

Homeowners offended by parties

Attempts at open dialogue fail.

As many of you are aware, a meeting was held in the Brendle Recital Hall at the university on Oct. 14, 1998. This meeting was an attempt to bring students and homeowners living in the university area together to see if a dialogue between us could effect a resolution concerning the behavior of a

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number of students who have held extremely loud alcohol-related parties in our residential neighborhoods going on now for about 15 years. Many, many times, homeowners including myself have been rudely awakened in the dark hours of an early morning with loud music, vulgar language, vehicles that belong to students parked on our lawns, and beer bottles and other debris scattered across our front lawns. I know that my attempts to have the students take their parties indoors and toned down were met with threats of violence and on one occasion an actual attempt made on my life. I have been cursed, screamed at and called filthy names on more occasions

that I can recall. I have also had my furniture stolen from my front lawn and arrogantly displayed on the front porch of a house rented by students.

I have had students urinate on my front lawn in my presence when I have asked some of them to leave my front yard. The reason I am listing these things is because as bad as these acts committed against me have been and because over the years the acts that have been perpetrated against me by students numbering well over a thousand, not one — I repeat — not ONE student has ever apologized to me.

At the meeting on Oct. 14, not one student stood up and offered any of us homeowners an apology.

At the meeting only 100 of the 400 students who were told to be at the meeting were actually there. Out of that 100 I counted 29 students who got up and walked out of the meeting before it was over.

Five students sitting together in the group were shown by the TV cameras to be laughing, giving the finger and swinging their fists in the air when a description of the parties were given.

Three students behind me said that the meeting was ridiculous, ludicrous and a waste of their time. One student stood up and said it was impossible for them (the students) to respect or show respect to people they didn't know. I have yet to figure out what that meant.

We were told again and again that we (the homeowners) should come to them first of all and get to know them.

Then to come to them first and tell them that they were being too loud

rather than call the police on them. This was nothing but a blatant attempt on the students' part to deflect responsibility for their behavior from themselves.

I recall one night asking 203 students gathered on the lawn next door to me to please quiet down, not once, not twice, but three times. THEN and only then did I call the police.

In fact, the police had to be called three times that night to that same group of students before they broke up the party at 3:30 a.m..

For the last 10 years I have been abused so badly so many, many times by so very many students that I no longer have the desire to get to know you.

And I resent having to get out of my bed at 1:00 a.m., get dressed and subject myself to 100-200 screaming, intoxicated young people in order to ask them to quiet down. Especially since they had to have known that they were being extremely loud.

I resent not being able to place my lawn furniture or anything else out in my yard because it will be stolen.

I resent being subjected to young men the same age as my son exposing their genitals to me while urinating in front of me.

I resent being screamed at, cursed, called filthy names, threatened and having an attempt made on my life simply because I have asked students to please quiet down at 1:00 a.m..

I resent being afraid to let my cats or my dog outside for fear that they will be killed by students who are drunk and are angry with me.

And I resent going through all this

crap for 10 years without once receiving an apology but rather than an apology to have students turn around and tell the police and officials of the university that it was I who cursed, screamed at and threatened them when that is absolutely untrue.

If this letter seems confrontational and full of accusations (which by the way are true) then so be it. I am no longer in the mood to engage in friendly dialogue with the students at this university.

And if you continue to party around me while at the same time abusing my rights, do not look for me to come to you first to ask you to quit doing something you know is wrong for you to do in the first place. I have "dialogued" enough with you. And that has never worked.

It is time for "the power that be" to take over and bring this mess to an end. On Oct. 16, just two nights after the meeting, another loud party took place by a group of students on Rosedale Circle.

Once again the police were called (twice) and once again a citation was given out. But once again no apology.

To party like that just two nights after the town meeting was an arrogant display of "in your face" behavior.

It is also a statement that the students have no intentions of considering the needs of their neighbors and that nothing short of suspension from the university will put an end to their behavior.

What is so sad and also frightening is that these very students are the future leaders of the greatest country on earth.

Student groups

must unite

Response to Westboro Church reflects values.

Hate. Love. Wrong. Right. Conservative. Liberal. Straight. Gay. Black. White. Sorrow. Joy. Fear. Courage. Intolerance. Compassion.

