

OPINION

THE DAILY
Collegian

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Letters

We want to hear your comments on our coverage, editorial decisions and the Penn State community.

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Letters should be about 200 words. Student letters should include class year, major and campus. Letters from alumni should include year of graduation. All writers should provide their address and phone number for verification. Letters should be signed by no more than two people. Members of organizations must include their titles if the topic they write about is connected with the aim of their groups. The Collegian reserves the right to edit letters. The Collegian cannot guarantee publication of all letters it receives. Letters chosen also run on The Daily Collegian Online and may be selected for publication in The Weekly Collegian. All letters become property of Collegian Inc.

AFM initiatives worthwhile

Last weekend, members of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) Local 660 held a meeting to discuss their Sustainable Music Venue program.

The initiative encourages bars to sign contracts with performers they hire.

Such contracts help establish a desirable wage for performers to help both the musicians themselves and State College's performance scene.

By paying musicians a steady and fair wage, the performers have more security and subsequently more time and freedom to hone their craft.

This will result in better

musicians at local venues.

It also seems fair to do so. Musicians have as much of a right to start a family and live comfortably as people of any occupation.

By paying a higher wage, the scene may even attract more musicians to the area, expanding and deepening State College's musical and cultural scope. So far, 12 local venues have signed on.

While increases in payment may increase covers or prices at venues, many local musicians are not part of the AFM, making the union slightly less effective.

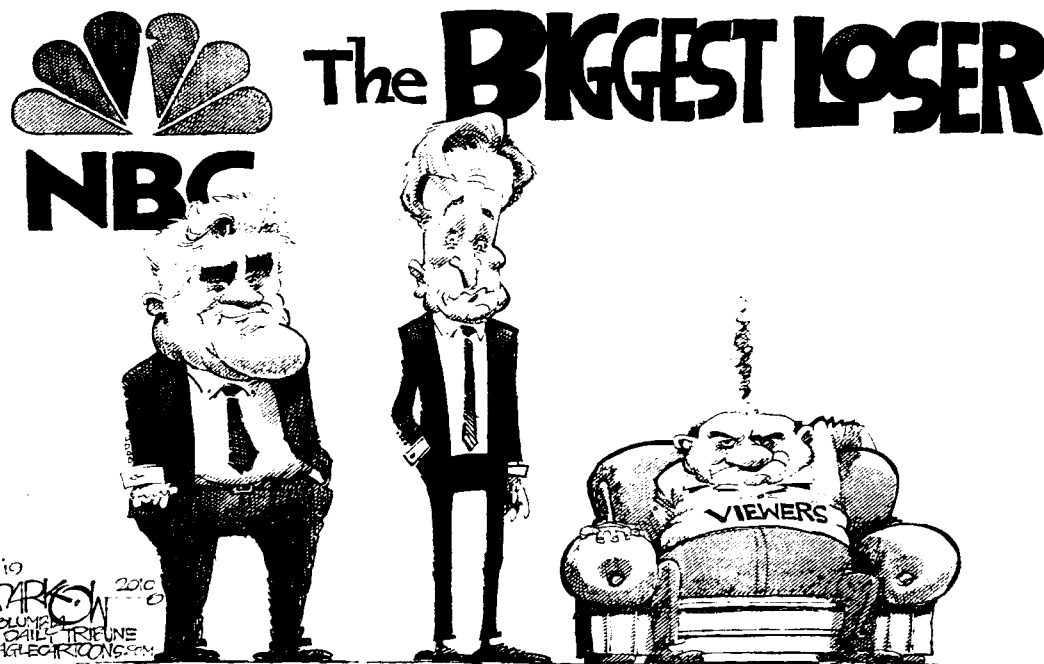
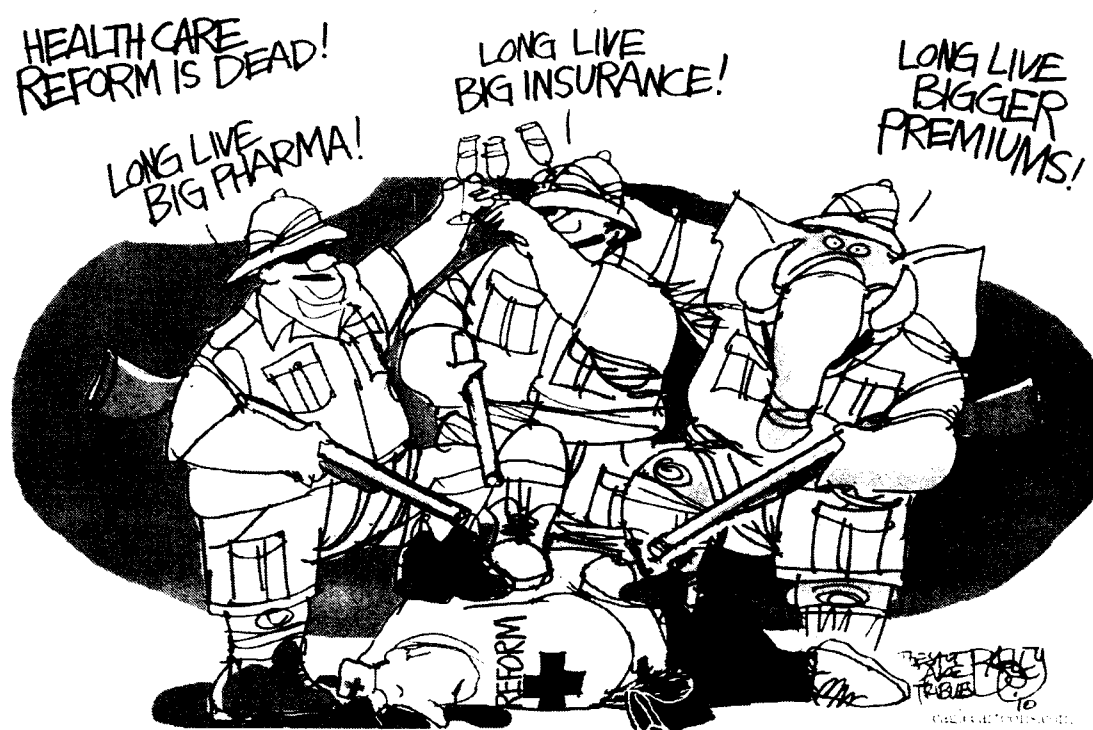
But the voluntary nature of the program

