

Letters to the editor

No man hating assumptions

In one carelessly written column, Andy Festa has gone a long way toward wiping out people's good work to encourage men to take women's studies courses. We try to assure men that in such classrooms at Behrend they will find not man-hating assumptions, but careful checks on stereotyping and overgeneralizations about men. Students tell me that my women's studies courses are, ironically, places where they learn a great deal about the difficulties of growing up male, and about prejudices against men. That's how I teach texts and conversations about gender. Festa knows this. Andy, I hate it when you waste my time like this, making me do damage control. You do know better. What were you thinking?

If anything like the dialogue described in Andy's column had taken place in his women's studies classroom, he'd have a legitimate gripe. He speaks calmly and the female student "screams". She hurls entirely wild-eyed man-hating accusations and he remains the soul of sweet reason and compromise. Since I am Andy's women's studies professor, I am the prof in question. He implies that I encourage this atmosphere in my classrooms. That's nonsense, and Andy knows that too.

The student(s) who serve as models for Festa's parody female adversary have never said anything remotely like this to Andy. She, or they, follow the rules of decent classroom interaction, which he sometimes does not. Andy can be overbearing, patronizing, monopolizing, even unintentionally cruel. Occasionally, after years of tolerating Festaisms, her tone might betray that she's weary. Far from being attacked in my classrooms, Andy has for many years been endlessly supported, often resulting in complaints by fellow students that I permit him classroom outrages, yet do not allow others to return the serve. And it's true. After six years of this, I am insulted that he would attack the very classes where he has been protected and nurtured. I hate that word, but it applies here.

It's not that the scenario Andy envisions doesn't take place; it does -- but not in feminist classrooms here, where we work actively for the opposite, where when something careless is occasionally said, women apologize to men, or men to women, in a spirit of mutual respect we've all worked hard to maintain. We have indeed had moments of gender tension -- and we have handled them well and learned from them.

Andy's column was inspired by the speaker I brought in last week, a male writer who described the kind of classroom

Andy portrayed ours to be. Festa did not even mention that of the two guest speaker events in his women's studies class, one was women writers -- and the other was a male speaking about men's issues. And this in a course on women writers, where it would be perfectly justified to exclude male perspectives.

Women's studies should indeed be gender studies. Festa even takes credit for that idea, which he got from me, and which we are trying to enact in the new minor offered here at Behrend. Men should indeed be welcome in women's studies classes. They are welcome here at Behrend.

I know Andy Festa wants to contribute to our mutual understandings of each other. In this case, it's he who heated up the gender war with an unwarranted bushwhack. No one in my class gets away with generalizations like "Men are jerks." But I am indeed saying that Andy behaved like a jerk last week. And Andy-- you think women here have been hard on you? You're graduating. Oh, Lord, my dear, what are you going to do when I'm not there to protect you?

Dr. Diana Hume George
Professor of English and Women's Studies

Misconception not cleared up

I am taking a women's studies class and I have taken a class on women writers. Contrary to the popular misconception, the women that take and teach these classes are not the bra-burning-anti-family-child-man-hating-fema-Nazis that have men cowering in desks as they cast their braissiers into a bonfire and proclaim with a blood curdling scream that men are "the Enemy." One of my classmates pointed out "we defend men in this class more than the people that have not taken a class like this do."

I understand the concept of poetic license, but having Mr. Festa's unnamed female antagonist state that "...all bears are dangerous, it's their nature, just like men..." promotes the misconception that feminists, women who take women's studies classes, and possibly all women, hate men. What type of woman is Mr. Festa portraying when his antagonist says the nasty words that he will not say? Despite his artistic excuses, Mr. Festa does nothing to clear the misconception.

Mr. Festa does make some good points. There has to be more open handed communication between women and men. I agree with Mr. Festa that women and men are not equal in their views of life and experiences. Women should strive for legal, political and economic equality. Unfortunately, women cannot do this on their own. This is a sad, but unfortunately true fact. At least that is how it is today, but

things change.

I am one of six men in my women's studies class. I do not feel persecuted that I am made to answer for what the men of the past have done. I entered the class with the hope of trying to understand the "concepts" of women and men better. There are few things that affect men and women differently. We are more alike than some people would like to admit.

Patrick Smith
7th Semester
GAS Major

Straight from the heart

I am one of the founders of Trigon, Behrend's Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual coalition. The main goal I have hoped to achieve when we first started to form the framework of the organization was to be able to provide emotional support and social acceptance to the lesbians, gays, and bisexuals on this campus. Thanks to SGA's recent approval of our constitution, the help and support of many students, faculty, staff and our advisor, Sue Daly, reaching that goal is becoming a reality.

We are beginning to find our way out of the closets of Behrend College. I commend all those who have had the courage to contact us and the patience to stick with us throughout the semester.

