

# EDITORIAL

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The Behrend Beacon

## 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](mailto:behrcoll2@aol.com). Letters must be received no later than 5 p.m. Monday for inclusion in that week's issue.

## The symbols of life after 22 years

In my (almost) 22 years of existence, I have heard, generated and analyzed more metaphorical comparisons to life than I can even count. My past *Beacon* columns have been full of those allegorical discoveries and creations for several semesters now. Everyone knows the Forrest Gump-coined phrase, "Life is like a box of chocolates..."

In addition to that, I have been known to compare life and have heard life compared to everything from sweat socks to mowing the lawn to apple pie to running a marathon. In a bleak effort to define who and what we are, we have all ventured out into the world of creativity to compare our own figurative phrases to the non-tangible word "life."

But no matter how many different comparisons I have heard or created, I have yet to find the one that truly says it all. The words pass through my brain, I take them in, and really think about them...but not one comparison to life has ever really struck me as being the end all, be all of life's true symbol. That is, until now. A little background to this comparison is probably necessary for everyone to really understand its meaning. And so I begin...

I have a job. Yes, a real job job job. I am graduating and I have a job - (and the world breathes a huge sigh of relief) so needless to say - I'm on cloud nine. As I attend my last few classes, finish up my last few assignments (this being one of them) and as I cross the stage on May 17 to conclude my college days, in the back of my mind "I am employed" keeps lingering through my head. It's kinda nice.

It all started about a year ago. I have always loved cameras. Everything from 35 mm to family camcorders - I can't get enough. So my media production class, Commu 383, was a welcomed addition to my fall semester schedule. Nervous, yet overly excited, I began the class last August. Now eight months later I am employed by Behrend as a Research Technologist. The editing bays will be my new home, a camera will always be at hand and the resources and technology of the Media and Instructional Support Center will surround me on a daily basis. I couldn't be happier.

Over the last few months I have really tried immersing myself in the world of production to prepare for this job. My camera has been on and running in everything that I do. I am involved in projects that are going on in the media department, and at this point

I am close to being able to run some of the production equipment in my sleep.

Now keep in mind, I'm not a pro yet, but I'm working at it. I have had my bad days behind the camera, just like everyone else. I have tried in the last eight months to turn everything from the good, the bad, and the ugly into video projects, plans and assignments. Sometimes you hit the nail on the head and sometimes you just don't. With each passing day my aim gets better and I fall more and more in love with the field.

Over this last year, I have learned a lot about myself as a student, as well. I have learned that there is a difference between being a tourist and a being a photographer, that a camera can really only be as good as the person who is running it, and no matter how much you try to or how much you want to fight it, video footage can never and will never be the real thing. Every lense gives its own view of the event or object being filmed and every photographer's angle changes reality, sometimes only slightly, but just enough to make it "different."

So now, here I sit, about to go to work in an editing bay, writing to you all for the last time as a student. It has been an incredible four years. I have said this all before, as my last few columns have all been about saying goodbye, graduating and moving on (just in case you haven't read them).

What a better way to finally say goodbye for the last time, than to tell you my view on life as it stands, tainted by 22 years of living in Erie, four years of being a Penn State student and most recently in becoming a member of the working world of production. For me anyway, I think I hit the nail on the head this time. At this point in my life this metaphor really says it all. "Life is like video production - the best results come from proper preparation, extreme concentration, careful editing, and persistent practice."

I wish you all the best. I wish you all the chance (if you haven't already) to find your own answer to what life truly is to you, to hit the nail on the head, and to be able to immerse yourself in something that you really truly love. To the class of 2003 and to all that will ever read this, thanks. And if you ever see a camera pointed in your direction, say "hello" because it might just be me behind it!



Just a little side note  
**Christine Kleck**  
advertising manager

Dear Editor,

This letter is in response to Guy Reschenthaler's column on affirmative action. First, kudos to Abbey Atkinson for her letter in last week's paper. I will try not to repeat too much of what she said because she mentioned some excellent points, but there are a few things that I would like to add.

