

OPINION and REVIEW

Editorials

Do Students Need Behavior Guide?

by Vi Ong

Have you ever talked, whispered, eaten, chewed, popped your bubble gum, burped, flipped your ink pen repeatedly, tapped your nimble finger on the chair in front of you, raised your hand to ask the same question a thousand times over, or unintentionally fallen asleep in class?

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above, you are evidently what many members of the faculty would call a "disrupter". You are the cause for breaking the undivided attention of your classmates; by your behavior you are cutting the cord of educational flow in the classroom and jeopardizing the foundation of future careers. You are the nightmare that brings frustration to the faculty who have dedicated their life-time commitment to teaching.

Am I over-exaggerating or blowing this problem out of proportion? Perhaps there's a rational explanation for these intolerable acts. Apparently some faculty members don't think so, for a faculty committee has been established to research the disruptive classroom behavior problem and to produce a Student Behavior Guide for our campus.

Before we examine the problem more closely, the term "disruptive behavior" is regarded here as "an act that inhibits the students' concentration to learn and the professor's ability to teach."

One student, when asked to define "disruptive behavior," responded, "Noise." This student can't tolerate continuous conversation from his neighboring classmates during a lecture. Does it matter if the conversation is relevant to the subject of the lecture? "Even if it is," another student commented, "for some trivial questions it's better to ask a nearby friend than to interrupt the class by asking the teacher."

How about eating in class? To some professors that's disrespectful behavior, but from most students' perspectives, it's quite acceptable. "The issue is simply time efficiency," said one freshman. Not all professors agree on this question. Some are even known to encourage students to eat in class if their schedules don't permit time for an adequate meal.

Right now, the flexibility of classroom rules and regulations is dependent upon each professor. As Dr. John Ousey, Chairman of the faculty committee on student behavior, stated, "Each professor has his/her unique way of running his/her ship. Some like it tighter, while others prefer it looser."

I couldn't agree more. This freedom to establish one's own classroom rules allows each professor to use his/her own judgment and to use their talent for teaching more efficiently. To most professors, this freedom to run their classes in their own way represents a sharp line of demarcation between secondary school classes and college classes.

This principle of freedom should be applied in the same way to college students. The faculty should be more tolerant of classroom behaviors which only a few professors consider disruptive, like eating, sleeping, or even whispering. And they should understand that these behaviors happen under very limited circumstances.

These are hardly enough reasons to be concerned with presenting the student body with a Behavior Guide.

Penn State's Stand on Obscenity

by Angela Deal

"... Promote, disseminate or produce obscene or indecent materials, including but not limited to depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts, or material which denigrates the objects or beliefs of the adherents of a particular religion or nonreligion." These are the terms under which, in July of 1990, the U.S. Senate voted to bar the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) from using federal funds.

In addition, the bill, sponsored by Jesse Helms of North Carolina, would restrict grants for artwork that "denigrates, debases, or reviles a person, group or class of citizens on the basis of race, creed, sex, handicap, age or national origin."

What did Penn State's Arts Center Director, Kenneth Foster, do when presented with these restrictions to a recent grant? He, with good reason, rejected the grant terms. In turn, Penn State lost a \$5,000 grant. Penn State and approximately six other institutions have rejected the anti-obscenity clause in the NEA grant terms. Although Foster does not promote obscenity, he feels that "to place content restrictions on artists is to restrict artistic output."

While probably criticized by some, Penn State has taken a commendable stand. Censorship is a prevalent issue today, and under this clause that the NEA has presented, artists will be compelled to thwart their abilities and ideas. Although some art may be offensive or lude, it is the artist's prerogative to produce such a work. The Constitution allows freedom of expression.

This freedom of expression is questioned by many people, however. A major issue today includes Robert Mapplethorpe's photography. The artistic value of his photos has been questioned. In addition to creating beautiful compositions of flowers, Mapplethorpe delved into the "taboo." He shot photos of men kissing, black and white men hugging, nude children, and more.

