

Letter to the Editor

You've all heard the expression, "What goes around, comes around;" well, here I am again, like a bad joke, back at college. One notable difference between this venture and my last stab at higher education is perspective.

These days I can see myself as I probably appeared during my late lamented freshman year. One of my favorite places to observe the species Homo Studentus, and myself in retrospect, is at sporting events, notably soccer games.

If you'll forgive me another cliché, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." I recall that as an independence-seeking, liberated eighteen-year-old perched on the threshold of life, I had a sewer mouth. These four-letter words which constituted 75 percent of my vocabulary I now divide into two categories. One star (*) are the types your mother tolerates occasionally, and two star, (**) are mostly out of the question.

As we all watch a soccer

game I notice there is no difference in language used by my fellow students now and me a few years ago. They complain about ** assignments, ** faculty members, (a few earn ***) the * food they had for lunch, *, I forgot to turn in my lab, get that ** bee away from me, what the * does that ** ref think he's doing? In principle, these assorted *'s and **'s don't bother me, not for my sake.

The problem is that I am now not only a student but a parent as well. If I didn't care about my children being exposed to verbal slime I'd get HBO and join the pagan cult formed around Eddie Murphy.

On a few occasions I've said something to a fellow spectator particularly proficient at diarrhea dialect about cleaning up his/her act in front of the kids. I have received profuse apologies, but I suppose it's only a matter of time before someone says to me, "If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the bleachers." Perhaps this attitude is justified. But

even in the theoretical absence of the children and me, the tree is still going to make noise as it falls in the forest.

I believe that when you speak that way, prude within hearing or not, you debase yourself. These crass and crude forms of expression, particularly the one used as a noun, verb and adjective, frequently in the same sentence, are out of synch with the atmosphere of intelligent thought and well-bred gentility which pervade the rest of the day. You can be just as disrespectful, irreverent, and yes, even obscene, without specific use of the Seven Words You Can't Say on Television. It's a creative challenge.

I know these expletives are easy to pick up and handy to utilize. It's easier to remove your own wisdom teeth than to break the habit of using them. But if you start now I'm sure you can quit by the end of the soccer season. Take it from someone with experience.

A.M. Tate

The Guilfordian apologizes for the inadvertent omission of a portion of Marya Sluck's article "South African Students Compare Home Country, U.S." (Issue 5 - September 27). The following is the last paragraph of the original article not included in the previous issue.

"Tshole said that the change must come from the Afrikaners. He said, 'A black South African is a great man as much as a black man is born great. So, I guess the Boers have to come down to Mother Earth, that's where the black man would be highly recognized.'"

The Guilfordian

Letter to the Editor

I appreciate The Guilfordian's apology for the omission of an essential part of my article "South African Students Compare Home Country, U.S." (Issue 5 -- September 27). The deletion of Patrick Tshole's point of view is a great concern because I do not want the South African point of view to be misrepresented. It is unrealistic to show that each and every South African has the same point of view. I am concerned that the absence of Patrick Tshole's view in the article implies that he has the same

opinion as Gordon Moshoeu, who has the final quote in the article.

I would like to further explain the implications of Tshole's statement being juxtaposed with Moshoeu's. While Moshoeu said a violent overthrow of the Botha regime will be followed by a racial war, Tshole said that there must be a change in attitude. The Afrikaners must "come down to Mother Earth," they must stop believing the lie of racial superiority, and see the Africans as fellow human beings.

Marya Sluck

LETTERS POLICY

The Guilfordian welcomes all readers to submit letters to the editor. Letters to the editor should be mailed to P.O. Box 17717 or delivered in person to the Publication Suite, second floor of Founders.

Letters should be legible, preferably typed, and double-spaced. Letters should be signed

and dated and include the author's phone number and local address. The Guilfordian will not publish anonymous letters. Please limit letters to 300 words or less.

The Guilfordian and its staff reserve the right to edit for length and clarity and to withhold letters based on the discretion of the editors.

Central American Experience

by Rich James

Last summer I had the opportunity to spend two weeks in both El Salvador and Nicaragua hearing the stories and witnessing the struggles of a brave people who have been fighting for justice for over one hundred years.

My intent was to study the religious dimension of the struggle within the ecclesiastical and lay communities known as "the base," the rural peasants and the urban poor, and to see the empowerment their faith provides.

Over the past two decades, this group has undergone a fascinating transformation inspired by a revolutionary Christian faith. The phenomenon has been systematized and developed by scholars into a body of thought known as liberation theology.

The specifics vary among theologians but the heart of liberation theology remains constant: the liberation of the poor is mandated by the gospel message that the poor must determine their own future and the church must serve the poor and be a witness to injustice.

The histories of Nicaragua and El Salvador are very distinct and the process of liberation of the base in each is distinct as well. But one common thread which I am compelled to share is the concept of "comunidad" (community).

"They [the base] live not only in community," commented a companion of mine, "but in communion," for, as the following example will show, they live for the community as a whole.

PADECOMSM is an acronym for a base community network in El Salvador's northeastern provinces of San Miguel and Morazan, the regions most devastated by civil war.

Uniting about 70



Salvadoran children, displaced by war

photo by author

communities, it serves as a project facilitator and tangible recipient of foreign aid. Two principles guide its organization and operation.

The first, popular democracy, means that each small community elects its own directors. There are 18 in all, each with their own responsibility for coordinating projects in areas such as health, education, production, culture and human rights.

When one community wants to do a health project, for example, all the health directors get together to discuss it and create a complete and detailed plan for the project in all communities.

They then give their plan to a coordinator who works in San Salvador as a liaison to the government and foreign aid. He acquires the needed resources and sees that they get sent to the communities.

This process fulfills the group's second principle: self-determination. The ideas begin in the grassroots and are completed in the grassroots by the hard work of the people. The elected coordinators merely facilitate the process.

In many ways El Salvador seemed to be both the Kingdom of God and "hell on earth." In eight years of war, 70,000 civilians have died and 7,000

have been "disappeared," out of a population of a little over 5.2 million.

But in the middle of hell is the kingdom of PADECOMSM, an oasis of modest and humble people committed to pulling themselves out of their poverty suffering. They are illiterate and uneducated.

"I don't do anything about an 'o,'" said one minister of culture, but he rambled on with pride about how he helped bring music and dance back into the community. "We don't suffer all the time."

"Organization makes us strong," said the liaison in San Salvador. "The army leaves us alone. The guerillas leave us alone."

That is not entirely true, because trucks bringing supplies for their projects are often turned away at government roadblocks. And, sadly, strong organization is perceived as a seed for political opposition and invites the heavy hand of government repression. Members of PADECOMSM will join in the thousands of disappeared.

My visit to these communities opened my eyes to the hope and courage that prevails there. The people of PADECOMSM are a symbol of the possibility that fear can be overcome and that people can live in peace and compassion.

Guilfordian

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