On Wednesday April 30, the National Society of Black Engineers and the Multi-Cultural Council sponsored an open forum discussing affirmative action and whether or not it is still needed today. My first question to Mr. Reschenthaler is, where were you? Of course I understand that as an active student on Behrend's campus you had things to do, but at the same time this forum specifically addressed issues that you spoke about in your column. If you were so adamant about your beliefs, you should have also been willing to find out why other people believe what they do and made an effort to attend.

I, for example was against affirmative action. I had originally been taught that it was about a quota system and like you, I did not approve. It made me feel inferior to white people. The concept of a quota took away my right as a human being and labeled me as only a black woman. After attending the forum and being educated by Drs. Robert Speel and Peggy Lee. I have developed an understanding of affirmative action and what its true goals are. Now I support it wholeheartedly.

In your article, Mr. Reschenthaler, you use phrases like "America should be a colorblind society" and "if all received proper education." Well, the reality is we don't live in the perfect world where everyone is treated equally. We live in a society where racism, sexism, and other isms still exist. You are completely right; America should be a society where nothing matters besides a person's merit. But in my opinion, this is what affirmative action tries to do. It causes the employer or the university (for the sake of the U of Michigan case) to give two people of different and unequal backgrounds equal

opportunities. Perhaps I was admitted to Penn State instead of a white student with the exact same credentials. But it wasn't because the school was trying to meet some quota. It is because Penn State is committed to diversity within its population. People who don't understand this obviously have no appreciation for diversity and what it can do to a community. Granted there is still much work to be done in terms of its students and faculty accepting and embracing diversity, but it is one of the four principles that Penn State supports.

Diversity adds character not only to the school itself, but also to the individuals who attend the institution. This is one reason I chose not to go to a historically black college. The world is not full of black people. I'm trying to de-program myself from thinking in terms of black people and white people and everything in between. I am a person just like you are. I want to be able to embrace a person's unique culture while ignoring their color.

President Kennedy's executive order declared that federal contractors take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and employees are treated during their employment, without regard to race, creed, color or national origin. For anyone to say this clause is not necessary is unconstitutional based on the original premise of the constitution that "all men are created equal."

Affirmative action means nothing more than taking a positive action or a step in making sure that people are, as you quoted, "evaluated not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." I would rather that no one have to be given special privileges because they are considered a minority. In fact, I hate the term minority. I am first a person. Before I am black or a woman, I am a human being and I wish to be treated as such. If a white female or an Asian male feels too intimidated to talk to me, it's because they see me as a black female, not as another human being who bleeds red blood just like them.

Affirmative action is not for blacks alone. It is for all underrepresented groups in the U.S., including women and other ethnic groups. Therefore, Mr. Reschenthaler, if you, a white male were living in a neighborhood of predominantly Hispanic females in the U.S., affirmative action would make sure that you were given an equal opportunity to get a job in that neighborhood regardless of the fact that you are of different descent. It does not mean that you will instantly get the job because of who you are, but it does ensure your right to be fairly considered for the position. Of course, if you were not qualified you would not get the job, regardless of your background.

I also disagree with your statement that "if all received proper education and were given the knowledge and lessons needed to perform well academically, then there would be no need to offer applicants 20 points for being black." The real statement should be, if all received proper education about the value of diversity and were given the knowledge and lessons needed to perform well in a diverse world, then there would be no need to offer 20 points for being black. There would be no need to offer 20 points for anything.

The protesters on March 30 and April 1 were not in support of a quota system. They were in favor of affirmative action. Get this: Affirmative action is not a quota system. In fact, quotas are illegal and indeed should stay that way.

So to Mr. Reschenthaler and anyone else who's read this letter, if you have any questions or comments, please, let's talk about it. I'm not so adamant about my beliefs that I'm not willing to talk about it with someone else. I would rather that you learn from me what I think than for you to try to imagine it for yourself.