Congress reviewed only seven of Mapplethorpe's works, which they considered obscene. In doing this, and neglecting to review his other works, they broke a rule. There are obscenity criteria known as the "three prongs" of the Miller standard (from a court ruling based on a case in 1973, Miller vs. California). Each of these criteria must be met in order to declare works obscene: 1) The average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the work as a whole, appeals to prurient interest, "prurient interest" here meaning that the work leads to sexual arousal. 2) The work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specified by the statute, and 3) the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

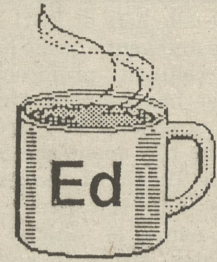
Clearly Mapplethorpe's works contain a shock value, yet more importantly his works as a whole are artistically serious.

At a recent lecture given by campus art instructor Constance Kirker concerning the issue, slides were shown and opinions were voiced. Although some of the works created a little embarrassment or a giggle, many of the opinions favored Mapplethorpe.

In any case, rejecting the grant terms has proved beneficial to Penn State, which has received sufficient donations to replace the rejected grant, due apparently, to the publicity on the issue. In addition, the University has made quite a dignified statement, refusing to be intimidated by censorship.

THE FRONT DESK

by Ed Tomezko
Campus Executive Officer



"The time has come," the Walrus said, "to talk of many things: of shoes and ships and ceiling way, of cabbages and kings, and why the sea is boiling hot, and whether pigs have wings."

What a wonderful coach is Buddy Ryan! The Eagles have won seven games and the Super Bowl is on the horizon. Five weeks ago he was MUD; today he could be mayor of Philadelphia and with a few more wins, he could be the second coming of Joe (dare I say it) Pa. . . . No, never that good.

Rich Kotite had installed the best offensive system in the league. Even the Iggy's offense has learned how to play this system. What a bunch of geniuses youse is.

I remembered November 22, 1963, on Thanksgiving Day, 1990. Jack Kennedy made the country feel young again because he was young and had a beautiful wife and an American family — one boy, one girl. In these twenty-seven intervening years, we have all learned just how human JFK was.

Dr. Martin Luther King has been "shown" to have written a few things without proper attribution to the original author, also known as plagiarism. But then, there have always been hints of indiscretion about Dr. King's life. Even some of his "friends" have been compelled to speak out about his "human" side.

As noted before, my impressions of the events on that 1963 day are indelibly etched in my mind. It was a cruel day and the days that followed for the funeral were equally so.

I can remember sitting in the Field House at Villanova to hear Dr. King speak, and I can remember some of what he said. I can remember all of what he meant. Unlike JFK, his death did not bring the same sense of sadness to the country. Only those people who

understood the message understood the loss.

How does Buddy Ryan fit into this, you ask? Easy. Buddy lives and dies on the singular virtues of 45 guys trying to be a team once a week for seventeen weeks, with one week off for television revenue. Five weeks ago, the rails out of town were well greased, Buddy was on them, and the fans were pushing for Norman to do something about this "great franchise." Buddy ignored his critics, and the critics got crazier. He fixed them; he began to win.

With Buddy, the people are honest enough to say, "You and your team stink, and the sooner you and your lousy coaches disappear, the sooner . . ." or to say, "You and your team are absolutely wonderful and the best team ever, and Randall ought to be mayor and . . ." You get the picture. Today's fame is related to the question, "What have you done for me lately?"

However, it would be a lot more dangerous to say, "Hey JFK, you have warts," or "Yo! Dr. King, you have warts." These people might argue back at you. They're big, and we are little. So detractors of great people work to destroy their characters, sometimes by small facts and sometimes by innuendo, always, however, dropped in the "right" places.

Here's the point. The need is for us to separate the message from the messenger. JFK did have vision. MLK did have vision. Great people always do have vision. Forgive the obvious, but that is what makes them great: vision and the courage to speak out about the vision.

We, as educated people, should strive to see the vision too. We, as educated people, might not agree on the value of a particular vision.

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