

Opinions

# Handle cultural and color differences with care

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Tessnear

The difference between black and white isn't as big in Boiling Springs as it is in Inglewood, Calif. I'm not talking about crayons or the shade of an automobile. I'm referring to race.

Recently, I saw a movie that makes me think about race relations, and the problem that those relationships are causing in our country.

After months of wanting to see it, I finally got around to renting "American History X" last week. The 1998 film details the problem of the growing ethnic diversity in our country. Edward Norton stars as Derek Vinyard, a white man popular among his peers for his "white power" sentiments and gang leadership in suburban Los Angeles.

Vinyard, who leads anti-black and anti-Jewish rallies in the Los Angeles area, gets prison time for shooting two black men who try to rob his vehicle.

After spending three years in prison, where he becomes friends with a black man, Vinyard leaves jail with a new outlook on race relations. He abandons the gang activities and white power rallies that he had long championed. He ultimately realizes that violence is not the answer when his brother, played by Edward Furlong, is killed by a black man in a high school bathroom.

The film reminds me of "Crash," which took the 2005 Academy Award for best picture. "Crash," which also displayed the powerful problems of ethnic diversity, also took place in the Los Angeles area.

These films, which portray Los Angeles as a place with a racial battle on every corner, do not reflect the racial conflict in our own community.

I don't know of any substantial gang activity in Boiling Springs, but I still believe racial hatred occurs, even if it's on a smaller scale.

Take Casar, a town in northern Cleveland County, for example. Casar has long been known for organized anti-black groups. In terms of racial hatred, Casar might be Los Angeles on a smaller scale, but it's not the only problem in this area.

We've all been in situations where we've seen someone upset at a person of a different race, who might express it using a racial slur. Slurs are a way of expressing that irritation. We see it in line at the grocery store. We see it in restaurants. We see it at traffic lights. Usually we shrug such situations off.

I've had a tendency to do the same thing with all racial issues. I've never had much interest in politics and the "platform" issues that public officials discuss.

Honestly, I rarely think about racial diversity, immigration or ethnic differences. When I look at someone, I don't see a black woman or a Hispanic man. I notice personality before I notice color.

I guarantee a lot of you think my lack of interest in racial issues is due to me being Caucasian.

"White people don't have to fight like blacks or Hispanics do," you might say.

I'd disagree with that statement. Furthermore, "American History X" and "Crash" make me realize that dealing with racial diversity is a serious problem in our country. Sure, both films are products of Hollywood, but they chronicle

the current racial landscape in this country.

They also make me realize that I do have opinions on such issues.

The United States has long been a "melting pot" of different races and cultures. It's a cliché to say that people have moved here from other countries because this is "the land of opportunity."

I believe that's true; however, the land of opportunity seems to apply to anyone but U.S. natives.

I have no problem with equality for those who have been in this country for long periods of time. The racial groups in this country are, indeed, true "natives." Even the two races I believe are still most prominent, white and black, came from "across the pond." Whites came from Europe and blacks came from Africa.

These two groups, and many others ethnic and racial groups, have long been part of our country. Most also are here legally. I have nothing against anyone of any race who lives in our country and abides by our rules and laws.

I do have a problem with anyone of any race who comes into our country illegally and isn't willing to speak our language and obey our laws. That's where I draw the line.

So don't jump on me for proclaiming my dislike of a certain group of people. After all, I'm not Tim Hardaway.

I'm not suggesting that the government place a locked fence around this country, so that no one can come in and no one can go out. However, I would like to see a tighter lock on who is allowed to live among us.

For example, anyone who has been in the area for two years and paid attention to the news knows who Scott Gardner is. Gardner

was killed in a car accident while on vacation with his family in Myrtle Beach, S.C. The man driving the other car was Hispanic, here illegally and drunk.

Again, I'm not knocking on Hispanics specifically, but he casts a bad light on Hispanics. The man also had a previous record of drunk driving in the United States.

Why can't we do something to keep repeat offenders from re-entering our country? In a day of advanced technology, we should have the capability to track such people.

