

[< Back](#) | [Home](#)

Letters to the Editor

Posted: 2/1/06

Kicking out Michigamua members worsens secrecy

To the Daily:

I graduated from high school in 1994 as a Mound Westonka Mohawk. It was fun - before big sporting events, hardcore fans would shave the sides of their heads, although they looked more like characters out of "The Road Warriors" than Native Americans. Still, we all identified as Mohawks, and it wasn't until 1997 that my school - about 30 miles west of Minneapolis and a thousand miles from the Mohawks' traditional homeland - changed its name to the "White Hawks."

Does that make me a racist?

No, but we did promote racism.

A lot of us have done dopey things that we didn't realize were offensive until it was too late. I'm disappointed that Brian Hull chose to focus on the intent behind Michigamua's ceremonies rather than their effects in his piece *Michigamua speaks out* (01/26/2006). There's a big difference between passive and active racism, though, and universally barring Michigamua members from activities represents exactly the kind of visceral judgments we're trying to fight. Moreover, castigating Michigamua members with an unforgiving attitude seems likely to lead to more secrecy, not less.

But most of all, demonizing Michigamua and calling the various -isms "symptoms of the small mind," as Mara Gay does in her column *Bigger than Michigamua* (01/30/2006), causes the struggle for greater understanding to seem like a good-versus-evil war. Sometimes it is, but most times it's not. Rising above our own preconceptions requires constant assessment and reassessment of what we're doing. The danger is assuming that we've achieved enlightenment and only those "others" are racists.

*Kurt Christensen
School of Public Health*

Teach for America critics must consider all sides

To the Daily:

While reading Sam Singer's column on Teach for America (*Where Teach for America goes wrong*, 01/24/2006), I was surprised to find myself agreeing with him. I agree with him in his praises of TFA's intentions and diligence, and I agree with his skepticism in regards to politicians' attempts to expand TFA as an end-all solution to public education problems. To realize the potential of public education, many systemic changes need to take place, including increases in public education funding, improvements in America's social structure and welfare and increases in public concern and awareness. And so Singer seems right to question the motivation of politicians who hope that sending recent college graduates to struggling schools can replace the many systemic - and expensive - approaches that are needed. TFA should not be thought of as a comprehensive solution to the shortcomings our public

education system faces.

The reason I was surprised to find myself agreeing with Singer is that he seems to go on to blame TFA for this mistaken intention, as evidenced by his title: "Where Teach for America goes wrong." TFA does not purport to be an end-all answer to the hardships of America's public education system; its mission is instead "to build the movement to eliminate educational inequity by enlisting some of our nation's most promising future leaders in the effort." As a soon-to-be member of the 2006 TFA corps in Newark, N.J. - where I'll be teaching middle-school English - I certainly don't hold the illusion that an effort of two years will single-handedly turn the tide of any systemic shortcoming of public education. However, I do believe that in order for public education to reach its full potential, motivated and ambitious young Americans must care about and become involved in the public education system. My fellow corps members and I will be there to teach, but also to learn - both from our students and from the seasoned teachers we'll be working with.

In short, Singer is right to argue against attempts to use TFA as a comprehensive solution for the public education system's shortcomings. But he is mistaken to take this as evidence that TFA has "gone wrong." Instead, what Singer seems really to be concerned with, and rightly so, is where politicians go wrong (again).

Ross Jensen
LSA senior
*The letter writer will join Teach for
America after graduation.*

Real Trotskyists don't share BAMN's goals

To the Daily:

A recent letter by some conservative opponents of affirmative action labeled BAMN as a wing of some "Trotskyist" organization (*Group wants to hold BAMN accountable*, 01/25/2006). Let me affirm that I have been a revolutionary Trotskyist for almost 40 years and that I am unalterably opposed to any special consideration based on race, ethnicity or gender. Let me also note that BAMN is now frightening and alienating the populace of Michigan with its opposition to the ballot as a way of gauging whether the citizens of Michigan want these special divisive privileges maintained.

An article in the magazine *Commentary* from the mid-1990s argued cogently that the Bolsheviks never concerned themselves with affirmative action and feminism. I can only recall four references by Lenin and Trotsky. During the 1902 split, Lenin derisively spoke of his opponents as having the "soft hands of a woman." He warned his girlfriend, Inessa Armand, in 1915 that she was disgracing herself with so much attention to women's issues. After the Bolshevik Revolution, he complained bitterly to Klara Zetkin that the women's movement was dissipating energy from the workers' revolution. Trotsky, in his seminal work "The Revolution Betrayed," refers to a letter from one of his closest supporters, who blames aristocratic women for corrupting Bolsheviks with their sexual advances. I will leave it to the reader to analyze why membership in the Bolshevik Party of October, 1917 dropped to 2 percent women.

Robert Bernard
Alum

**Sex in the grad library?
Try North Campus**

To the Daily:

I just read your article about sex in the grad library. I was thinking you should have a survey to see what campus locations might be perfect spots for the sexual activities of students. My idea would be the Vroom - or as I like to call it, the Vroom Room. It's a soundproof room in the Groundworks Lab on North Campus. It is used as a recording studio - that could certainly lead to some interesting results - and can simulate different environments, such as an auditorium with reverberating echoes, an arena with softer echoes, or an anechoic "flat" environment. Open 24 hours a day, participants could "make their own music" at any time of the day or not and not worry about outside listeners. However, the large glass windows should probably be covered.

Ken Domke
LSA junior

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