

editorial opinion

## The lost art of thinking

In the not too distant future, a university professor might make a reference to *Huckleberry Finn* and students in the class might not know what he or she is talking about.

Professors might get the same reaction if they mention *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Darwin's theory of evolution, or any other controversial literary or scientific work.

This is the goal of certain feminists, minority groups and fundamental Christians who are out to censor library materials and textbooks that foster sexism, racism or secular humanism — the doctrine which centers on human interests, rather than God.

According to the American Library Association, efforts to censor classroom material have risen dramatically in the past two decades.

The most recent case involves a Mobile, Ala., group of about 600 parents who are challenging textbooks they say promote atheistic humanism and exclude the Judeo-Christian faith.

It will be a sad day for the children of Mobile or any other town, for that matter, if the censors' efforts succeed.

The intellectual exercise that comes from the discussion of new and controversial ideas is what stimulates learning and creativity in our educational system.

An American Association of University Professors report states that censorship threatens academic freedom which can deny students information that will help them advance in college.

The same report shows that watered-down textbooks may be driving down test scores.

The effect of censorship at the elementary and secondary levels will later surface at the university level. Colleges and universities will be forced to offer remedial classes to make students aware of controversial ideas and literary works.

Religious revival groups and other interest groups claim they have the right to say what should and should not be in textbooks. But if these groups get their way, they will force other people's children to read textbooks filled with evangelical Christian ideas.

Such textbooks would only be the extreme opposite of books biased toward secular humanism. These books would tell young creative minds what to think, with no options offered.

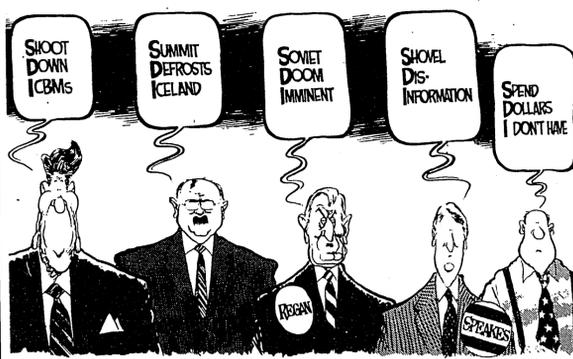
By neutrally presenting controversial ideas or religions, textbooks are not discriminating against anyone. If the students are taught to be open-minded and mature, they will not in any way be hindered in practicing their religion just by reading a textbook.

Students are made aware of different ideas by reading textbooks containing controversial issues — they are not forced to believe or practice the ideas.

Instead of being told whether a book is moral or not, students should be taught to decide for themselves.

Thinking is a skill that must be practiced. If the move to censor textbooks becomes more commonplace in the United States, thinking will become a lost art among American students.

## Q: What does "SDI" stand for?



## reader opinion

### Human failure

While the Human Rights Day in the HUB Ballroom on Oct. 22 had its inspiration "to increase the level of awareness on the urgency of human rights issues," according to its chairman, the program dismisses human rights of some groups by not involving them. This is the case with lesbian women and gay men.

Lesbians and gays make up about 10 percent of the population worldwide or more than half of a billion people.

In only a handful of countries do we enjoy protection and equal rights, mostly in Western Europe. Only Wisconsin protects us from discrimination.

However, nowhere in the world are gays free from harassment. According to a recent study, 82 percent of gays have been the subject of some form of violence because they are gay; this corresponds to about 15 million Americans.

Most violence goes unreported, while cases which are brought to trial, including outright confessed murderers, are dropped by the courts because the victims are gays.

This is a disgrace, but in a world in which many enjoy less freedom than Americans, the situation tends to be worse.

This has prompted Amnesty International to list gay activist prisoners as prisoners of conscience.

As the largest minority group at the University and one of the most discriminated against, the participation of the Lesbian and Gay Student Alliance in the program would have lent it greater credibility as a positive force for change.

The organizers have decided to make students aware of only certain

human rights issues. Therefore, the event failed in its efforts.

