedicated to "my first time," and everyone else this year who has shared the same experience.

This year, the first generation of 80's children heads to the bar for the very first time. Weren't the 80's a great time, a time when your parents experimented with leather and jean jackets, the great era of Whitesnake and Ratt on the radio, and when they ever so popular generation of children carried around Cabbage Patch Kids, My Buddies, and Sit-n-Spins? What I wouldn't give for a Sit-n-Spin to play on all night at a

party! But those days are over, and now the 80's children have grown up.

I'm sure that everyone in their lifetime wished they were 21 when they were not. I did, so you can admit it, too. In fact, I bet everyone who thought this did so after high-school graduation, when coming to college meant, "Do I know anyone who can buy me beer?" Life begins after 21, right?

Well, I disagree with that. I think life ends the day after you turn 21. Then there becomes nothing to look forward to, and don't give me the excuse "I can't wait until I get to see every bar in Erie"—PLEASE!

Maybe I am off on a limb here, but I bet Behrend students are the only ones complaining about bars and why is that? Well, let us examine the nature of geography in Erie. Either A: You can drive less than a mile down Station Road and pick up many boxes of beer, or two miles to find liquor all for under \$10, or B: You can drive about 15 to 20 miles for a fun bar experience which costs you around \$20 for about five drinks.

Let us pretend for one moment that Jimmy Z's is out of the question because most people will figure out that once you've been

there once or twice, you begin to see the same people over and over just like at a fraternity party.

So I will offer suggestions to those of you who haven't turned 21 yet. Yes, it is fun to finally go to this heavenly fun place where all your older friends already are, but the night you turn 21 will be the only single time you have fun. The reason is because all eyes are on you that night, and you could do just about anything in the world and people would think you are fun. You never have to buy the drinks that night, and you can forget about classes the next day because everyone will have you so drunk. But the best part of this is knowing that if people are taking you out to drink, you can open wide and let it all in because you have no choice.

But what happens on your second or third time to the bars, when you still feel very much illegal and virgin to the atmosphere, yet you have to try and blend in? Well, it's okay; don't fear too much, because you will feel right at home. Yes, people in leather and jean jackets are there who look like your parents and so they make you feel better! Then suddenly, you hear Whitesnake playing on the jukebox

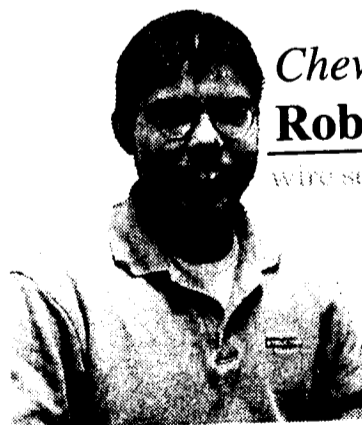
and you start to relax, when all of the sudden someone wearing a "Krispy Kronic" t-shirt tells you that you are the most beautiful person in the whole world. Now what could be better than that?

I should be honest for the fear of people of telling me that I am a complete idiot. I have enjoyed my times at the bar, though they have been few due to the amount of work I am required to do at home, but most of my friends still have not yet turned 21 and this is a real problem. What I think I want to get across to those still anticipating turning 21, is that the bars are just like drinking anywhere else. You'll have fun times and you'll have dull times. But when you have a dull time at the bar and then have to ride quite a distance home with people who scare you, well, then it isn't so much fun.

My last advice would be this: Make the most of the night you turn 21, you only do this one time ever in your life and make sure you do it right!

Rodgers' column appeared every three weeks.

Simple solutions to simple problems...a few last bites



**Chew on This
Rob Wynne**

wire service editor

As the end of the semester approaches quickly, so does my editorial column for this school year. I noticed that as time progressed, semesterly burn-out set in quickly amongst the Beacon staff and most editorials degenerated into a list or something involving beer. But, that happens sometimes when one is forced to stay up until 1 a.m. working on pages. So, to keep up with the current flow, here are my random thoughts on some items I didn't get a chance to cover earlier this semester.

Issue #1 - Prisons. After hearing much

debate about Timothy McVeigh's closed circuit execution audience, I began to wonder about the prison systems in America. I was debating with Dave Richards at the last layout session about which means of punishment better suited a criminal, lethal injection or life imprisonment. I always assumed that it would cost more to keep a prisoner alive, but I guess I may be wrong. So, if inmates are going to be kept alive in our federally funded prisons, I believe they should run. That's right. I believe each inmate should be issued a treadmill. They should be forced to run on these treadmills which will be hooked up to massive storage batteries that can help California in its energy crisis.

Haven't you ever seen one of those flashlights that work by continually pumping a trigger? If a single light bulb is able to glow with a few flicks of the wrist, imagine the thousands, if not millions of prisoners who could be aiding their communities by helping to generate some power while at the same time serving out a sentence. Prisoners work out anyway. Now that's what I call recycling. And in

the end, everyone benefits in this plan.

Issue #2 - Water. I'm so very tired of hearing that we must save our water. If I feel like taking an extra long shower or importing a two-gallon-per-flush toilet from Canada, I'm going to do so. I had environmental science last semester, and I'm aware that fresh water is being depleted and environmentalists are stressed out like Behrend students before a Frankforter exam. I am aware, though, that desalination plants exist. If big companies like General Motors, Microsoft, and Pepsi stopped worrying about paying millions of dollars for 30-second TV advertisements and donated (perhaps just for one year) their ad budget to building more and more desalination plants, America would have more fresh water to drink, and I wouldn't have to worry about my toilet always plugging up. Let's ask professional athletes to contribute a few million each, too.

So what about the salt that will be removed from the water? Ship it to Erie so we can use it on our roads during our six-month winter season. Again, this is

recycling on a large scale.

Issue #3 - College students. This topic is more local. While sitting in my car in the Erie Hall lot, I noticed a student become frustrated because someone parked his/her car with its front bumper touching his own. This is a situation that would definitely frustrate me as well. Although it may not seem like it, there is plenty of space in all of the parking lots to avoid parking on top of other students' cars. It's not the "Price is Right," folks. You don't need to see how close you can get without going over. Leave a little bit of space.

On a different note, can someone in housing and food services convince the Bruno's staff to offer more than one soup and less salt in the stir fry?

Also, I wish people would avoid constructing the horizontal human chain on the walkways between classes. I know there are many cigarettes that have to be consumed in a short amount of time, but let the rest of the students enter the various buildings that they need to.

Oh no, I'm starting to get all worked up now, I better sign off...

Wynne's column appeared every three weeks.

Fighting over something with your friends? Want to see it debated in the newspaper? Send us your idea, and we will debate it in our 'Hot Debate' of the week discussion!
behrcoll2@aol.com