

The Behrend Beacon

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

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THE BEHREND
Beacon

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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. Monday for inclusion in that week's issue.

Reverse discrimination

Ok, it's cold in the mornings, everyone's sick, it's time to bitch. I want to hit on a couple of subjects, but I only have one point here. First off, I want to complain about racism.

"Oh no!"
Now look, I'm not racist by any means, and I fancy myself as a very liberal person. But, I'm sick and tired of people complaining about racism.

This complaint actually comes from reading an article in last week's Beacon about some kid from San Jose City College who is having his basketball coach investigated. He basically said that white kids don't play basketball as well as black kids.

Who cares? What difference does it make if he said that or not? It's his opinion, and he's damn well entitled to it, and to speak it. I'm sorry it was taken offensively, but that's where it should end.

Besides, let's face it, its true. Black people are more agile and athletic when it comes to a lot of rigorous sports. How else can one explain the fact that even though black people account for only about 13 percent of the US population, they account for more than 50 percent of basketball and foot-

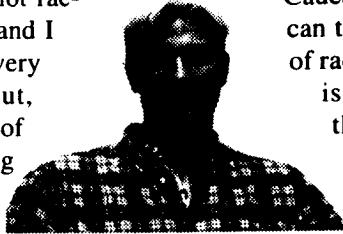
ball players?

The door swings both ways, though. The race card is played way too often when most times it isn't even the real issue at hand. I know I'm not the only one who's noticed. This isn't an anti-Caucasian, or anti-African American thing. I'm just sick and tired of racism becoming the big news issue. Every other problem that involves two different races suddenly becomes a race issue. What is wrong with people? We're taking our rights and abusing them to get what we want. And nobody wants to speak out about it. People are so worried about getting sued, or "offending" someone, or angering the wrong organization. Well, I don't care; I'll say it. Stop using your race like it's a shield. Do we, as Americans, really want to become more unified? Or are we just going to continue to separate ourselves?

Here's another thing. When did suddenly looking good become a problem? Maybe I missed the boat, but somehow, there seems to be an ever growing attitude that if I shop at Abercrombie and Fitch, I'm just giving in to a popular trend, desperate to fit in with the "American Dream." Bull. I shopped there because they had a fall sale, and I needed a pair of jeans.

I don't understand when suddenly, just because I dress perhaps in a preppy manner, I'm another one of "those." There's a serious hypocrisy going on because I hear so much about being different, and how if you shop at Abercrombie and Fitch, or American Eagle, or wherever, you're just not original. Well, wake up people, because guess who's getting on the "let's be different" train? It's YOU. I saw an ongoing argument about Abercrombie and Fitch in the Beacon that took up three weeks worth of newspaper space. Who cares? It makes no difference to me if I'm shopping in A&E or in Hot Topic. I aim to look like I want, not to be trendy, and not to be anti-trendy. I refuse to alter my lifestyle just because some person wants to categorize me as unoriginal. Who cares about trends, if I want to shop at Abercrombie, and then pop over to American Eagle, then get in my car and put on some Dave Matthews, I'm not doing it for anyone but myself. Come on, people. Why do we have to be so shallow to care how a person dresses? I just care about how you act. And complaining whether others look too pretty (or too grungy) is the most immature load of bologna I have ever heard.

What's my point?
Basically, this reverse discrimination is a load of crap.



Derek Bledsoe
editorial columnist

The reality bites when it comes to celebrity justice

It's no secret that celebrities are above the law. The most infamous case, of course, is when O.J. got away with murder, literally. P. Diddy and Allen Iverson walked away from violent crimes. A revolving door was installed on the rehab clinic for Robert Downey Jr. When murder was the case that they gave Snoop Dogg, he got a slizzap on the wrizzist. Now he's rolling down the street smokin' endo, sippin' on gin and juice.



Kevin Fallon
interim editor-in-chief

But what if criminal justice goes the other way for a celebrity? What if celebrities are viciously prosecuted because of their fame?

This is the case for "Girl, Interrupted" and "Mr. Deeds" star, Winona Ryder.

Ryder was arrested last Dec. 12 and charged with four felony counts: second degree burglary, grand theft, vandalism, and possession of a controlled substance, after an alleged shoplifting incident at Saks Fifth Avenue in Beverly Hills. Her trial begins Oct. 24. Ryder, who has insisted she is innocent, faces 3 years in prison.

Now, I would have no problem sending a beautiful, talented, doe-eyed actress to prison if she is guilty. But Ryder is not. Saks and the Los Angeles district attorney have singled out and headhunted Ryder because of her high profile.

The witch-hunt against Ryder has been full of holes since the beginning. A judge recently threw out the drug charge against her. It turns out she had a prescription. Go figure. This is just one example of vicious prosecution that has spawned a

national "Free Winona" campaign.

