

THE DAILY COLLEGIAN

Patricia Tisak
Editor in Chief

Francine Sadlik
Business Manager

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mailed to Commonwealth Campus students, parents of students, alumni and other subscribers who want to keep abreast of university news.

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EDITORIAL

Day of Service a chance to achieve King's dream

Today we celebrate a man who devoted his life to the service of others.

Today we have an opportunity to honor the memory of Martin Luther King Jr. by participating in the Day of Service.

Although we do not have the day off from classes, we can still make the best of the situation by giving the time that we do have in our schedules to help others and in the end, help ourselves.

With the recent hate letters and the increasing racial tensions on campus, it is important now more than ever to work toward unity

instead of separation. Participating in the Day of Service means supporting the values of a man who believed strongly in a world where everyone — regardless of race, color or creed — could accept each other without question or suspicion. We still have a long way to go, but today is a chance for us to chip away at the barriers we all have constructed. Today is an opportunity for us to give back to carry out his dream.

In the words of Coretta Scott King, "It's not a day off, it's a day on." Go out there and serve the community.

Approval of AOL Time Warner should make consumers wary

It is an everyday part of life for many college students.

Sign onto America Online's Instant Messenger and up pops the scrolling news ticker. A story catches our eye, and it's so convenient to just click and read.

Likewise, as news goes 24 hours a day on the two CNN stations, it's easy to turn it on anytime and not wait for an evening broadcast. If that's not convenient, then just log onto the Web site — oh, and a link to Time magazine. How effortless.

But with the freshly approved AOL Time Warner merger, consumers should critically examine the routine ways in which they access their news.

Mergers are undoubtedly a part of capitalism, but colossal mergers like AOL Time Warner's will leave consumers with less variety of media sources.

Particularly alarming about the AOL Time Warner merger is that it encompasses companies that already had unbalanced amounts of market power.

CNN alone not only has its two American cable networks but also includes its radio and air port networks as well as its international network.

With companies such as AOL, CNN, HBO, Time, and Warner Bros. Films, AOL Time Warner's umbrella now covers all aspects of communications from Internet and television to movies and magazines.

We may think we are getting a variety of viewpoints by reading one newspaper, watching another television station and picking up yet another magazine.

With mass media mergers, these "different" sources become fused. They might have separate editorial departments, but they answer ultimately to the same boss — and are paid by the same boss. Media companies always claim mergers will have no effect on objectivity, but the financial influence on the news is inevitable.

What these huge parent companies are trying to sell us is the convenience of it all. But it will end up more costly in the long run to the consumer with such concentrated market power in the hands of the corporate elite.

While the individual may feel personally powerless when his or her consumer choices are narrowed, they still have a choice by making the effort to seek information from alternative media sources.

It's easy to jump from link to link or change channels without thinking twice about what company is really behind the news. We must be active viewers and readers and not be fooled by the different logos on the outside when the inner-workings are all the same.

Deals between media moguls bring us convenience as well as a challenge: to be more critical consumers than we ever have before.

Who we are

The Daily Collegian's editorial opinion is determined by its Board of Opinion, with the editor holding final responsibility. Opinions expressed on the editorial pages are not necessarily those of *The Daily Collegian*, Collegian Inc. or The Pennsylvania State University. Collegian Inc., publishers of *The Daily Collegian* and related publications, is a separate corporate institution from Penn State. Editorials are written by *The Daily Collegian* Board of Opinion.

Members of the Board of Opinion are: Heather Cook, Jon Fassnacht, Cheryl Frankenfield, Angela J. Gates, Lily Henning, Alison Kepner, Tim Swift, Patricia Tisak, Tracy Wilson, Alissa Wisnouse and Susie Xu.



LETTERS

Car insurance companies do not discriminate by age

The fact of the matter is, when it comes to insurance companies and people under the age of 25, it is not an issue of discrimination. It is an issue of logistical information. Insurance companies hire actuaries that study statistical information on accidents, ages and population density.

