

College scene is just really tiresome

First it was intimidating, then it became interesting, then casual. Now I'm tired. Really tired.

No matter how frightening the future of resumes, entry level gofor jobs, and guaranteed student loan repayments seems, I can stay here at Behrend no longer. College is without a doubt a shelter against real life, but this nurturing environment is, like all greenhouses and fish tanks, oppressive. People, like plants and animals, grow only to fit their surroundings.

The faculty and administration of Penn State Junior, The Behrend College comprise most of the environment for its students. Although this is the only college I've attended, I would be willing to bet that some of Behrend's teachers are the very best in the business. On that same wager I would say that some are the very worst, not even deserving the title of teacher. But all are repressive to the students they are trying to breed just by the very nature of the teaching business.

Even the finest, most liberal teachers have to maintain a level of control over their disciples, else the guru's word not be taken

seriously enough. Too much skepticism on the part of the follower toward the prophet is unprofitable, even though no good prophet would call his disciple's education complete without the most important lessons of skepticism, self respect and confidence.

Teachers like to throw around labels like "apprentice" and "student" in condescending tones as they talk about the work of their followers: "This is a fine piece of apprentice writing." Or "Pretty good student research."

Is there any doubt that teachers reading this will say "well, they are students, after all." True enough, but we are all, no matter what our jobs or positions, students, or at least we all should be. I like the words "student" and "apprentice" myself. It's just that too often the words are used as qualifiers by both teachers and the students.

College students often draw solace from the word "student" if something they do is not particularly good enough for the real world. Students have the idea that once they have a diploma everything they do will be instantaneously better and, no doubt, professional. If that does

not turn out to be the case then they will invoke another label: "trainee."

Students are told by their teachers (and I use that word with more and more apprehension as memories of select members of

YEAH RIGHT

the Behrend faculty ooze into my mind) that they should read the GREAT WORKS. And eager undergrads will indeed spend long hours in dimly lit rooms absorbing them, not realizing that many, if not most, of those great works were written by the authors when they were but young men and women in dimly lit rooms.

WELL, LIKE I SAID, I'M TIRED. A well known poet and essayist who read on campus a while back said that there were definite advantages to being older. He was happy he didn't have to dance anymore, that when he was

young he had to, but now he could say he was old enough to sit it out.

I've been here long enough to say "I'm going to sit this one out" once in a while. So when a teacher throws out a pat definition that he and I both know would be called into question by any number of experts, I keep my pen on my desk.

When a professor tells me to read a dry, lifeless book put out by the academic vomit-or-parish bookmill, I do read it, but I refuse to outline every other sentence full of suspect data and questionable definition.

Each professor thinks that his discipline is the one that will save you. Each thinks that details lead to understanding, because in most cases he was turned on by those facts and artifacts. The problem is that for most of us, the gang saying and gang memorization of facts will be more turn off than on. Facts are important, but in most cases they only benefit when they are learned instead of memorized.

I think that it would be interesting to throw a few of the most self righteous of those teachers into each others classes

so they can amuse themselves, or better yet, learn what does not work.

I'm not asking to be entertained. Amusing people is easy enough. I suppose I want my teachers to become part of the learning community of the class room. They reveal the evils of dictatorship, but they sometimes forget the evils of false participation and pseudo-accessibility.

Teachers stroke their liberal libidos by asking students for input on the course. Unfortunately almost all fail when it comes to letting that input have influence. Thanks for the thought, guys, but if you don't care: YOU KNOW WHERE IT'S AT.

Yeah, I'm tired. Tired of being sheltered and fed. Thus, the final lesson: Get out and do not come back. And that YEAH is indeed RIGHT.

- R. M. Prindle

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No, Nike's still not shaking in its boots

by Mike Royko

About two months have passed since Operation PUSH launched a sudden boycott campaign against Nike Inc., accusing the popular athletic apparel maker of being insensitive, insulting and disrespectful to blacks.