Our government needs to more effectively screen people coming to live in our country, and to stop illegal immigration.

I realize there could be an argument that I'm picking on Hispanics. Asians, blacks and whites are convicted of drunken driving, manslaughter and other offenses, too. But most of them, at least, live here legally. That's the major difference in my eyes.

Accidents like Gardner's are a tragedy, regardless of who is involved. But it upsets me more when someone who doesn't even live here legally breaks our laws and kills our citizens.

I'm not advocating violence between races and ethnic groups. I also realize it's almost impossible to expect complete peace between all races. However, guns and fists are not the way to solve these problems. "American History X" and "Crash" are evidence of that.

We also have a responsibility, as U.S. citizens, to calmly approach racial and ethnic diversity. We'll never separate into race-specific communities. Cultures and colors will mix in our melting pot, so this issue is never

going away.

Therefore, regardless of race, we need to be aware of it and handle it with care, something not done by characters in "American History X," and real people on some streets in our country.

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## WISDOM ON WHEELS: March Madness: It's the most wonderful month of the year

By Jacob Conley  
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Conley

There is so much going on in my world these days, but none of it seems worthy of an entire column. Therefore, I've decided to cover a wide range of topics in hopes that my scattered thoughts can come together in a cohesive column.

As usual, my thoughts revolve around sports.

I was flipping through the channels the other day and came across the Atlanta Braves' first spring training game. The announcers made mention of the team's new owners, Liberty Media.

If I'm not mistaken, Liberty Media has ties to the adult film industry. I can't double check this because every time I type "adult films" into Google, the GWU firewall kicks in. Oh well.

It will be interesting to see what changes the new owners make. Some people are worried that this will negatively affect baseball. How?

It's not as if game programs are now going to be covered in dark plastic and only sold in a back room. But just in case they are, I've already got my tickets for opening day.

The dominant sport in March is college basketball.

It's the most wonderful time of the year. Basketball will run from noon until midnight, beginning on Thursday with the ACC Tournament, through the end of the month.

I'm not a doctor, but I think I'm going to be sick today with a horrible disease called March Madness. The prescription is no class, lots of soft drinks and Little Debbie's snacks.

To put in the vernacular of a Visa commercial: Enough junk food and soft drinks to give Willy Wonka a buzz, \$25.00. Batteries for my portable radio to listen to on bathroom breaks, \$6.00. Missing a day of class, one point off of my class average. Watching every minute of the ACC and NCAA tournaments, priceless.

Speaking of college basketball, I was so proud of Gerald Henderson for breaking Tyler Hansbrough's nose.

Because I've been playing a lot of Mortal Kombat lately, I yelled "finish him," stood and cheered. Then gravity took over and I ended up on the floor.

There was nothing more

beautiful to me than that red blood flowing on that baby blue floor. I don't care that Henderson was suspended.

The incident brought back memories of Christian Laettner's stomp against Kentucky in the early 1990s.

The elbow showed that Duke is still Duke and they will not be pushed around.

On a serious note, I've never been more proud to be a Bulldog than I was this week when I saw Gash out-play and out-hustle his opponent in every facet of the game.

To see the effort was Rudyesque. It's just sad that the effort was not rewarded with a victory.

I was also happy for Chris Gash. He's had a great career here at GWU and he had a large contingent of his family cheering at his final game in Tennessee at the Atlantic Sun Conference tournament.

Chris also demonstrated the hustle and never-say-die attitude. He fouled out of his final game because he refused to give up an easy bucket.

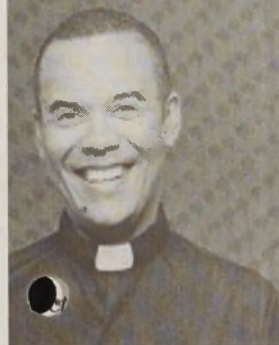
After the game he also demonstrated class in the post-game interview in the midst of extreme disappointment.

Chris Gash, thank you for your heart and leadership. You will be missed.

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