Sim David Aherson  
co-director  
Lesbian and Gay Student Alliance

### Disgrace

Dinner on Sunday, Oct. 19 at Findlay Dining Hall was a disaster that calls for action.

If you happened to be a student who came to dinner toward the end of the 4:30 to 6 p.m. period, you were in for a big disappointment.

You had to wait in a 40 minute line or longer. Your meal, supposed to be sausage or plain pizza, was a sorry excuse. It was intended to get a salad, you were out of luck.

You also would have found yourself eating to the stench of vinegar because tables were being cleaned while you were eating.

What act of mismanagement can explain why these students were treated as second-class dining hall-goers while paying in full?

If Sunday's meal was the first of such events it could be forgiven, but it's not.

This kind of abuse is usually dealt to customers who eat closer to 6 p.m. Something must be done.

Housing and Food Services should research the number of student's eating at specific meals and plan ahead.

If research doesn't help, the student's arriving for dinner after 5:30 p.m. should receive a discount.

Nothing will be done unless Housing and Food Services hears from customers who are fed up with the sorry state of late dinners.

Together, we can get something done.

Ken Sandgras  
sophomore-engineering  
Steve Slater  
freshman-engineering

### Speed limit

Here I am again, your friendly neighborhood speed freak, crusading against the law I love to hate, the 55 mph speed limit. I did research and discovered some interesting facts.

I was wrong in my last letter that the death rate is going up. In fact, it has been steadily decreasing since 1974. This fact admittedly puzzles the Department of Transportation.

They say in *Newsweek* that there is a correlation between speed and death rate. "It is simply impossible to isolate. While there are no clear indicators the law saves lives, it does cost Americans time."

Jim Baxter, president of the Citizens Coalition for Rational Traffic Laws, is quoted in *U.S. News and World Report* as saying, "55 mph speed limit increases travel time 21 percent."

This equates to an extra month on the road for a salesman who travels 45,000-50,000 miles per year.

The argument many supporters of 55 mph give is that the government is trying to protect us.

However, if this is so why are cigarettes still on sale in this country?

Smoking will kill a person sooner or later. Why doesn't the government protect us and ban cigarettes? The hypocrisy goes on.

People do not want to drive 55 mph. Although polls show that most people don't want the law repealed, support drops when the stipulation is added that tickets would be given for speeds as low as 60 mph.

I've come to the end of another letter trying to inform the public of the ignorance of this law and find I have a lot more information.

Michael J. Gehman  
junior-microbiology

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## opinions

### Please write

The Daily Collegian welcomes letters from students, faculty, staff and area residents concerning issues and topics of interest to the Collegian's readership. With the semester at the half-way point, many important issues confront the University.

Authors must present letters to the editor (no more than 1 1/2 pages, double-spaced) or forums (up to three typed pages, double-spaced) to the Collegian in 126 Carnegie Building.

Students' letters should include the semester and major of each writer. Letters from alumni should include the author's major and year of graduation.

All writers should provide their address, phone number and social security number for verification of the letter.

The opinion editors reserve the right to edit letters for length and to reject letters if they are libelous or do not conform to standards of good taste.

Due to the number of letters received, the Collegian cannot guarantee that all letters will be published.

All letters become the property of Collegian Inc.

## Racism:

### Prejudice continues to block Penn State's way to further progress

"The night is black without a moon  
the air is thick and still.  
The vigilantes gather on  
the lonely, torch-lit hill."  
— from "Witch Hunt" by Rush



Today marks six weeks since six students were asked the question, "How do you think the climate for black students has changed since you came to campus?" The comments were written up in a "Quote/Unquote" section on these pages.

To please Lucifer by rounding out this hellish mathematical series, I decided to ask another six students for their answers to the same question.

"The righteous rise  
with burning eyes  
of hatred and ill-will."  
— "Witch Hunt" by Rush

"You mean, how has the situation changed for them people? I think it's improved drastically. Why, I've even let myself be seen associating with one or two of them people. I think all of Penn State is learning to deal with them. I've learned they're people, almost like us."

