

Celebrating Groups: How far is *too far*?

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Capital Times Columnist

A while ago, one of my friends asked me what I was going to do for National Women's Month, which just happens to be in March.

My quick response to her absurd question was, "What should I do?" After she stalked off, though, I thought about her question more.

After an hour of thought and a box of cookies, I came to my conclusion of, "Why even have a special month just for women?" Or on that note, why even have a special month for any specific group?

Think about it - in our "non-prejudiced" society where everyone wants to be treated equal, a great contradiction is taking place. In making special months like "National Woman's Month," society is actually segregating the groups being so-called "honored."

For example, why do blacks, excuse me, African-Americans (let's be politically correct) get to have a whole special month to themselves? Or even a special room on campus to themselves? And why do we have a special week just for Hispanics? Are they an elite group of people that deserve their own special month or week?

I don't think so.

Although some people thrive on celebrating their heritage, I don't. (I'm an American - isn't that

enough to celebrate?) Since everyone is supposed to be "created equal," shouldn't we just celebrate being united as Americans, and not

Miller's Light

as African-Americans, Native Americans, or Caucasians?

Celebrating heritages or groups of people isn't all that bad, I guess. I mean, St. Patrick's Day is one day out of the year where people wear green and pack into bars to drink green beer.

I do believe, though, that we can go too far. We haven't stopped at celebrating heritages, we are now celebrating inanimate objects, too. Ice cream gets a week in January, as does BBQ in May.

C'mon now, isn't this a bit ridiculous? Pretty soon we'll be celebrating "National Toothpaste Day," or "Hillary Clinton Day" (my worst nightmare).

Getting back to the subject of equality, there are some races and heritages that have been passed over throughout the years. In my twenty-one years of existence, I've still yet to see a "National Korean Month", or a "National Polish Day."

If we are going to celebrate races and heritages right, we might as well have a "National White-Anglo-Saxon-With-a-Little-Bit-of-Irish-Day."

If we are going to go overboard, we might as well go headfirst.

The Capital Times

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What Happened?

This is only the second issue of the *Capital Times* to come out this semester.

This is not right and there is only one reason - one person accountable for it.

The editor-in-chief.
Me.

I have not lived up to my obligations as the "driving force" of this newspaper. It should have come out more often.

I have the clarity of hindsight to show me what it is exactly that I have done wrong and what I could have done to set it right.

The easy thing would be to just do nothing, whine about and let somebody else deal with it.

I have learned, however, that mistakes are useful learning tools. So allow me to teach a lesson.

I know you won't mind, since I am sure no one is really reading this anyway. Wait, that's not true. My advisor, for one, is reading.

Louise Hoffman, associate professor of humanities and history.

No, she's not a journalist. She is, however, someone who knows a few things about journalism. More importantly, she is one of those rare treasures in universities--the Sincere Instructor.

She cares about the students, and the school. She knows there are problems and wants to be able to correct them. She has been more than patient with my foolishness. No doubt she is reading this now and

making copious remarks on a copy. She does believe so much in giving feedback and criticism.

All right, one reader.

No wait, other people do read. Those that noticed the motto I had placed on the paper last issue, "Non illegitimi Carborundum". Translated it means, don't let the bastards grind you down. I have a very good reason for choosing that motto.

The term bastards represents anything that might be an oppressing force. Anything: snow, stress, instructors, other students, administration, sickness, depression, etc. We should not let anything stand in our way in accomplishing what it is we want.

Okay, so people read the front and that's it. Okay.

Wait, that's not true. The nurse, Mary Lou Martz sent me this letter:

I read your article about Dr. Richard Keeling's presentation on "HIV/AIDS in Contemporary Society." I was encouraged by your article and hope that many more will see that our role is prevention and it starts with each and everyone of us.

I was also delighted to see your reference to Dr. Keeling in "From the Editor's Disk," and noting "that people act within the context of society which is created by the media."

Thank you for your coverage of the HIV/AIDS related programs at Penn State Harrisburg. It has helped disseminate information to the campus community on HIV/AIDS, one of the steps toward the goal of prevention.

So someone does read at least to the editorial page.

So do people read us? Yes.

But does anyone take us seriously?

No. Why should they?

We are not a grand bastion of journalistic excellence. We are just a sorry excuse for a newspaper that can easily be ignored. That is the newspaper this campus deserves.

This campus is not one of action, so it really doesn't require an active newspaper.

We are an educational expressway, otherwise known as a commuter campus. Mired in bureaucracy, often with no good guidance.

But last semester the *Capital Times* persevered not only that, it soared in so many ways. Why?

Rage.

Dr. Peter Parisi, an assistant professor of humanities and communication, who was our advisor and the print journalism professor, was denied tenure. He got a job offer and he took it.

Good for him.

Bad for us, though. At least in terms of having a good print journalism program.

But in a way it was good. We (the staff) were enraged, because we lost a sincere teacher. He was a friend and a good advisor, who didn't tell us what to do,

but was there for advice.

He was an ally.

When he was denied tenure, the staff here went up in arms, determined to do well. Maybe shake things up.

Then, there was the rape last semester and the cover-up. Anger over that gave us more momentum.

Obsession helped too.

The editorial staff spent many a Sunday night, up all night, editing, pasting, swearing and going nuts. But we got the paper out. Although none of us would admit it, we had fun doing it.

I had no rage and my intensity was gone. I felt no passion toward journalism, but was guilty into becoming editor, because I was the only one left that was "here when we had a good print journalism program."

This was a mistake.

And it is one I regret. It has caused me stress and done wrong to the campus.

Okay, this is some nice kvetching and mental dumping, but it doesn't do much for the campus. Read on. I'm getting there.

One lecture in my Nature of Media of class, which I took my first semester here, focused on a newspaper and its role in the community. Specifically, how a newspaper is a reflection of the community. I think this is certainly true of the *Capital Times* and PSH.

The snow this semester set a tone of lethargy that this campus has not recovered from. The *Capital Times* has been a dismal failure. *Tarnhelm*, the literary arts magazine is not coming out due to lack of submissions. Let's face it, we have all been stretched out thin, because that is the nature of the campus.

This is not a campus where everyone works together for the betterment of all.

There are a few people who want to change things and they get involved in such a wide range of activities, in trying to make things better, that they have little time. Sometimes things get done, sometimes not.

That by the way, is the the lesson here.

This campus could be great. Could is the operative word here. Because of its non-traditional nature, students have a great flexibility to do things. The only problem,

of course, is that students are here for such a short time and then they move on. Often before they truly finish what they begin sometimes.

I think there is only one way this campus will ever become the educational Mecca everyone (I hope) wants it to be.

Students must allow themselves to become obsessed.

Obsessed with something--anything for the campus. They must be able to commit themselves wholeheartedly to it and operate with their obsession to change the campus for the better.

This, however, requires that the faculty and administration egg them on; encouraging them in their efforts and giving them advice and support to help their efforts succeed.

Could this happen?

Yes. But it requires that students care not so much about getting a grade and learning.

This is not the norm, though. Most students just want their degree, a job and to get on with their lives.

As long as we are only obsessed with our lives, and not the learning process, things will never change.

Without a proper dose of rage and obsession in our lives, this campus will see lethargic semester and hear the grumbling of students.

Nothing will ever be done.

This ends today's lesson.

Good bye.

Matt Hunt
editor-in-chief