Studies have shown that drivers in the age category of 16 to 25 are more at risk for accidents because of less driving knowledge.

Now this is not to say that middle-aged drivers are any better, but historically more accidents occur in the first 9 years of driving.

So to taking this information and making it discrimination is more a matter of ignorance on your part. You need to grasp all information from a company before you prematurely make a decision based on beliefs and not facts.

Matt Lingenfelder
Class of 1999

Column on racism sloppy, disrespects writer's father

Angela Gates' column Thursday about racism was embarrassing for all involved. The point of my letter is not to chastise Gates for the opinions expressed, but for their inexcusably sloppy presentation.

Gates claims her "archaic" father "is not the most versed on ... issues ... concerning racism and white privilege," but offers only a vague anecdote about a department store and that of Tommy Jefferson had slaves as evidence of her own insight into the world of race and privilege. No actual data, quotes or statistics are offered.

I marveled at the three paragraphs describing her father's appearance.

The information was either embarrassingly extraneous or meant to inspire assumptions about his personality and intelligence by saying he looks like the Brawny towel guy and has a gap in his teeth.

Ironic, no? If the simplistic, unfocused nature of the essay resembles how she spoke to her dad, no wonder he's skeptical of white privilege. Perhaps quoting someone who made her case eloquently would be more effective in enlightening him (and us readers, for that matter).

In the third-to-last paragraph, we learn this lumbering tale was meant to clear the *Collegian* of unspecified claims of race bias.

Describing the charges and discrediting them may have been a more productive, and readable, use of the column. I am begging

Write a letter

We want to hear your comments on our coverage, editorial decisions and the Penn State community in general.

■ E-mail: letters@psu.edu

■ Postal mail or in person:

The Daily Collegian
123 S. Burrowes St.
University Park, PA 16801-3882

Letters must be typewritten, double-spaced and no longer than 250 words. Students' letters should include semester standing, major and campus. Alumni's letters should include the year of graduation of the writer. All writers should provide their address and phone number for verification. Letters should be signed by no more than two people. Members and officers of organizations must include their titles if the topic they write about is connected with the aim of their organization.

The *Collegian* reserves the right to edit letters for length and to reject letters if they are libelous or do not conform to standards of good taste. Because of the number of letters received, the *Collegian* cannot guarantee publication of all letters it receives. Letters may also be selected for publication in *The Weekly Collegian*. All letters received become the property of Collegian Inc.

the *Collegian* for coherent columns that actually inform rather than offer anecdote and ignorance in lieu of substance.

Anthony Miccio
junior-film

Web workbook necessary as teaching aid for course

On Thursday Matthew Lukens wrote about the new Web workbook being required in Speech Communication 100 (Effective Speech). We created this Web workbook for a number of reasons.

First, we recently converted the course from a lecture-discussion format to small sections in response to student feedback.

The workbook provides some of the information we used to cover in the lecture and insures some uniformity in the course.

At the same time, we wanted to increase the use of technology in teaching the course. The workbook represents part of our efforts to update the course and keep it at the cutting edge of public speaking instruction.

We hope the Web workbook will accomplish not only these goals but, more importantly, provide a significant enhancement to students' education.

By providing interactive activities, links to other information sources, and additional information, the Web Workbook should improve the quality of their educational experience.

And by developing it this way rather than having students buy a workbook from a commercial publisher we have been able to keep costs down while providing the highest quality education.

I might add that the combined cost of the text and workbook (\$67.35) is still less than that for most general education courses and less than Mr. Lukens pays in his major, engineering, where texts typically cost \$75 to \$100, and students pay additional fees for the courses.

Michael Hecht

head of Department of Speech Communication

Instant runoff best format for voting in next election

If the "spoiler" role of third parties is to be avoided and everyone feels free to vote for the candidate they really want rather than a candidate they think actually has a chance of being elected, a significant voting system change will be required.

Instant-runoff voting may fix the third party problem.

Under this system, voting works like this: You rank your three favorite candidates by order of preference.