The biggest flaw in the case against Ryder is the DA's own "evidence," a "smoking gun" surveillance tape of Ryder cutting tags of merchandise and stealing. However when the tape was released it showed Ryder-gasp-shopping. Ryder was not even apprehended by security guards leaving the store, but leaving one department to the next. At most, Ryder can be prosecuted by the fashion police for bad style.

The entire case against Ryder is a conspiracy. Saks wants a poster girl to scare people and prevent shop lifting. Rumors have even surfaced that Saks offered security guards a bonus if they caught a celebrity shoplifting before Christmas. The Los Angeles DA wants Ryder's head to show that they are not easy on celebrities and to redeem itself after the botched OJ trial.

When, as a society, are we going to say, "enough is enough?" What happened to equal treatment for

all...celebrities? It is unjust to let some off the hook and go after others, especially the really hot ones.

Regardless if Ryder is guilty or innocent, have we forgotten that she is famous? Movie stars are supposed to be our royalty. Is this how we want our royalty treated? What kind of world do we live in where a rich and famous woman can't steal a \$1,000 dollar Gucci handbag?

So maybe Ryder hasn't made a good movie, well, since ever. But she sure is fine. That should count for something.

If they really want to punish Ryder they can just send her to my house and I will give her a few spankings. I just hope the jury has the same level-headed attitude towards justice as me, and is also made up of other horny college guys. That way Ryder can put this trial behind her and pose for Playboy like the washed-up actresses are supposed to. That's the kind of world I want to live in. God Bless America.

Letters to the Editor

The Brothers of Tau Kappa Epsilon would like to thank all those who helped with our annual Barrel Roll. Through your support we were able to raise money for the Second Harvest Food Bank. Thank you again for your support.

The Brothers of Tau Kappa Epsilon (Behrend)

I love the Humor Page and Sports Page, they are awesome. They are the only two reasons I read the paper. I can't read the humor page without crackin' up. Keep up the good work guys!

Nina Zinger

A toast to French tarts

by Lenore Skenazy
New York Daily News

Omigod! Did you see what she's wearing? That ruby red corset! That see-through gown! And just look at her bottom--it's as big as a beluga!

Take it easy, J.Lo. No one's talking about you. We're talking about big-time celebrities, mega-mamas, the ones who changed the entire course of women's history, not just Oscar necklines. In other words, we're talking about turn-of-the-century French prostitutes. Let us raise a thong to them.

It was in the 1880s that French magazines and newspapers started to notice: Sex sells. So instead of running yet another story about some stuffy aristocrat and her boring wardrobe, editors turned their attention to the Madonnas of their day.

These were more daring than the Madonna of our day, because they did it first-- and could have been arrested.

"This is the period when courtesans and actresses moved from being notorious to trend-setters," says Fashion Institute of Technology historian Valerie Steele. "It was in their interest to create a brilliant and fashionable facade by looking like a very expensive lady -- an object deluxe. Because if she's wearing a gown worth 1,000 francs, then (an admirer) will give her 3,000 francs. So the gowns keep escalating and the women keep becoming sexier."

With their pictures on posters all over town and enjoying their pick of stage-door johnnys (sometimes even stage-

door princes), these public women were becoming stars. Soon the fanciest designers were vying to make their clothes. A madam in your gown was a celebrity endorsement!

"Of course," Steele adds, "you'd still have a heart attack if your son wanted to marry one." But your daughter wanting to dress like one? That was a given. My, how times haven't changed.

To give us all an "eiffel" of these shocking French fashions, Steele curated an exhibit called "Femme Fatale," at the Museum at FIT in New York.

To modern eyes, this is simply dazzling stuff: queenly gowns of velvet and lace. Jewel-colored corsets and bottom-enhancing bustles. Diaphanous tea robes slit down the front to reveal flesh-colored silk studded with sparkling beads. All super-taboo in their day.

"If you wore this ball gown on the street in the daytime, children would throw mud and the police would arrest you," says Steele, pointing to an impossibly gorgeous low-cut red velvet dress. As for the tea robe craze: These were easy-on, easy-off confections perfect for an afternoon liaison.

Hence their notoriety.

Hence their popularity. Decent women who had worn white-linen undies all their lives were suddenly asking their dressmakers for colorful corsets and slinky silk underthings. A fashion writer of the day declared, "It is just as important for a wife to have beautiful lingerie as it is to have fine silver." Such notions didn't only change what women wore. They changed the way

women thought about themselves. A lady in a dowdy housedress is a good wife and mother. A lady in a tea robe is sex on a brioche. She's powerful and pretty! She is woman, hear her purr!

"This was way too sexy for respectable women," Steele says of a blue silk petticoat. "But by the 1890s, women were saying, 'We have a right be sexual, too!'"

Yes, they did--thanks to the prostitutes, actresses and all-around public women who blazed the trail of trash and flash.

Today we honor their memory with belly button rings, low-rider jeans and everything by Donatella Versace.

Has this bettered women's lot? Well, our underwear sure is softer. And awards shows are a lot more fun to watch.

Let Behrend know what you think. Send a letter to the editor!

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