My message to those of you who remain behind closed doors and to all who read this letter is this: No matter what race, religion, sex or sexual orientation, we are human beings and as human beings we all deserve to be loved and respected. In my book this is one rule that has no exceptions.

Jennifer Lynn Walker
3rd Semester
English Major

Ignorant, angry, little girl

Tarsha, you poor girl and I'll emphasize the word "girl", so tell me what black male dumped you for a white woman? You sound like a ignorant, angry, little girl who was dumped.

I'm glad to see that all you think white women have to offer is blonde hair and blue eyes. If you think that's all that black men want from white women is blonde hair and blue eyes, and as you pointed out there are black women who can accommodate that, but then why would you even want that black man if you have to change for him. Glad to see that you're going for substance in a relationship and not superficial things.

Also, I really like the comment Angela Johnson made too (One of the very few comments you actually put a name next to. I wonder who made the other ones, if someone actually did make them?) Anyway, how'd it go, "Some black men aren't strong enough to deal with a strong black woman, so they go

to a white woman." Good adjective use there: "strong" black woman to just a white woman. It's surprising that us white women ever made it to this college or for that matter that we even still exist. Obviously some black women aren't "strong" enough to deal with interracial relationships.

Another thing, I came to Behrend for an education, not a white or a black education, but an education. By the way, do you even realize how many different cultures exist within the white community? It's not just one big culture. We all come from different cultures, and I mean all of us.

You are right though, there is a lack of education, or should I say communication? The problem isn't with us white women or black men etc. So stop pointing your finger and start communicating not only with black men but also with white women. For that matter every other race, sex, and color, something you obviously don't do. I'll leave you with a quote from En Vogue's song, *Free Your Mind*:

"I might date another race or color

Doesn't mean I don't like my strong black brothers

Free your mind and the rest will follow

Be color blind don't be so shallow."

Mia Colabrese
4th Semester
International Political Science

Can we ever live together?

When I read Tarsha Proctor's article "No compromise, no sell out", I wondered if there would ever be a time when people of all backgrounds could live together in harmony.

I am of Caucasian and Native American decent. Every person in this country, not of wholly English decent, has relatives, who, in the recent past, have been the objects of ridicule and even violence. Different European ethnic groups, like many of my ancestors, experienced discrimination, but they stood tall and made positive change, without giving up their culture.

Tarsha says that all African-Americans should live by Malcolm X's "No compromise, no sell out." What about Dr. King? Didn't he say that African-Americans should cherish their culture and broadcast it to all people by becoming an equal part of the American society? Isn't it more of a sell out to deny African-Americans the freedom to choose by their heart, rather than their skin color?

Black men, with white girlfriends, are not weak. They believe in their culture and are comfortable enough with it to be able to break free from racial molds and choose with their hearts and their own minds, rather than be told what is and what is not acceptable. They have the strength to stand against centuries of racial conflict and to choose for themselves.

Everyone should learn the backgrounds of all the world's many cultures, but no one would be denied the freedom of choice because of one. The days of whites enslaving blacks is long over, now it is time for them to stand tall as part of American society and to encourage both traditional cultural families and families of mixed heritage, so that every culture will be understood by all through a common understanding. My Polish, English, German, Scottish and Native American heritages will always be a part of me. And though some of my ancestors were the objects of jokes and others were not Caucasian, I will always be proud of them and glad that they had the strength to follow their hearts and not be stopped by cultural barriers. If I were an African-American male with a Caucasian girlfriend, I would be offended by what Tarsha said and I would have every right to be.

Mike Duminiak
3rd Semester
Biology Major

Problem finally tackled

I am writing in regards to the article entitled "No compromise, no sell out". I would just like to commend Miss Proctor on her willingness to tackle a problem that has plagued the African-American community at Behrend for years.

I am aware that there may be some African-Americans as well as some Caucasians who may take offense to the subject matter contained in this article, and to them I say: The African American community in America is suffering tremendously from the degenerations of the family; to us as a race, the lack of education and knowledge of their own history and ancestors. I feel that it is articles such as these that become the first steps in the rebirth of the African-American culture. I feel it is articles like these, that begin the process of education. Articles like these, are the tools that begin to moisten the thirsty lips for knowledge.

In conclusion, Miss Proctor deserves applause and respect for her brilliant articulation of the problem of interracial relationships at Behrend. So as I end this letter, I leave you with the feelings of Malcolm X: Until we as a Black race can come together within our race, we can never afford to go outside of that race. Until we can deal with our problems internally we have nothing to offer to another race.

Kei S. Fuller
3rd Semester
Liberal Arts

My beautiful, black race

While I am sitting here at my computer thinking of how I am going to express all of my feelings about my beautiful, black, race and the many responses I have heard over