If a candidate wins the majority of No. 1 votes, they win, but if not, the candidate with the fewest No. 1 votes is eliminated from consideration, and the No. 2 votes of the voters who voted for that eliminated candidate go to the other candidates of their choice.

This instant-runoff process is repeated until a candidate gets a majority (more than 50 percent of the total vote). For example, if you wanted Buchanan as president, but definitely didn't want Gore, you could have put Buchanan as your No. 1 choice and Bush as your No. 2 choice. After Buchanan was eliminated from consideration for too low of a vote count, Bush would have gotten your vote, but in the meantime, you would have boosted Buchanan's vote tally.

One disadvantage of this system is that it makes it seem like some people get to vote more than once.

Even if it helps eliminate "spoilers," the main political parties probably don't like the system as a whole because it allows third parties a "foot in the door."

If you support some third party and ever hope to get your candidate elected, concentrating on changing the voting system would be a good start.

Sean Sweeney

graduate-materials science

Rediscover value of silence amid college noise

By Jeremy R. Cooke

On a good day here, when my homework and commitments fall away, when balance and moderation reign — if only for a few moments — I can usually pause with relief and say to myself:

"I am not my Palm Pilot."

That's on a good day. More often than not, something in my handheld electronic organizer is just *dying* — with each meager beep — to steal my attention and send me off to my next class, my next meeting, my next rendezvous.



MY OPINION

Don't get me wrong; I love this thinly-sliced sandwich of plastic and computer chips. It's my daily bread, if you will, providing me with that nourishment of our age: information.

Where to be, when to be there, what to do, how to do it, who to call and what to know — it's all here for the taking.

The problem is, there is so much here that silence rarely prevails, and stillness doesn't seem to make it through.

Oh, sure, I can turn off the beeps on the Palm, but then another sound will trickle in to draw me away. The radio, the car, the Web or the phone.

Even the lesser technological marvels — those living, breathing people we call friends down the hall — present distraction enough.

In living life to the fullest, especially at college with all its wonderful excesses, we for-

get to leave room for quiet, for the space along the edge of our lives that spells the difference between confusion and contentment.

It's easy to deny the importance of that space when deadlines and due dates and dramas intervene, but without it, we can find ourselves set adrift.

We will bob up into consciousness some day before we leave this place and wonder, *Who grabbed hold of our controls while we weren't paying attention?*

Maybe, before graduation day arrives we'll realize that in order to get the most out of college, we first need to get a little less.

Schedule time to be quiet and conscious. Or better yet, don't schedule it, if you think it'll reek too much of extra obligations.

Surprise yourself. Sometimes the oldest and simplest activities foster insight that

doesn't need to be willed into existence to emerge.

■ Set out to walk without planing a destination, without worrying where you'll end up.

Take the long way now, instead of the shortcut. Look about you, as if the place was just created. Listen as if you can't speak.

■ Pick a night to not get drunk. Remember that being in tune with your senses can be as great as not being fully alert.

■ Whatever else you're doing, turn off the music. I used to think it was bliss to have a CD player always within reach. But then the reality of background music hit me.

It's like spending your life in an elevator where the muzak doesn't stop.

■ If you're religious, pray. But not like you usually do and not out loud. Try to reflect on why you believe what you do, without worry-

ing about putting it into words. Let the feeling of your faith come to you first.

None of these are new ways to be silent, nor are they the only ways, but they become fresh for me when I rediscover their importance, their ability to carve up slices of time outside of my noisy modern Palm-Pilot-outlined routine.

I don't envy those shadowy premodern citizens of the Good Old Days, when life was, to quote Hobbes, "nasty, brutish and short." But they probably knew more than me about being quiet, about how silence can produce great ideas and even greater peace.

And that's something ultimately no digital assistant can help me with.

Jeremy R. Cooke is a sophomore majoring in American studies and journalism and a *Collegian* staff writer. His e-mail address is jcooke@psu.edu.