

OPINION

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. - The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

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Social Cues and Dont's

By Jennifer Haight
News Editor
September 9, 2005

There are certain things that a person just does not do when he or she is either in the presence of others or in a more public setting, especially a college campus, namely Behrend. These things consist of: sitting on the steps in front of Perry Hall, smoking in the elevator and the elevator stairwell, walking in groups of four or more wide on the pathways, etc.

There are two sides to the steps in from of Perry Hall, presumably, one to go up and the other side to go down. This is a very high traffic area and is usually pretty easy to get through, except when those few boneheads block one side and could care less. This causes frustrations for everyone trying to get from the top to bottom or from the bottom to the top. So for those of you who make it habit to use these STEPS as chairs, please, have consideration for the thousands of other people who use these steps and MOVE.

Smoking; Enclosed: spaces. These two don't really go together, do they? Think about it people, there are a lot of us who use the elevator behind Senat Hall. Just

because one person can't put off his nicotine addiction for a two minute ride up the elevator, doesn't mean the other people in the elevator should have to suffocate. The other day I was waiting for the elevator to come back down so I could take it up and then someone comes up next to me with a lit cigarette; he then had the nerve to tell me that he wouldn't take any hits while he was in the elevator car. No, he was just going to let it burn and still fill the elevator up with smoke. We're in college here folks; why not just put it out? Save whatever of the cancer stick that went unused and burned in the elevator, simultaneously creating a copasetic environment for all those using the elevator.

Smoking in the stairwell is objectionable, but not as much. Please keep in mind that the entire structure that holds the elevator is closed in, with the only fresh air coming in through the doors at the top and bottom of the building. The smoke lingers, causing it to really stink. This is one of only three ways to get from the learning part of campus to the residential part: don't make it uncomfortable for others because you're too lazy to put out your cigarette for two minutes.

First of all, let me differentiate for you what I mean by "wide" and "deep." Four people wide means walking in a group of four (maybe more) people who are lined up next to each other, key phrase here being "next to," whereas four (maybe more) people deep means walking two by two perhaps in a sort of filed line, key phrase here being "filed line." When people are short on time and have to make it from room 41 in Kocheh and have to go to room 37H in Hammerrill in ten minutes, it's a mad dash on the big path that goes from one end of campus to the other. It is especially hard trying to make it on time when people are walking four or more people wide, blocking a big majority of the path. This is why people who walk "widely" should learn the ways of the "deep" walkers and make it easier for everyone.

There are going to be things in life that we're all going to have to put up with, but for now, while we're in college, let's all just meet half way and make everyone's lives a hell of a lot easier. Be respectful of everyone around you, be aware of your situations and what others are trying to accomplish and most importantly, do for others what you would want done for you.

Katrina Katrina Katrina ... Bush

By Pat Webster
managing editor
September 16, 2005

There have been few times in my life as an American that I was as appalled at my country's government as I was when I observed the depressing response time to aid those hit by Hurricane Katrina. While I witnessed many acts of individual heroism and an outpouring of national generosity, I was left with the distinct impression that the government really dropped the ball.

The government failed on many levels, in many ways. Let's start on the local level.

The Mayor of New Orleans, while justified in his righteous anger toward FEMA, which we'll get to in just a moment, don't worry; was a poor planner in terms of disaster response. The now-famous photo of several dozen school buses sitting unused in flooded downtown New Orleans led many to ask why these were not used to evacuate citizens. However, I have difficulty accepting that anyone could have done a very good job after the fact, no matter what plan they had, considering that there was no power, communication or transportation that was viable once the city flooded. Among other things, he issued a mandatory evacuation order the day before Katrina hit and 80 percent of the city evacuated itself. Mayor Nagin gets a C.

Governor Kathleen Blanco transmitted her formal request for federal assistance on August 27, fully two days before the hurricane hit. There is a lot of misinformation floating around out there that the Federal government did not step in in a timely matter because they had not received state authorization. This is totally untrue. The Congressional Research Service issued its report on Tuesday than Governor Blanco took all "necessary and timely" steps needed and informed the federal government that "the incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments and that supplementary Federal assistance is necessary to save lives, protect property, public health and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of disaster." This was acknowledged and accepted by the government on August 28, the day before the hurricane hit. Governor Blanco gets a B+.

This leaves us with the federal government. While we're at it, we may as well start at the top, with the president. Mr. Bush in no way caused the hurricane, but his decisions compounded the disaster that was to follow.