should make it a well-balanced system that is beneficial for all parties.

The union has also created specific committees for different musical genres and performance types and has plans for expanding in the future. This should further help State College's music scene grow in many different directions, as the group also pushes to diversify the acts booked at bars.

The main draw at downtown bars remains the drinks.

However, the AFM's goal of building a stronger local music scene may be difficult, but it is an honorable goal.



Feud makes late night TV interesting

By Rich Coleman

TONIGHT will mark the first time since June 1, 2009, where I've made a point to sit down in front of my television and watch a late-night talk show.

Back in June, I wanted to make sure I witnessed Conan O'Brien's first episode as the host of NBC's "The Tonight Show." Tonight? I want to make sure I witness his last.

Unless you've been living under Jay Leno's chin for the past couple of weeks, you more than likely have heard a lot of news about O'Brien's drama with NBC. If this late-night talk show fiasco could be analogous to anything, I'd say it's like a bad love triangle. NBC dumped Leno and started going out with Conan, but NBC still secretly had feelings for Leno and was even seeing him on the side (see: Conan's lackluster lead-in, "The Jay Leno Show").

Now the triangle has been exposed, and NBC has learned the hard way that it can't have its cake and eat it, too. All parties are bitter to some extent, whether it's Conan, who's out of a job, or Leno, who's out of a good reputation.

But the interesting thing to me is that this whole mess started over ratings. Conan got bad ratings, Leno got bad ratings, so all hell breaks loose and NBC executives decide Leno needs a half-hour show at 11:35 p.m. and Conan needs to be bumped to

12:05 a.m. This did not fly.

But since this fiasco has started, Conan's ratings for his final few weeks of episodes have gone up significantly. So, why is it that people are now so interested in watching Conan O'Brien again?

It's simple. Viewers are now being given something they didn't have before: a reason to watch him.

Let's face it: We all love Conan, sure. We can all agree he's edgier, funnier and more hip than Leno will ever be.

But none of us actually make a point of tuning into the show. And I don't mean watching clips on Hulu.com or DVRing it so you can watch it the next day. I mean, saying to yourself, "Oh, I need to make sure to watch Conan tonight," and then following up on it.

Now, sure, there are some exceptions, but obviously if the majority of us Conan fans watched every night, then he wouldn't be in this mess to begin with. The problem here is the traditional idea of late night talk shows being this topical-form-of-entertainment-that'll-get-the-water-cooler-buzzing is stale and outdated. Does anyone really talk about last night's episode of "The Tonight Show" at the water cooler anymore? Do people talk about any late night talk shows at all anymore?

Certainly not before Conan and every late-night host on network television started publicly bashing NBC while preparing their best Leno impressions.

The reality is that people will watch Conan, Leno, Letterman and any other late-night program if there's a good reason to watch it. With the NBC drama

going on, every late night host has to put in their two cents and in that way, we, the audience, are viewing a late night war-of-the-words play out night after night. Each cheap shot becomes more scandalous as the contract negotiations between O'Brien and NBC become more heated.

And it's making for some damn good television.

But therein lies the problem. Late night talk shows are only worth watching if something out of the ordinary is happening.

