

# Politics and drugs

*Writer believes D.C. Mayor Barry's ethics, not his skin color, to blame*

by Christine Spanos

Is D.C. Mayor Marion Barry a helpless, hapless victim of a plot against black public officials (as many civil rights leaders, liberal journalists and ministers seem to believe), or is he simply a public official whose abuse of a powerful office prompted his recent arrest?

In my opinion, neither. Mayor Barry finds himself faced with drug charges due only to his blatant disregard for the law. Those who claim Barry is a victim of racism don't seem to realize that by defending him in that manner, they are, in fact, the ones engaging in racial prejudices.

Implying that Barry is a victim of a plot against black politicians is to suggest that he is nothing more than a simple-minded fool who has no concept of law.

Perhaps that's all he is, but that doesn't say much for the people of this country, particularly the D.C. residents who elected him.

Public officials are supposed to help stop the problems that surround them, not become the problem. Public officials should be examples to not only the young, impressionable people of this nation but to everyone who enjoys this nation's freedoms.

Now I'll ask you again, is Barry a victim of his skin color or did he create his own demise?

By placing himself in the public eye, Barry made his first mistake. He could have been a back alley dope dealer and gone virtually unnoticed by the police force and the media. But he is the mayor of our nations capital and with that title comes great responsibilities.

Back alley dope dealers are not required to make important city decisions, appoint public officials or utilize millions of tax dollars.

The idea of a man, high on crack, deciding how to spend the tax dollars of every white man and every black man in the District of Columbia should be enough to turn anyone's stomach.

One of Barry's most important tasks as mayor of D.C. was to curtail a massive drug problem, a drug problem that brought about a murder rate that catapulted to ludicrous proportions in the month of January.

I'm not saying that you shouldn't have sympathy for Barry. A drug problem is a drug problem, but to say that Barry is a victim of a plot against black public officials is to say that he shouldn't be held accountable for his own wrong doing.

Barry's outlandish lifestyle led to his downfall. He had an attitude that claimed no limitations. His administration was haunted by scandal from day one. Key aides went to prison for taking kickbacks and his former girlfriend was arrested for dealing cocaine.

If that isn't enough to prompt a full investigation into Barry's administration I don't know what is. Barry could have been white, green or polka-dotted and the end results would remain the same. When a public official takes an oath of office he is sworn to uphold the law. Barry failed and that's all there is to it.

This isn't a racial issue. It's not a plot against black public officials. It's simply the federal agents doing what they are paid to do.

**Editor's Note:** Columns and letters appearing in *The Collegian* do not necessarily reflect the views of *The Collegian* or Penn State University.

# Opinion

## Letters to the Editor:

### Student challenges administration's punishment of Sigma Tau Gamma

Dear Editor,

Penn State is indeed an Equal Opportunity University, is it not? We preach that "Racism has no place at Penn State." If you are a victim of discrimination or witness a racist act you report it to the proper authorities and they will take care of it, right? Penn State is supposed to be a model of a diversified institution. An incident has occurred however, that shows that we don't practice what we preach.

On Tuesday, January 16 (the day Martin Luther King, Jr. III was at Behrend to speak, how ironic) members of the Sigma Tau Gamma fraternity attended an Erie Panthers hockey game, simply for entertainment. The opposing team was ahead, primarily due to one outstanding player. He just so happened to be an African-American (black). Well, rather than jeer the entire team, Sigma Tau Gamma, along with the crowd and a 3 year old child, began to chant, "Go home Buckwheat, go home!" Needless

to say, it got back to administration at Behrend.

What do you make of that? For those of you who do not know, "Buckwheat" is a stereotypical name for an African-American with a negative connotation. It denotes stupidity and ignorance.

Since Sigma Tau Gamma is an organization on this campus, their actions will reflect on the Behrend Community. Naturally, one would think that this behavior would not go unpunished. The "Grapevine" says that Sigma Tau Gamma had to attend the Benjamin Hooks lecture and send an apology letter to the team. Is this enough? Does someone have to be hurt, physically before a firmer punishment is issued?

We all know that we can apologize with a straight face and not mean it as we speak or write it. And how many times have you been in class and retained any information. A speaker series lecture should not be used as a form of punishment. That gives a

lecture a negative connotation. Punishment is something that makes you regret what you've done. I doubt that they've given it a second thought since they chanted racial slurs at the player.

I am appalled by the actions of these men, but even more appalled at the passive punishment being rendered. I don't want to attend a university that overtly shouts "racism is wrong," but then covertly covers it up when racism is evident.

This letter is not intended to condemn the administration for their actions because I am sure that they will inflict a firmer punishment. That is, if they are the avid leaders for a crusade on diversity, like they claim. This letter is simply to make you aware of the type of people you associate with daily, so that we are not fooled by the kind of person they pretend to be, because now we know what's on the inside.

- Ala Stanford  
4th semester, Biology

### Writer opposes Spanos' column on mandatory drug testing for financial aid

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to Christine Spanos' column about drug use among students who receive financial aid. Frankly, I very nearly puked when I read this bit of right-wing trash. Although Ms. Spanos has the right to air her opinion, I must violently disagree with her willingness to give up her and my constitutional rights.

She says, "If the testing were only for illegal drugs, ....it would only be the drug users themselves who claim that their constitutional rights are being violated." What an incredibly

stupid thing to say! I don't use drugs, but I am not willing to forfeit my Fourth Amendment right to be free of unreasonable searches and seizures just because the issue middle America is upset about this year is drug abuse. Drug testing without probable cause is wrong.

Our founding fathers wrote constitutional rights into the U.S. Constitution because they had experienced what it was like to live under a (British) regime which granted them no rights. It pains me to see polls like the recent one which said that 62% of the poll respondents would allow their houses and cars to be

searched to help the "war on drugs."

Ask older citizens of West Germany what good it did them to allow the abrogation of the rights of Jews, homosexuals, and Gypsies from 1933-45. Those citizens ended up losing their own rights as well. Can the U.S. afford to single out one or more classes of people and say, "we will just take a few of their rights"? If we do, we are no better than the Nazis. Ms. Spanos should learn from history.

Sincerely,  
Ron Shull  
Senior, Political Science

## The Collegian

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