

Opinion

# WAKE UP!

by Tarsha Proctor and Sadatu Usman  
Guest columnists

Is the problem of racism being dealt with on the college campus? Are we truly trying? After all, education is the only way to combat the problem. Minority leaders fought for us, the entire student body, regardless of color, to go to college for an education. Combating racism needs to be made a priority; only then will it be solved!

Many students at Behrend have mixed feelings about racism on this campus. Some black and white students have stated that they have not experienced any racism yet. Some black students, however, say that they expect to experience discrimination or racism at Behrend. The problem does exist.

Example 1: Recently in Niagara Hall the word nigger was written out on a RA's marker board.

Example 2: During the Martin Luther King speech rehearsal, a white male student, while going over some lines, slipped and said "the nigger community..." when he was supposed to say "the negro community...". The incident was brushed off when it should

have been dealt with. He was still allowed to partake in the celebration.

Example 3: While in the newspaper room, a white student referred to Gerald Spates, the minority advisor, as a colored, which is a derogatory term once used for African-Americans. He said this as though it were said everyday in his house. We reporters were then chastised about our reaction to his comment. We were told that it made him feel uncomfortable. His comment made us feel uncomfortable, but that did not matter.

Example 4: On January 18th, Martin Luther King was given an hour celebration in Eric Hall. A lot of the African American students did not understand why that day was not featured in *The Collegian*. They figured that if the Erie news came to film the candle light vigil and interview a couple of participants, why couldn't *The Collegian*?

Example 5: Tamara Wiley, who is on the entertainment staff, wanted to write about African-Americans' roles in the entertainment network; how they've progressed in some ways and how they digressed in others. She was told that she couldn't write about issues like

that in the entertainment section because it might insult people. Why would talking about a race's position in entertainment insult people?

Example 6: While in conversation with a couple of African-American students, a white male student stated that he believed that Rodney King deserved to be beaten. The African-American students left it alone, but were disturbed by the fact that he thought he could say that in front of them without any ramifications. Were they supposed to have had no reaction?

Example 7: An African-American male student had gone into the bookstore, took off his jacket, and proceeded to walk toward the merchandise. The police officer then stopped him and told him that he had to take off his sweatshirt jacket as well. He thought to himself, "Why do I have to take off my sweatshirt jacket when there are other students in here with sweatshirts and even thin jackets?" He did as requested and went on his way. All of these situations make it hard for the Behrend student body to get along. What we need is knowledge of each other.

How do we achieve this knowledge? A group of African-

American students went to a North East church a couple of Sundays ago to speak to the congregation on what it was like to be an African-American student at a predominantly white university. They, not being African-American, could not now or ever understand the daily turmoils that we face. We did, however, explain it to them as well as we could. On our visit, we were given lunch, introduced to guest speakers, and asked many questions. We spoke to parishioners and came out with mixed reactions and opinions. One African-American student on the panel said that he had never experienced any type of racism. As the question of racism was posed to the other students from Behrend, there were quite different responses.

Senior John Young stated that "Yes, I have experienced racism. I was in a grocery store one day and a little white girl looked at me and said to her mother, 'Mommy, why is he so dark?' After the little girl made that comment, her mother took her to the side and chastised her as if there was something wrong with curiosity. Instead of correcting her, she should have explained his difference."

I, Sadatu, explained to a parishioner that it is a fact that

black people cannot be racist. We can be prejudice, but not racist. This is because black people do not control any institutions in this country. We have no institutional power in the United States. Whites have all the power. I then asked him questions.

Why were nude colored stockings called nude? Nude for who? Not for most African-Americans. When we are nude we don't turn that color. Who were flesh colored band-aids made for? Not for most African-Americans. We could not camouflage that band-aid on our skin. When he (the parishioner) got the dictionary and looked up "racist", it said the same things that I had said. He still did not want to listen.

As long as people keep denying the fact that there exists a problem between the races, nothing will be solved. Ignoring racism only makes the problem worse. For example, the next time you hear someone make a derogatory remark, correct him or her. Why deny yourself the opportunity to learn about people who are unlike you? Difference is not bad. Everyone open your eyes and WAKE UP!!

# Minority radicals

by Matt Duddy  
Columnist

I was in bed last week sleeping peacefully when all of a sudden the phone rang. It was my friend Kristie, who was bearing some grim and shocking news. I couldn't imagine what would be so vitally important as to wrench me out of angelic slumber, but what I heard was both disgusting and insulting.

I wasn't exactly sure how to respond to the news, so I hung up, and called several people who would know more about the obscene accusation. As it finally turned out, I was allegedly a racist. Me, one of the most open-minded people in the universe, was charged with being a racist.

Everyone that heard it and knows me realized that the accusation was silly, and unfounded. Perhaps another reason they found it peculiar, is because they all know that one of my closest friends here happens to be African-American, and that I am completely impartial to race or lifestyle. As far as I'm concerned, however, I don't have to justify anything to anyone.

Perhaps that's why I was so astounded to hear such trash.

The *strange* thing is that I should be used to this sort of silly and childish attack. After all, I am a member of the largest on-campus minority of all (and unquestionably the most oppressed) -- I'm one of four TRIGON co-directors. I know

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what it's like to lead a rough life as an oppressed minority. But at the same time, I don't shout "homophobia" and "oppression" everytime I get stepped on.

It seems to me that there's a certain radical black movement that points at every organic thing at Behrend and accuses it of being racist. I believe unquestionably that minorities should have the

exact same opportunities as the majority. I agree that there should be minority activists working for equality and justice for their populations. But I do not agree, and am strongly repulsed by minority radicals who go overboard, and proclaim oppression at every miniscule thing that doesn't go their way.

I thought I had heard it all. I believed that nothing could possibly surprise me anymore. But then, I heard some of the most frivolous and unfounded tales ever told on this campus. I heard of a student (according to sources, it was *me*) that said the word "nigger" during Martin Luther King Junior Day Celebration rehearsal, and this student was amazingly still allowed to participate in the celebration. We've all heard of certain campus personnel charged with being racist. And the grossest of all, I heard that certain African-Americans and Hispanics were traitorous for hanging around Whites too much. I guess you can never be absolutely sure that you've seen everything, and by the looks of things, no matter how hard you try, you can't win.

The point of this week's column is: **Wake up Behrend College! Things aren't as bad as we pretend.** I'm not saying that minorities have complete equality, and should stop working for justice and fair representation. What I *am* saying is by shouting "racist" at everybody, and even turning on

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our own kind, we are destroying what we are working to construct. We're getting an inch, and screaming for a mile.

*Things really aren't so bad.* Actually, we've come a long way since just 100 years ago. Unless you were a straight-white-Christian-male, your opinions meant nothing. Blacks were viewed as animals, queers were

disgusting perverts, other religions were evil, women were merely beautiful to look at, and all races were inferior to Whites. We all know, and can agree that all of these examples are foolish, and outdated.

Minorities don't have to be happy with current situations if they're not treated equally. They can and should *always* push for more rights. But being rude, militant, and demanding, rubs everyone the wrong way, and makes majorities want to stifle minorities just for spite.

It seems to me that certain minority radicals are losing sight of the target: equality, justice, and peaceful coexistence of all cultures, colors, and lifestyles. I've said it before, and I'll say it again: **the Penn State atmosphere needs to be nicer to everyone.**

This is college. We've got too many *real* problems to be dealing with to stop and listen to silly rumors. What's it going to take for everyone to put aside their differences, and work for a common cause? Perhaps we'll never know.