

# Your brain or the system's? Calling resistance fighters

By Barb Roy  
Editor

At the end of the movie *The Matrix*, Neo (Keanu Reeves) finally kicks virtual butt in a too-cool long black leather jacket (that he loses in battle.) I want one of those jackets because I need to kick virtual butt, and so too, my friend, do you.

In case you haven't seen this movie (time-warp, don't run,) humanity is encapsulated in the system of the computer-run world. Humans are unknowingly being used as a power supply for the machine. Human minds are separated from their bodies virtually through the system. Minds are kept occupied with rules and regulations in order to function.

If this sounds eerily like what it is like to attempt to get things done at Penn State, then welcome to the Matrix. The main campus now controls your brain while the rest of you is programmed to keep occupied in the satellite schools. At least if you work here, that is. They're working on the rest of us leading up to graduation.

Are you scoffing? Here are valid points of evidence: last month, the adjunct teacher of the Humanities Communications Graphic Arts course I am enrolled in attempted to get her students work displayed in a small gesture of inclusion in the student art show that is currently taking place in the Gallery Lounge. After being told that the Gallery was full and that she could hang our stuff in the Humanities office wherever she could find space, the teacher and I (having volunteered my help) looked over two small walls in the little lounge area: one of those was over the copier machines.

Our first test of sanity versus total surrender to the system was to untangle a massive mess of fishing line. This was offered to us to tie to folder clips that we were supposed to clip our art onto, and then shove the clips under the edge of the drop ceiling while teetering precariously on a step ladder.

Fortunately at this point, I found out that my brain is still mine, because I

made an attempt to figure out what else we could do. A classmate suggested to me to call the Educational Activities Building, which has free-standing bulletin boards that we could have transported here (I was even willing to load them in my van) and set them up in front of the never-open curtains in the Gallery Lounge with the rest of the art show. When I suggested we just show up and do that, my friend looked at her watch and said, "Gotta go!" Red tape matrix hell had gotten to her in the past and she did not want another encounter.

I made an attempt to work with the system. I asked for the bulletin boards.

It was at this point that I realized that this tactic will get you nowhere. You ask, they refuse. When a talking head gatekeeper begins to sound suspiciously like an automated electronic machine, you are talking to an agent of regulationdom who is aligned with the system and determined to efficiently keep you there, too. When the solutions they are offering lead to more chaos, it's time to change the

system.

The solution offered us was to try to get our art work hung in the Provost's office. HA. The Provost's office had two lone works of art from the Harrisburg Art Association on its spacious walls. An agent in the Provost office said you had to schedule your art show ahead of time with an office in the blah blah building.

"Sue 'em if you fall," was my advice to the Graphics teacher, (someone our mom's age- would you want your mom to risk her life like this?) as she surrendered hope for options.

Neo is taught at one point to bend a spoon with his mind. "There is no spoon," said his wise little sage. People attempt to put limits on us or we allow other people to limit us. *There is no spoon.*

Now, resistance fighters. It may be too late for this place, but when you graduate, don't let the system have your brain. When ridiculous regulations get in your way, grab the cool leather, bend your mind around the problem and kick it's butt.

## It all comes together in the end

By Dan Zehr

I sat here many times at this computer, staring into this monitor. I sat here too many times lamenting what this school didn't have, could improve or just annoyed the hell out of me.

No dice today. Today was a damn good day

For once I forgot about the adversarial relationships between teachers and students, between the "school" and "us." I heard a dialogue, a true discussion about how faculty and students could improve things. I heard a student relate a complaint without a hint of accusation or self pity. I heard a faculty member respond without a hint of impossibility.

For once I literally struggled with an idea foreign to me, and, having done so, moved closer to realization. Solving problems and understanding them is usually easy enough, but not for an idea different than my most basic patterns of thought. I began to see a small trace of a different maze. It wasn't delusory, trapping me in the labyrinth; it was an opening to much more.

For once I forgot about the cold, sterile face of the Olmsted Building. I walked

into the Gallery Lounge, sat on a plush chair and listened as Tarnhelm's finest took their turns at the podium. I listened to friends open their creative souls and felt them move mine. I saw the beauty of an idea, and the emotion of an idea in form.

For once I realized the incredible articulation of an unspeakable horror. I saw brutality in human nature and America's past through phrases that were turned as well as my stomach was as I read. I felt the most intense love and the most terrible hate blended in one stroke of the hand.

For once I walked out on the front porch and breathed in spring. I smelled the rain, noticed the buds on the red maples and the crabapples. I was surprised to see how far the perennials were pushing in Vartan Plaza. I felt the cool air fill my lungs, and I felt part of me leave them to join my surroundings.

For once I enjoyed the culmination of a friend's hard work. I sat and watched three months of late nights, worries and re-writes turn into smiles and congratulations. I saw nerves turn to hugs. I saw trepidation relieved by performance. I felt my curiosity satiated and my search for something good

confirmed by a final ovation.

For once I had the kind of day I always hoped college would be.

I sat and listened to Brad Moist discuss his ideas for the radio station with Bill

Mahar, and smiled as they found a reasonable path to a mutual solution.

I sat and I pondered the Eastern philosophy of "Great Space." I saw a class, including myself, begin to grasp an idea profoundly different than our Western Tradition. And I saw Glen Mazis nod or shake his head as he saw us learn.

I closed my issue of Tarnhelm as Kim Glass read her award-winning short

story. I smelled the orange blossoms and swayed on the porch swing with her characters. I laughed as I felt the humor of Rachel Adamiak's first-place photo.

I got new chills as Matthew Wilson

took our class deeper into "Beloved." I saw new meaning in twists of terror disguised in such wonderful language. I saw slavery's brutality and a mother's horrible love.

I smelled spring.

I saw Jesse Gutierrez smile after an outstanding performance of his play, "Cameron." I understood the work he put into it, but I couldn't realize how the actors and crew pulled it off. Three months! And I was lucky enough to

see it all come together.

Hell, today was the reason I came to school.

For once, I had it.

For more, I'll remember it.

*"For once  
I had the  
kind of day  
I always hoped  
college would be."*