Mr. Bush declared Louisiana in a state of emergency after receiving Ms. Blanco's request the day

before, still a day before the hurricane even hit. What I can't fathom or even begin to understand is why federal assistance was authorized by the president to all parishes (counties) except those in the coastal region most likely to take the most damage.

I'm baffled. Furthermore, it took days for any significant federal disaster relief to appear. They saw the hurricane coming days in advance, federal help was requested days in advance and yet FEMA was caught flat-footed and totally unprepared. This is inexcusable.

Core of FEMA's problems was the Bush Administration's restructuring upon his inauguration. Bush removed the previous administration's FEMA leadership, which included several professional disaster relief figures, including the department head, and replaced them with campaign fundraisers / former college roommates. Five of the top eight leaders of FEMA had very little or no disaster management skills whatsoever, including Michael Brown, FEMA head, whose previous work experience consisted of being the commissioner of the International Arabian Horse Association. His vast management and leadership skills ensured that federal response took three days to reach the area. Thirty seven percent of all Louisiana and Mississippi National Guard troops were in Iraq, with another third getting ready for rotation, yet no consideration was given to how this would affect state and local efforts.

The federal government's actions in a resource sense are no better. The money for levee maintenance has been cut 50 percent since 2001. FEMA's budget had been reduced by 1/3 last year alone, all in the name of streamlining it's efforts by making it a part of the Homeland Security Department.

This is from the government that campaigned on protection from terrorist-based disasters and response and claimed to have been improving our ability to react. If the response is this poor to a disaster we saw coming days beforehand, I cannot imagine how terrible the government's response would be to a terrorist bombing, chemical, or gas attack on a major city would be with no warning. Our government response was worse than the Indonesian response to the tsunami, for which there were mere hours of warning. If I were president, and I admit that I do not know all the circumstances, I would be irate. I would not be telling Brownie he was doing a heck of a job or assuring Trent Lott that his mansion would be rebuilt while thousands of poor New Orleanians are struggling to survive.

The federal government gets an F.

Cherish the good times

By KJ Margraff Jr.
staff writer
February 24, 2006

There are several moments in life that seem to stick out as benchmarks and cornerstones. It's a lot like the song "100 Years" by Five for Fighting: "I'm 22 for a moment..." Last week I had a rare chance to get a view of all these points in life at the same time. It was as if I was watching a movie picking out all the important scenes, and it made me realize just how short life is.

I made the six hour drive to the Allentown area on wednesday for my sister's wedding. It was a unique experience for me because my sister had never been much of the "girlfriend type," yet she now acted with a new purpose and motivation in life; it was evident in everything she was doing, even the small things. I was able to see all the elements of selflessness and love in her, in a way renewing my trust in the idea that, for lack of better terms, everything is supposed to 'work out' in the end. My sister had changed herself, and some of her characteristics, for this man who was to become her husband. I was proud to share in the moment with her as one of the groomsmen, and besides, the food at the wedding was phenomenal.

The wedding also had a profound effect on my parents. My mother and I had always been extremely close, so I wasn't surprised by how marrying off her first child, her baby girl, was exciting and happy to the point of tears. It brought me great pride to escort her in and out of the church for the ceremony. But my father and I have had our differences. I've never really had the chance to see his more emotional side except when he and I bashed heads. The wedding brought out a sort of calmness in his face that made me sort of relax more, watching him interact with my new brother-in-law, Randy, accepting him into the family whole heartedly. As I stood at the front of the church watching him escort my sister to the altar, and then sitting with my mother, I saw him start to well up with emotions, and start to tear. All the small indifference that he and I have had from time to time seemed to melt away and not matter to me for the moment.

Friday morning, before setting up the church and going to the rehearsal, I made the extra effort to drive down to Philly where I grew up; I went to visit my grandparents, Nan and Pop, who I'm very close

to. Every holiday, especially Christmas day, has been spent at their house, which I account for giving me my strong family values. Unfortunately, my grandfather's health is not at its best. Having a long list of heart problems and double kidney failure, Pop relies on dialysis treatments to live, and the whole family can see its effect on him. Recently the hospital found an infection in his blood requiring extra caution with his regular treatments, and personally, it scares me because I do not want to lose this important person in my life. My grandfather has always been a strong example for me throughout my life. He was the typical Italian man who enjoyed working in his garden and spending time with his family, so it hurts me to see him in pain. Despite the pain he is in, the same strength and love I remember as a child glows brightly in his eyes like fire. I can only hope that when I reach his age that I will be like him, still loving and strong despite personal difficulties, always giving in any way possible.

