

Editorial opinion

One more time

Executive Round Table must learn from past mistakes

Although the new Executive Round Table looks suspiciously like two now-defunct organizations, this student forum could be a great way for student leaders to work together to solve University-wide problems — or it could go the way of the Executive Student Action Council and the University Student Advisory Board.

Each student group on campus has its own agenda and priorities, often meaning that broader issues get overlooked. By providing a place for student leaders and administrators to talk, the round table may fill that hole.

But to get anything accomplished, participants must pinpoint where ESAC and USAB went wrong. When ESAC was dissolved Spring Semester 1994, many members called it ineffective and unable to handle the issues it initially wanted to address.

The round table, with its broad goals of being a sounding board, risks this same fate. Student leaders should set each meeting's topic before each meeting and then take the initiative to seek out administrators, students or community members who would also

provide valuable input for discussion. Publicizing the topics in advance will also allow students uninvolved in government the opportunity to decide whether they wish to attend the meeting.

And even though the round table cannot make legislation, it should come up with suggestions for each student leader to take back to his or her organization.

Take gay bashing. A problem affecting people across campus and in town, gay bashing is too big an issue for one group to handle. But if the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Student Alliance talked during a round-table discussion to the Undergraduate Student Government and Academic Assembly, for example, the groups could work together to educate the University community.

The lines between different organizations are already muddled. Just because someone is a member of Black Caucus does not mean they don't have suggestions for USG.

If handled properly, the round table will draw out these similarities and lead students to work together and with the administration.

AND NOW: SENIOR GIFT OPTIONS WE'RE REALLY LIKE TO SEE!

A) GEORGE W. ATHERTON RESTORATION: Former Penn State president would be exhumed from his grave on Pollock Road, renovated to his former condition, and displayed in an air-tight case for the enjoyment of all!

B) SOMETHING TO BE DONE ABOUT THE BEE POPULATION ON THE HUB LAWN: Who can relax with all them bees flying around? Not me!

C) RETURN THE MISSING LETTER "F" TO THE SIGN ON NORTH REAR BUILDING SO IT WOULD NO LONGER READ "NORTH REAR BUILDING"

Vote Early! Vote Often! P. H. H. H.

Letters to the editor

Senior gift should be one that matters

What is the point of the senior gift? Is it so we can come back as graduates in 20 years and say, "See that fountain not making a difference, my class gave that as our gift to show how much we care about Penn State and further education."

No, the point of the senior gift is to show thanks for the education we have received, and to leave the University better than we started. The gift should leave a mark on the University, but why, year after year, do the classes limit themselves to material representations? A restored Nittany Lion is nice, another grassy knoll for hack-sack is fine too, but why not dare to be different. Lets look beyond adding more to the University, lets improve what we already have!

Have you ever been to the library and been bothered by loud groups while studying in a supposedly quiet area? I have. Have you ever been in a computer lab and had a problem that only a non-existing lab operator could fix? I have.

I suggest that the seniors reevaluate the proposed senior gift. Instead of offering another material item (i.e. fountains, trees, gazebos), lets offer something that will make a material difference. The money that would be raised and used for the aforementioned gifts should be entrusted to student (not just senior) determined groups that would use the money to provide for a better learning environment.

Perhaps the money could go to paying for a full-time lab-operators where they are needed. The money could help pay for the extra library staff to keep quiet areas quiet. Where ever the money would go, it would be making a difference. Granted, we can't hang a "Class of '96" plaque on a service, but wouldn't it feel better to look back and say, "I made a difference, when others made an encased lion with kiosk?"

Joshua D. Reed
senior-accounting

making me yell this to the campus so that the mass consciousness does not persecute, outcast or ostracize me? No, it is not.

Although every time a man starts to open up and show emotions caring for others, the people around him start feeling woozy with nausea thinking that they are one of "them." No, I am stating my sexuality to show that one does not have to be gay to sympathize with their plight.

In fact, homosexuals are victims of abuse who cannot do anything to stop it. This is up to the mass of heterosexuals to change. Acceptance must first start by not allowing a joke, or anything else, to go by unchallenged.

But what can we laugh at if not somebody else right? This has nothing to do with being "politically correct" either. I'm not running for office, I just want peace. That is it and that's all. As a heterosexual, I know this intolerance takes courage to stand up against.

Like I said, "in the spirit of the day." Do you realize how much courage it must take for homosexuals to come out? Just to be able to say, "this is who I am and that is who I have to be." Meanwhile knowing that it will leave them vulnerable to verbal abuse and physical abuse. Many have to overcome the self-hatred that society has taught them to feel.

To top it all off, some would try to fool you into thinking that God is against homosexuality. This faction tends to call themselves "Christians," but I don't see what it is that makes them that. One Sunday I was a greeter for the United Campus Ministries Service. UCM is often attacked or looked down upon by the more traditional groups of Christianity for not preaching the condemnation of homosexuality.

After the ceremony two clean-cut young men came prepared to debate with Rev. Synan about homosexuality. As the observer I noticed the anger and the intensity of these two young men. It struck me odd that out of this whole book, these two young men would find parts that said homosexuals were sinners.

Now I may not go to church much but I understand Jesus in a very different way. I don't think he said his followers were not sinners anymore. He said we are all sinners and must repent. I don't quite understand a self-righteous Christian. Is homosexuality the only sin or even the greatest sin? That takes a high level of judgment there and I have yet to meet the person who is qualified to say.

