

Why I'm proud to be an American

shannon meyer

In some circles, people consider it chic to denounce the United State and our horrible capitalistic, materialistic ways, but I have a feeling that these people haven't traveled out of the country much. Well, I recently had the good fortune to take a small excursion to the lovely countries of Italy and Greece. Despite the fact that I had a wonderful time, by the end of 15 days, I wanted to go home. And while I agree that people should appreciate other cultures, and I abhor anyone who suffers from Obnoxious American Syndrome, I am proud to be an American.

preciate the fact that, in America, I can get a full 12 ounces for 50 or 60 cents. In Europe, ten ounces costs between \$1.50 and \$2. That's almost more than I'm willing to pay, even for my favorite beverage.

Linearity is a foreign concept to Europeans, as well. In Italy as well as Greece, going to the grocery store becomes the ultimate battle of courage and wits as you try to squeeze in and out of the horrendous traffic that refuses to stay in its own distinct lanes. "It's cows (meaning chaos but pronounced as if referring to that fabulous farm animal)," as our guide Enrico liked to say.



A no smoking sign is nailed to the tree at a scenic overlook in Rome.

Apparently Europeans have not discovered that smoking is bad for one's health. Everybody does it over there, and they do it anywhere they please, in the airport, in the bathroom, on the bus, even over your food as you eat. Smoking sections do not exist. I keep wondering what people who are allergic to the smoke do.

Showers caused a lot of issues, too. Real showers with some sort of enclosing device were rare. I encountered several types of showers, but my favorite was the one that was the bathroom. I mean the shower head came out of the wall and the drain was in the floor. Imagine a Bryan shower with a sink and toilet in it, too. The bathroom was about that size. Perhaps the designer intended to allow one to complete several tasks at once, but standing in the middle of the soaked floor while I brushed my teeth and having to hike my pants up to keep them from getting wet proved too disgusting and annoying for me. Many people found a lack of hot water or good water pressure an inconvenience, as well.

As an American, I like Coca-Cola. I refuse to apologize for this fact. I also ap-

And I hate to admit this, but near the end of the trip I broke down and went to MacDonald's. That was an ordeal. Simply getting a Big Mac and Coke required shoving and trampling people. There were no lines, only a mass of people pushing toward the counter.

In short, I've taken a lot of smaller aspects of my life for granted. There's kind of a double standard involved. People are always raving about how easy going Europeans are, but they make fun of us for always pursuing comfort. What's wrong with comfort if gaining it does no harm to anyone? While I enjoy my shower curtain that cost little to my family but keeps me from having to mop the floor every time I take a shower, Europeans are killing the non-smoking tourists of the world with all of that nasty smoke.

So in the future, though I plan to travel extensively and appreciate every moment, I will never be sorry to return to my beloved, comfort-filled country. And I dare all of those anti-capitalists out there to spend 15 days without getting a good shower and not complain about it.

STAFF EDITORIAL

Scenario 1: Boy caught drinking, given a level IV, privileges suspended, on probation.

Scenario 2: Boy caught drinking, given a level IV, sent home.

Inconsistent?

Without knowing any details of these cases, only the offenses and punishments, there seems to be something very wrong with the above scenarios. Consistency in the punishments of level IV offenders has long been an issue at Science and Math. This lack of consistency, whether the punishments are fair or not, has caused overall feelings in students of resentment and lack of respect towards the rules and rule enforcers.

"So and so had their level IV hearing today. Can you believe they are letting him off?" said one student.

"But so and so was kicked out last year for the same thing," said the other student.

What causes this discrepancy? Is it because one was a first time offender and the other a repeat offender? Is it because one is doing better academically and the other is struggling? Is it because one has a better reputation than the other? The answer to these questions is who knows? And the answer to that question is nobody.

What factors influence the decisions in level IV hearings? That is what students want to know so that maybe the inconsistency will make sense. The recent level IV trial and appeals resulting in the expulsion

of four members of our community has spurred much discussion. Many think that the administration is insensitive, expelling three seniors two months before graduation. Others think that they are being made examples of so that things will not get out of hand towards the end of the year, possibly even starting a no tolerance policy. Some say it is about time people get dismissed for what they have done, comparing this punishment to previous punishments for the same offense.

Is creating chaos on campus what our level system is for? One suggestion to make students more aware of the aggravating factors in a level IV decision is the dispersal of a simple statement to the student body over e-mail concerning general factors that influence whether a person is dismissed or not. This will explain the inconsistency and possibly reduce the animosity towards the powers that be.

Recently, a speak-out was held on the issue of consistency with members of the student body, faculty, administration, and SLI staff attending. Suggestions to reduce the inconsistency of the level IV trials included a rotating hearing board with unbiased members

of the outside community. The purpose of this suggestion is to give the accused a fair chance without the factor of reputation in the way. However, the new code of conduct calls for a hearing board consisting of one student, one member of the faculty, one SLI, and one division director (Dr. Barber or Dr. Warshaw).

Another suggestion to reduce inconsistency is the second-chance-policy. This is the system already in place at the Illinois Academy. First time offenders would get a five-day suspension without the chance to make up work. Second time offenders will be dismissed. This would reduce inconsistency and not allow someone with multiple level IV offenses to stay on campus and a person with just one to be dismissed.

All suggestions should be welcome to the administration. We are sure that we can work together with the administration to use some of these suggestions and create others. We should not let a problem that can be easily solved through cooperation divide us. To the students, keep calling for consistency in punishments and to the administration, help make sure those punishments are fair.

the stentorian

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