The last moment in time I was able to witness was the joy and excitement of a new baby. One of the other groomsmen was Randy's brother Ryan. Ryan and his wife were recently blessed with another child, and watching them interacting with this tiny little baby at the reception made me realize not only how innocently we begin our journey through life, but also how much a new child can affect a family. While I never had the chance to meet Ryan or his wife before that day, I felt that their marriage and love seemed to have a fresh renewal due to this new child.

I guess what I'm trying to say in this mess of memories and emotions is that life is short, and these moments in life need to be cherished; time is fleeting. A lot of times we, as college students, can lose sight of the big picture and get caught up with the stress and worry of classes, exams and projects. This is a point in our lives where we are not kids anymore, but we are still not quite adults it's good to focus the fact that there is so much in store for us in the future, and we should enjoy this time we have in college as a step in that direction. I also hope that, as dumb as this may sound, we can all remember how important our families are and remember to tell our loved ones just how much they mean to us. Personally, I got a recharge from the trip home, despite the ungodly amount of driving that I had to do, and the memories of the week will stay with me for a long time.

Can't stop the wild stereotypes

By Chris LaFuria
sports editor
November 18, 2005

The other day I was watching "Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle" when I had a realization or rather an epiphany. If you are not familiar with the movie, the premise of the movie deals with two minority, college-aged students and the endeavors that they encounter as they travel to a seemingly elusive destination of White Castle. Throughout the film, the Chinese Harold and the Indian Kumar come across and deliver many stereotypes of other races and ethnicities. As a metaphor for our current social status, these stereotypes hinder their journey.

As the movie ended and I was filled with many blatant stereotypical ideas about different races and ethnicities, I began to consider the many stereotypes and prejudices that our society has against other countries. Stereotypes such as: Why do Irish people love green beer? Why is it a German's instinct to drink beer with every meal? Why do all Indian people want to be American doctors? Are all Middle-East people terrorists? Is Frank Sinatra the epitome of an Italian? Is school the only activity associated with Chinese people? Are all Russians eternally drunk off of Vodka?

Many people who read that last paragraph may have been extremely offended. As a matter of fact, I was offended by writing it. However, denying that those stereotypes exist is perpetuating a silent killer that has more casualties than most wars. Some people may claim to be innocent of such accusation but having a stereotype of another country is not the only stereotypes that exist.

Aside from the mass number of stereotypes aimed at other countries, here in America, every aspect of society uses a stereotype, whether they are cognizant of it or not. How many times has a black actor been portrayed as a criminal in a movie? How many women or minorities have been denied a job because of a preconceived notion that their state of being is inferior? Why are homosexual people always immoral? How many "adults" use their stereotypes of teenagers to make vivid, inaccurate assumptions? The innumerable answers to these questions precisely reflect the nature of our country.

In the vast, boundless search for an end to such deliberate hatred and ignorance, people have begun to place the blame on the wrong people. In the component of Hollywood, surely there have been Caucasian directors creating stereotypes of black actors in a negative sense. Similarly, male actors give demeaning roles to some women actresses, but these contrasting groups aren't the sole provider in much of the unconstructive stereo-

types. The endless problem of stereotypes has been enabled and promoted by people in the specific race, sex, or ethnicity themselves. Actor/comedian Dave Chappelle places a negative image of African-American people in his comedy show. Likewise, comedians such as Carlos Mencia and George Lopez have made derogatory statements about their own Mexican heritage. Comedian Ellen DeGeneres once said, "I think they should have a Barbie with a buzz cut." This is a blatant mockery of herself as a homosexual female.

When dealing with such stereotypes, one must observe two different vehicles for such ignorance. The average person must stay perceptive of such stereotypes; furthermore, people who have the creative power to produce our nation's entertainment need to be as aware that their message of ignorance and hatred does have an affect on the people of American society. Even though the aforementioned Hollywood entities are making a dollar and creating humor, they are simply perpetuating the cause of evil that is destroying lives and reputation. Finally, the next time a friend comes up to you and says, "I just heard the funniest black/gay/woman/Asian/Polish/etc. joke," don't express interest. You'd only be fuelling blatant hatred and ignorance.