Animal Collective is playing on Letterman? Worth watching. President Obama is a guest on Conan? Worth watching.

Conan is viciously insulting his bosses and Jay Leno while he negotiates a multi-million dollar exit from his contract after a slew of erroneous actions taken by NBC executives? And it's the last week that he'll be on-air? Definitely worth watching.

But that'll all change once all this controversy fades away, after Conan has been off the air for a week or two and this is all old news. No one will care to watch Jay Leno after the first couple of weeks, and we'll all just keep ignoring Letterman and Kimmel and Ferguson like usual.

Only in the fall, when Conan returns to late night TV will any of us say to ourselves, "Hey, I better watch Conan tonight. This is going to be a big event."

Hopefully by then we'll have figured out a reason to keep watching without the aid of controversy.

Rich Coleman is a senior majoring in journalism and is the Collegian's Friday columnist. His e-mail address is rmc5074@psu.edu.

Loss of City Lights Records damages music community

In all the years I spent immersed in the State College music scene, nothing served me better solace than the continuous presence of Greg Gabbard's record store downstairs from Metro. Seeing the David Bowie cutout in the window and the shaded gaze of the man behind the counter always meant I could lose myself for an afternoon. It was a feeling no live show in this town could offer me. It was personal. A record store, most people don't realize, isn't for buying records. Hell, you can listen to records anywhere nowadays. Record stores are for finding yourself in music. Live shows very rarely offer that opportunity, as great as they can be. You're surrounded by strangers, and unless the band you're seeing is truly transcendent, there's always this notion of familiarity in the air. A record store can take you out of your comfort zone and push you forward.

And now that Greg's leaving, State College is losing that. I can't say the town ever seemed to understand it as a whole but I know there have been and, until Jan. 30, will continue to be people who understand it. Greg was the gatekeeper, the shepherd, the last remaining light in State College's music landscape. City Lights Records will be sorely missed, if not by any current students, then by those who have entered its doorway in the past. Goodbye, City Lights. Joni Mitchell told us that you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone. I'm not sure we'll ever know what we had in City Lights.

Kevin A. Doran
Class of 2007

Renaming street for King would be honorable move

In his Wednesday letter, "Murphy a better choice than King for street renaming", Brian Heckmann claimed that honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with a street name "would be a disgrace to our community" and that King "has only the most tenuous connection to our community via a singular 1965 speech." For him to make such remarks is insensitive, incendiary and reprehensible.

I am in agreement that Lt. Mike Murphy is worthy of being honored by the State College community. He was a courageous man who valiantly served and ultimately gave his life in exchange for another.

Dr. King, like Lt. Murphy, risked his life for 13 enduring years as a leader during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. His prominence and resolve to attain racial equality culminated in his assassination. He is a Nobel Laureate and national hero who has afforded greater civil rights to minorities. Furthermore, he appropriately presented to historically privileged whites like myself that racial discrimination and inequality are fallacious.

Dr. King is no disgrace to this community. His ties are both deeply rooted and abundant. And, we, not as people of different color but people of upstanding moral character, celebrate Dr. King's birthday each year hoping that we can peacefully uproot the deeply seated racial inequality that even today still exists.

Kyle Lewis
Class of 2008

DeChellis deserves support for efforts on and off court

When I read the letter titled "Lack of sustained success shows PSU needs new coach," I was surprised to see the lack of Penn State pride coming from an alumnus. Yes, Penn State is all about pride in success. Yes, the men's basketball team is struggling a bit this season. But, no, this should not be the means of firing Coach DeChellis.

This very young team is still growing. They're still learning to play this very familiar sport with not-so-familiar teammates. The way for this team to play together is to stay together. A new coach would bring uncertainty and would only cause more problems. As pointed out in the letter, he has done great things for the Coaches vs. Cancer foundation, not to mention the National Invitational Tournament championship he has under his belt. The Penn State way is never to quit and to have pride no matter what the score.

Maddy Pryor
freshman-advertising

blog lines

Small World

Today is my fourth day in Montpellier, and right now, France is about the little things — what I get most excited about isn't necessarily the Arc de Triomphe on the other side of town or the opera house a block from my apartment. It's the tiny dog under the table next to me at the cafe I'm writing this at.

It's the random anti-capitalism protest held by several of France's major political parties that I ran into while looking for a farmer's market today. It's getting in a taxi and hearing French voices on the radio.

I feel kind of stupid for obsessing over stuff as ordinary as cafes and tram cars. But the little things here are what makes France so different from home. It's about 40 degrees here, and people are still sitting outside at cafes — install heat lamps above every table so everyone can still eat, smoke and people-watch.

Read more from **Small World** and the rest of The Daily Collegian's blogs at psu.collegian.com.