Leaders of PUSH threatened to bring Nike to its knees if it didn't immediately start using black law firms, advertising agencies and banks; hiring more black executives; and putting blacks on its board of directors.

The head of PUSH also said he wanted Nike to lower its prices and to finance educational programs in black neighborhoods so young men wouldn't shoot each other for their frontal parts for a female sports writer.

Because of the hectic nature of the news business, there hasn't been much written about the boycott lately. The story has been shoved aside by the threat of war with Iraq, the quivering national economy and football players displaying their frontal parts for female sports writer.

So I wondered how the boycott was going. Are Nike shoes and other garments gathering dust on the shelves, as Operation PUSH vowed they would be?

Because Chicago is where PUSH was born and has always received the most media attention, it seemed a logical place to conduct a survey of shoe

stores, sports stores, tennis clubs and other businesses that sell Nike.

Some of the businesses didn't want their names used, so I'm going to omit all names. But there is what they said about Nike sales:

A Chicago tennis club: "They're going fine, and some people are buying Nike because they didn't like the boycott. The boycott just hasn't had any negative impact. If anything, it's increased sales."

A Chicago racquet club: "We've never carried Nike shoes because we have an exclusive contract with another name brand. But after the boycott started, some of our members started asking for Nike. So we put in an order for some of their clothes. It's a big order for us, but we're not having any problem selling it."

These comments about Nike sales came from several suburban Chicago stores that are part of national sporting goods chains:

"They're doing fine. IN fact, I think some of the publicity has helped them. We just had a shipment of Air Jordans sell out in two days."

"Sales have been good. It hasn't hurt sales at all. Maybe a little better than normal."

"Probably the same, if not better."

Other sporting good chains: "They're doing fine. A couple of people even came in and said they wanted them to get back at

PUSH"

"I'd say it's been pretty much the same as it was before that thing started."

Obviously, most of the suburbs have predominantly white populations, and it's unlikely that the customers would join in a black-led boycott.

So I called a major discount



store on the city's West Side, where the majority of the customers are black. The manager said: "They're doing very well. There's been no difference in the sales. Sure, a few people refused to buy them, but at the same time, the boycott stimulated some interest among others."

And a store in a western suburb that has many black customers reported: "They're doing really well. And they're being bought by people who

would be expected to support the PUSH boycott. Actually, I've seen it in all of our customers, white and black, including some who said they bought Nike because of the boycott."

My local survey didn't surprise Liz Dolan, the spokesperson at Nike's headquarters in Beaverton, Ore. She said:

"Nationally, our sales are way up. For our fiscal year, beginning June 1, shoe sales are up 31 percent, which wouldn't necessarily show the effect of the boycott."

"But the more telling number is our footwear orders for the next five months, up about 39 percent. And overall orders are up 42 percent. That's not chopped liver. That's huge. It shows a great deal of confidence on the part of the retailers. There's no better measure of effectiveness than from the people who are selling the products, and they've never been more confident."

So what does this tell us? I don't mean about the shoe business, but about Operation PUSH's demand for more sensitivity, respect and a piece of the action.

Well, it might tell up a PUSH threat doesn't have nearly as much impact as a prime-time network commercial, starring basketball star David Robinson, who delivers a strong anti-drug message, while wearing Nike shoes. Or a network commercial starring Bo Jackson, who urges

kids to stay in school, while wearing Nike shoes.

It also could tell us that PUSH didn't do a very effective selling job when it tried to persuade the country that Nike, which donates millions of dollars each year to worthy projects in poor black areas, was guilty of being insensitive, disrespectful and insulting.

And it also tells us that there may have been a pro-Nike backlash by white consumers who saw PUSH's boycott effort as little more than extortion. And not a very subtle extortion attempt, at that.

But, who knows, by going after Nike, PUSH may have accomplished something for itself.

I wouldn't be surprised if other businesses call PUSH and say: "We would like to make a contribution to your organization."

"Thank you. That's very generous."

"You're very welcome. And could I ask you for a small favor?"

"Such as?"

"Could you see your way clear to boycott us too?"

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