Kate K. Klanberg  
senior-inane studies

"I don't see any tension between blacks and whites. I don't see any bitter feelings toward

each other. I don't see anything resembling racial prejudice. I just don't see what the problem is."

Helen Keller  
sophomore-optometry

"No, I don't think much has changed. If they would only stop provoking the whites, maybe things would get better. I mean, what was the point of that shanty town last year? It just got in the way and looked ugly. Let's not forget the anti-apartheid march this past Saturday."

Who do they think they are, trying to 'raise our consciences' when we were trying to get to a football game? You see, the blacks come here so they can cause problems. I'd say they're getting what they deserve."

"Quick to judge,  
quick to anger,  
too slow to understand.  
Ignorance and prejudice  
and fear walk hand-in-hand."  
— "Witch Hunt" by Rush

"I think the climate is the same for them as anyone else. It rains on most days, it's sunny on others. I don't understand why it should be any different for them."

John Q. Weatherman  
sophomore-neoscience

"As a black student, I really haven't seen any drastic changes. I'm not saying there's overt racism, but why does the University support slavery in other countries? I'm still not saying that there's overt racism, but the University might as well have separate bathrooms with their attitude."

Hell, don't think I'm trying to say that there's overt racism, but sometimes I feel I should be sitting in the back of the Loop."

think blacks deserve something more than they're getting."

Jim Hob Smith  
graduate-malignance

Sometimes joking about serious problems can alleviate some of the pressure when discussing them. Now it's my turn to steal a page from "The Saint's" book and do a little preaching.

Racial prejudice remains a hurdle blocking Penn State's way to further progress. We can talk with real and not-so-real students and write about this problem all we want, but what we really need is a strong effort on everyone's part to wake up to reality. Our country recognized that all people are equal almost 200 years ago — many of us have serious catching up to do.

It's time we all think about what we're saying. Question yourself: would I want these things said about my racial, ethnic or religious heritage? The answer may keep us from saying things we'll later regard as foolish.

If you'll give it a try, so will I.

"Those who know what's best for us must rise and save us from ourselves."

— "Witch Hunt" by Rush

Things just aren't the same. My dad remembers the good old days when whites were whites and black's weren't. At least I was able to come to Penn State so I wouldn't have to deal with any bleeding-heart liberals who

Phill Staub is a sophomore in the Division of Undergraduate Studies and a columnist for The Daily Collegian. His column appears every other Friday.

## the Collegian

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## quote/unquote

What do you think of politicians who focus more on mudslinging than issues to defeat their opponents?



Beth Skelly  
freshman  
English

"Basically, I don't think politicians who are into mudslinging should be in politics in the first place."



Tsutomu Takahashi  
senior  
Japanese

"In Japan, we don't use that kind of thing. But I think that, in a way, it's kind of good. It's bad to condemn each other, but it's kind of good to attack the weak point of the opponents."



Tom Mangan  
senior  
telecommunications

"It's getting ridiculous; totally out of hand. They just keep saying the same things over and over again. Like Casey and Sarantou keep saying, 'you didn't go to that meeting' and they're not talking about unemployment — just all the bad points and not what they should be talking about."



Grace Powell  
senior  
general arts and sciences

"Well, I think that's really petty. First off, they should keep themselves addressed to the issues and only bring up relevant things and not that they're not attending meetings. Personal things should not be brought up."



Tony Rybak  
senior  
non-degree student

"I think it's kind of funny. My dad's in politics and he doesn't do that. I think it adds some fun to the campaign and gives the candidates more than just the issues to focus on."



Jody Dively  
sophomore  
finance

"They should concentrate more on the issues. When they go back and forth on the radio, it seems like they concentrate more on what the other person is saying than what they believe in themselves. They should elaborate more on what their goals are for their campaigns."

Compiled by Collegian staff writer Marty Irvin and photographer Alan Klein

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