Why is it that so many modern day

Christians overlook that "Judge ye not others . . ." scripture. Is that one somewhat less important? I think I know why, because many Christians in the 20th Century still do not want to adhere to "Love one another."

In my opinion the single most important part of the Bible. It is much easier to point and say, "You have got to change your ways," than it is actually to change your ways. Some say that Christianity will die unless Christians start behaving in a Christian way sincerely with their hearts. As young as seven years old, I viewed the church as hypocrites, and now at 20 the level astounds me.

I beg you people — accept others for who they are, that is the beginning of the teaching of Jesus, (and Buddhism, Native American, Islam, etc.). It is the teaching of compassion without discrimination, it rises above the personal prejudice.

To the Christians who spend their time battling homosexuality, your Jesus looks much like Hitler. Stop degrading your religion to the level of those people who have inscribed "All fags must die" into all of the campus bathroom stall walls.

Am I a gay lover? Yes. Am I a minority-lover? Yes. Am I a Jewish-lover? Yes. Am I an animal lover? Yes. Am I a tree hugger? yes. Where is the limit to your love?

Richard Swartz
junior-biobehavioral health

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Correction

A letter in The Daily Collegian Oct. 12 incorrectly identified the author of a letter. The author's name is Erin E. Bried.

Things to Do Today

1. Have a cup of coffee.
2. Write a letter to the Collegian.
3. Call home.

Juries' questionable caliber leads to lack of trust in system

The recent O.J. extravaganza has stirred up misgivings about our legal system. In the light of the verdict, people have also begun to question the integrity or fitness of the jury. It is unfortunate that we had to wait until a black man was acquitted by a mostly black jury to start asking these questions. It is as if the phenomenon of a possibly "biased" jury started with O.J. It did not.

But we can take the O.J. jury, since everyone is so well informed about the trial, as a representative example of what goes on in U.S. courts every day. Defense lawyer Johnnie Cochran pleaded to the jury to "send a message" that they have had enough of the corrupt police force and racism.

There is nothing wrong with the message itself. However, it is not the juror's job to send messages.

It is the jury's duty to listen to the evidence with an open mind right to the very end. It is their job to consequently weigh the evidence and jointly deliberate the pros and

My opinion

Karoline Gottschild

cons of the case using their reason.

In the Simpson case, there were 45,000 pages of transcripts, 1,105 pieces of evidence and 126 witnesses. The jury did not even have the decency to pretend that they were taking their job seriously by going over at least the most salient witnesses, testimonies and evidence. They clearly went with their minds made up, voted, and changed the two "guilty" verdicts around in less than three hours.

Yet the very premise of a jury is to deliberate. But after nine months, they couldn't wait to get

out of there. One juror snidely stated that they had nine months, they didn't need another nine. That same woman claimed that they did get their books and went over all the evidence. In three hours?

I am revolted by such a blatant dismissal of the jury's duty. But we should not be surprised.

Look at the kinds of people we have on juries. In the O.J. case, so much weight lay on the interpretation of highly complex scientific evidence, yet only two jurors even had college degrees.

One male juror asked "How could a man who had it all be a suspect?" This man's imagination and knowledge of facts is so limited that he is incapable of conceiving that rich men can and do kill their wives! The jury forewoman stated that domestic violence represented mere "personal problems." O.J. Simpson beat Nicole savagely, until she called 911. Nine times. She put a note in her safety deposit box, stating she feared for her life at the hands of her ex-husband. This

"If we can't trust the juries' intelligence and integrity, we can't believe in their verdict."

wasn't a mere personal problem. Spousal battery is illegal. Did these two jurors not comprehend this?

That forewoman's understanding of scientific tests is equally impressive. She recited — as an example of how unreliable scientific tests were — that her urine sample once incorrectly showed her to be pregnant. Urine samples are indeed very unreliable. DNA tests are highly sensitive and accurate. The prosecution explained the latter, evidently to no avail.

Another juror admitted she thought O.J. was innocent from the start, and that she clung to this hope until the very end. It appears that in this case, the jury could not (would not) distinguish between the shadow of a doubt and reasonable doubt. This jury clearly required proof of guilt beyond any possible doubt.

Another juror admitted that she told reporters that she believed none of the evidence presented against Simpson to be true. She pointed out that jurors could hardly be expected to transcend racial issues, since whites and blacks had to go back to their communities after the trial. This sounds dangerously like the kind of reasoning a white racist would have used 50 years ago in letting a white man, accused of harming a black man go free. This was the situation then. This still is the situation today. Jurors are tainted by racism, sexism, ignorance, stress or whatever other conscious and unconscious motives.

Each year the U.S. conducts over 120,000 trials by jury. We need to revise the jury selection process. We cannot continue to have weak juries with their own agendas,

whatever their color. Let's admit it. To some extent we are all biased. We see life through the prism that our life experiences have provided. But we must at least aim for clarity, for truth undistorted.

A new jury model is needed, such as a mix of civil lay persons and professional experts — of all races and genders. The experts could help the lay persons understand the complicated scientific, legal or logical aspects of the evidence. The lay persons would assure diversity in background and experience. Together they should be bound to deliberate each point of the case. If we can't trust the juries' intelligence and integrity, we can't believe in their verdict.

We cannot have a system of justice that is blind to the very thing it is meant to protect and promote: Equal justice for all. Blacks, Whites, Latinos, Asians, Women, Men... ALL!

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