

EDITORIAL

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The Behrend Beacon

The Behrend Beacon

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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.

It's gonna take more than a french fry to kill me



Kevin Fallon
editor-in-chief

I almost died this week. No joke. I almost choked to death on a McDonald's french fry. I always knew McDonald's would kill me, but I always thought it would be a slow, drawn out death involving lots of cholesterol.

I was driving and eating at the same time, and I learned the hard way that is a dangerous combination. I started choking and had to pull over on the side of the highway. My friend was about to jump out of the car, drag me out, and perform the Heimlich maneuver when, with my last ounce of life, I coughed up that dastardly fry.

Almost dying was an eye-opening experience. I always thought that if I was about to die I would say a last minute prayer or think of my loved ones. Instead I was just thinking about how the hell I was going to get this stinking fry out of my throat.

Then I started thinking about how pointless the last four years of hard work would have been if I would have died two weeks before graduation. I mean, if I knew I was going to die, I would have spent the last four years partying and watching "Seinfeld" reruns instead of working hard. But, on the other hand, if I would have died I wouldn't have to take any of my finals.

Then I thought that if I choked to death, I would be able to sue McDonald's for a truckload of

money. Unfortunately, I lived, so I won't get a dime.

I wondered if my family would miss me. I am sure they would. After all, I mow the lawn in the summer.

Then, my life flashed before my eyes. This is the time where you get to relive all the great moments of your life. But, I haven't done that much with my life yet, so my greatest moment was the time I watched the "Back to the Future" trilogy in one sitting.

Then I started thinking about all the things I wish I would have done that I didn't get a chance to do, like get married, have a family, and find out who wins "American Idol 2." I thought I would never really find out how many licks it takes to get to the center of a Tootsie Pop and I would never find out where in the world Carmen Sandiego has been.

But now I have a whole new outlook on life. Almost being done in by a slice of potato has brought new meaning to my life. I have been given a second chance. I will now live each day to the fullest.

For starters, I plan to read and understand a James Joyce novel, beat the original Super Mario Bros., order an ice cream cone with all 31 flavors, grow a mustache, learn how to moonwalk, eat brunch, sing "What I Like About You" to my girlfriend at karaoke, pull off Santa's beard, eat a steak so big the restaurant gives me a free T-shirt, run up the Rocky stairs, inhale a balloon, and sing the Munchkins' song, and find a woman with three breasts like in "Total Recall."

After I do all that, I can die with no regrets. That is, as long as it is not at the hands of a vegetable.

Letters to the Editor

After having attended The Gala, a formal awards ceremony hosted by the Association of Black Collegians and celebrated by many of the groups under the umbrella of the Multi-Cultural Council including MCC themselves, I want to publicly recognize three women who were neglected in recognition, appreciation, and celebration. Abbey Atkinson, Kim Moses, and Radhina Ramirez have

been working through various organizations under the MCC to promote the message, and carry out the actions leading to unity, tolerance, and diversity from the very beginning of their school careers here at Behrend until today upon the brink of graduation. People who dedicate themselves as these three women have deserve some kind of honorable mention, at the very least. So, I'd

like to say congratulations on a job well done to Abbey, Kim, and Radhina. You have set great examples for students to follow in your mission of making the world a more accepting place for each and every person who inhabits it.

Sincerely,
Danielle Stahlbaum
04, GAS

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to Guy Reschenthaler's recent editorial mistaking the promotion of diversity for racism. I usually have some kind grievance with Beacon articles, but this one has enraged me to the point of this reply. I am severely disappointed that my fellow peers, supposedly educated people, have fallen for, written about, and published this idea that affirmative action means quota system and is a bad thing for "whites."

Let me help you clarify a few facts. Affirmative action, nor the University of Michigan, has implemented a quota system. Like what was explained in the article about Kennedy's vision, they imply that the minority population should be REPRESENTATIVE of the community. Wouldn't it make sense that a community with a certain percentage of ethnic minority citizens should be represented in the demographics of the neighboring college? If a mostly "white" town admits mostly Puerto Rican students, that might say something about racism in policy. By the same right, a diverse area, like Michigan, would have to admit just as diverse of a student body to avoid racist politics.

Let's talk about the meaning of diversity and minority status, as well. First, I must address the "white" issue. I'm not white. Neither are most of the students reading this. The three "white" womyn sitting next to me are representative of

their Irish, Austrian, German, Romanian, and Italian ethnicities. How can you group us into one color and not appreciate the diversity in this room? So, when Reschenthaler refers to "racial preferences," that's an area each of us who live and breath fit into.

As far as minority status, that's different from race and ethnicity, as the University of Michigan understands while Reschenthaler apparently does not. Yes, Asians are a minority group, however what is the percentage of Asian students at Michigan? They are advocating diversity on their campus, not simply promoting minors.

I am a lesbian, a mother, (and was a teenaged mother) a high school drop out, and have a long life of experience that most college students don't share with me. I'm sure it was that diversity that helped me gain admission, not only to Penn State, but to Brown University, Mt. Holyoke College, and University of Miami. (It sure wasn't my alluring GED certified by the state of Florida or my enticing financial aid application!)