Sincerely,  
Nicole C. Greene  
COMBA 08

## What was my point, again?

I started going to Behrend for all the wrong reasons. The biggest reason was all of my friends went to Behrend and I was stuck out at Edinboro as an art major. I was having a miserable time at Edinboro as an art major. I was spending my days drawing fat, ugly, naked men. I drew places that I didn't even know existed. They would be naked and contorted in pretzel-like poses, thereby exposing ungodly nooks and crannies. Drawing these nooks and crannies was supposed to teach us the beauty and wonder of the human form. Mainly, I wondered when I would be drawing hot women wrestling in mud. However, the closest I got was a dude named Tony bent over with the wrong way facing me.

So, I went to Behrend's web site to see what programs it offered. Anything would be better than drawing nasty Kamasutra illustrations. My excitement turned to disappointment when a bunch of technical programs came on the screen such as Management Information Systems and Electrical Engineering Technology. Yeah, I got a D- in high school algebra. I mean, there was a reason I was an art major.

But somewhere on the list I saw something called Communication and Media Studies. I had no idea what that was, but hey, I just wanted to hang out with my friends. When people asked me what I did in my major I would just say, "Communicate through various forms of media."

Luckily for me, I ended up really enjoying my major. I kind of floundered through my first few semesters of college. It wasn't until I took a few writing courses that I became interested in college.

I still had a high school mentality of just wanting to do the least amount of work and go home. But as soon as I finished my gen-ed courses and started delving deeper into the communications world, my thirst for knowledge really began.

I think one of the main problems with the education system is that starting from the beginning, students are not taught to think; they are taught to follow directions. As soon as I abandoned that line of thinking, school became exciting. There were a select few teachers that encouraged me to stop regurgitating answers and start asking questions. I stopped memorizing and started thinking. For the first time school became about thinking, creativity, invention, and discovery.

This led me to my best experience at Behrend, writing for the *Beacon*. For the first time, I was writing for an audience that was not just my teacher. I think one of the reasons that many people struggle at writing is because they are not used to writing for a mass audience. Granted, the *Beacon* is a little paper on a little campus, but it changes the way you think and write. Many students only know how to write for a one-person audience. Teachers are the only people who read their work. But this is not how the world works. Writers know that they have to know their audience.

Of course, many people avoid joining the *Beacon* because they are not interested in journalism. However, they do not understand that writing is the foundation of every career. If you can prove you know how to write, you will be much more successful, no matter what field you go into.

My favorite part of the *Beacon* was writing my editorial columns. I liked to use humor and satire to discuss issues. I was often criticized for being insensitive to serious subjects. However, as a writer, I knew my audience. I knew that if I wrote an editorial titled, "The Middle East needs to like, totally chill out" more college students would read it than if I would write a dry book report.

I did not really want to argue a point. Some of my editorials didn't even have a point. In fact, I think I forgot the point of this one. My editorials had two purposes: to make people laugh, and more importantly, to bring issues into the dialogue.

Getting people to discuss topics was more important to me than actually getting them to agree with me. The United States is supposed to be founded on free speech and debate. Sometimes people, especially my age forget that. When I became editor-in-chief of the *Beacon* I wanted to extend that spirit to the rest of the paper.

There were many times where the *Beacon* would print an editorial and someone would disagree with what was said. I have no problem with that; in fact, I welcome it. I wanted the *Beacon* to be a place where students could voice their concerns and opinions.

But, sometimes people would upset me, and it wasn't because they disagreed with what was said. It was because they said the *Beacon* was wrong for printing it.

I am more than happy to print both sides of an issue. I respect the pro/con arguments. However, I believe it is wrong to silence someone just because you do not agree with what they say. That contradicts everything this country is about. Unfortunately, it has become a growing trend to reject dissent. Voltaire said, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

But who am I to question the demagogues of this campus who are bequeathed with the knowledge of absolute truths? I am an American, that's who.

I will soon leave Behrend and continue to pursue journalism, not only because I enjoy writing, but to be a part of the free press. Free press and free speech are two things that keep us free and protect our liberties.

I am sickened by these so-called patriots who wave a flag and have no idea what it stands for. I will tell you where you can put your censorship. You can stick it in an ungodly nook and cranny. If you want, I can draw you a picture.

Ok, this is it, my last few words for the *Beacon*. I may have started Behrend for all the wrong reasons, but I think I learned all the right things.



**Kevin Fallon**  
editor-in-chief