Are they all bad schools? Did their admissions officers make a mistake in thinking that I could add something to their classroom experience just as a Middle Eastern or European student could to Michigan? Diversity points are issued for diversity, not race. There is a blatant difference. Remember that Michigan has not gained the status of

Howard or Moorehouse.

Finally, I didn't get a chance to protest with my peers because I did not arrive on campus until 4 p.m., but make no mistake about the intelligence behind those protesters. They knew what they were saying, what they were doing, and exactly what they were standing for. Perhaps because you saw a bunch of black students bound at the mouth with the words "AFFIRMATIVE ACTION," you were influenced by your own bias and prejudiced thinking. More than black students took part and many ethnicities, including my Irish self, stand behind the University of Michigan and their diversity policies. I will only advance by learning about others and for that education to take place, a variety of people must sit in my classrooms, be employed within my career field, and live in my neighborhood. To ensure that kind of environment, we must partake in the tolerant and accepting policies from people like JFK rather than allow narrow minds like George Wallace to find a source of power again.

I know my thoughts seem rather random, but my mind races at the ignorance behind this article. For further reference, I suggest research.

Sincerely,
Abbey L. Atkinson
08, GAS

Only one more issue to voice your opinion! Let us know what you think!
Send Letters to the Editor to:
Behrcoll2@aol.com

In the diversity corner

My identity crisis

by Christine Stewart
contributing writer

Are you a mix? What are you? Are you Chinese or something? Were you born here? Are you an Oriental?

These are the questions that I have been asked throughout my lifetime. For those of you who have asked these questions toward someone and got yelled at here's the reason... it's rude. First of all, Oriental refers to rugs and food, not people. Second of all, "What is your ethnic background?" sounds a lot nicer than "Are you Chinese or something?" and third of all, "what are you?" is completely rude. I am a human being.

Well enough about my political correctness. Here is my story. My father was born and raised in Erie and was stationed in Seoul, South Korea when he was in the Army. That is where he met my mother, who is Korean. They fell in love, came back to Erie, got married, and eventually had my sister and I.

I had a rough time growing up. I failed preschool because my first language was Korean and so, because of that, my mother refused to teach me anymore. During my second year of preschool all of my knowledge of the Korean language was wiped from my mind. In grade school, whenever I would draw pictures of myself, I was always told by my peers that I needed to make my hair black and my eyes with a slant because that is what Asian people are suppose to look like.

I remember even being told that I should take taekwon do because I was Korean. In high school I was considered the smart one because I was Asian but I was an average student. When group projects were picked everyone

would want me in their group because they thought I was smart but when the project was over and we would have a "B" everyone would wonder why not an "A."

In high school most teenage girls go through a makeup phase. I tried going through that phase but it didn't work out that well. I would go over to my friends' houses and we would take turns applying makeup on each other.

When we were done my friends would look great but I would look like I was wearing a mask. Most makeup is made with a pink undertone and that doesn't go well on Asian complexions.

Asian skin tones tend to be yellow and makeup looks terrible on me. Not to mention the concept of eyeliner and eye shadow doesn't work on Asian eyes. The problem with that is the eyeliner always rubs off and you can't see the eye shadow because of the folds on my eyes. So to this day I rarely ever wear makeup because you either can't see it or I look like a freak.

In about ninth grade my mom decided to take my sister and I to her home in Seoul to meet our relatives. I kept thinking that I must really be Korean now because I was actually there. But when I went there everyone who was Korean considered me an American. When my sister and I would get bored we would try to find Americans to talk to but they wouldn't acknowledge us until we spoke and then they would know that we were American, as well.

College was going to be different. I would leave the small-mindedness and pettiness of high school behind me. During my first semester here I was so excited about the different people I was going to meet. One day I overheard two girls, who were clearly Asian, talking about an Asian meeting that they were going to go to. I approached them and

asked when and where the meetings were. They looked at me like I was nuts and then asked why would I want to go and walked away. Supposed full-blooded Asians looked down upon me. I felt I had been stripped of my culture and apparently wasn't Asian enough to be in the Asian Organization. From what I've heard it's different now, but the experience I had left a permanent scar on me.

I have had a long struggle of trying to discover who I am. I don't think I have found out yet. I thought I did find out but I'm even hesitant to write this article. Plus, all I talked about was my Korean side. I should be able to embrace my Irish, Scottish, and Hungarian sides. I think it is partially my fault and society's. I am always approached as being Asian before I am Irish, Scottish, or Hungarian.

My name, Stewart, is Irish and I always get double takes after my name is said and someone sees a Korean woman standing there. I think I will always have a constant struggle with those of you reading this article I hope you will realize that Asian people are constantly asked, "What are you and were you born here." If an Asian person jumps down your back because you asked them what they were, you have to understand that we are asked this constantly and sometimes it becomes annoying and sometimes you just can't take it anymore and yell.

I always try and correct people not because I'm anal but for future reference I don't want you to get yelled at because you are rude. I have been asked if you are a mix? That is the rudest question I have ever been asked. I hollered at the man who asked me this and then corrected him. Hopefully those of you reading this will learn from this man's ignorance and ask you questions more politely.