These words carry with them powerful images, if not meaning, to all of us — and the

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list can go on and on. What's interesting is that these words also carry with them a certain power within the life force of a community. Power can be a divisive, if not destructive, force in our ability to build a positive sense of community if the proper context in which we use them is misinterpreted or misaligned.

Lately, it seems as if we have focused a lot of our community attention on the pending visit of the Westboro Baptist Church, as it has certainly served as an important "wake up" call for all of us — a "wake up" call to examine not only our own personal beliefs but what constitutes our community values. To me, whether they decide to visit our campus is irrelevant, but what is relevant is the ongoing dialogue it has created between all of us — some positive and some not so positive.

To me, events like this serve as a catalyst for important student driven initiatives to emerge, such as the "United in Peace" vigil which will be held next week at Wait Chapel. Under the auspices of Student Government, a number of students are working to design a university-wide event which will prompt us all to consider where we all stand as a community on the values we say we promote in the spirit of *pro humanitate*.

I was concerned recently when some students approached me about their disillusionment in the different reactions they have received from some of our student groups, those who are considering either not to participate in the vigil or to support it because they believe it to be a pro-gay rally. My challenge to these groups is to look beyond themselves into the symbolism of the vigil which is meant to celebrate the values which bring us together as a community when we are confronted by hate activities.

I would venture to say that if we were all to reflect on our personal experiences, how many of us would say that we have not been affected by hate? Think about it. If it hasn't happened directly to us, then let's take a broader look or deeper dive into our cultural heritage or the faith we practice and profess. In my mind, there probably has been no community in the course of our world history or religion who has not been affected by hate. Now if I've missed something from my civics or world religion classes, please tell me.

My understanding of hate activities which indirectly affected me were those which directly affected my parents and their parents via their internment during World War II as American citizens (people of Japanese ancestry born and raised in the United States). Their pain is my pain, one which I cannot run away from or ignore — just like the pain which afflicts different community members within our university when they become targets of hate activities. We can either choose to ignore it or deny it exists, or we can do something pro-active about it.

If there is any time that prompts us to focus more directly on our circle of influence as a community, I believe it is now. I would encourage all of us to act from our compassion and not from our indifference or intolerance of groups who are not like us. As long as hate activities exist not only on our campus but also in our communities, then it is up to us to make a difference.

To me, the "United in Peace" vigil represents all that is "good" within our community. I do believe we now have a window of opportunity to come together and make a positive difference in how we create and sustain a climate of compassion at the university which symbolizes the true spirit of *pro humanitate*. Thus, let me close with the following meditation written by Sharon Salzberg, the author of *Lovingkindness*:

"Sometimes we think that to develop an open heart, to be truly loving and compassionate, means that we need to be passive, to allow others to abuse us, to smile and let anyone do what they want with us. ... Quite the contrary. It is the strength that arises out of seeing the true nature of suffering in the world. Compassion allows us to bear witness to that suffering, whether it is in ourselves or others, without fear; it allows us to name injustice without hesitation, and to act strongly, with all the skill at our disposal."

May peace be with you and within us as we stand "united in peace" as a community.



MORE LETTERS

Association has posted meeting information

In its recent coverage, the *Old Gold & Black* has explained the logistics of "Unite for Peace" quite well.

It is a vigil to take place at 9 p.m. on Oct. 29 in Wait Chapel that will embody our commitment to unity, our desire for peace and our affirmation of human dignity.

"Unite for Peace" is essentially an opportunity for the university community to stand together against hatred and to stand together for peace.

Since most readers have an idea about what this vigil is, let us reflect on what it is not. It is not a rally for gay rights. Please don't misunderstand — we believe that the university must address that issue.

But this vigil is not a forum for that discussion.

Before there can be equality, we must FIRST *Unite for Peace*.

If we have not yet fully committed ourselves to unity, then we are not truly a community, and we then cannot define the rights of individuals within that community.

Before we lay our foundation — a community that desires peace and affirms human dignity — then we have nothing on which to build.

We have nowhere to go. We have no hope. We must FIRST *Unite for Peace*.

Please come to this vigil. Please lay aside for those few moments your

personal convictions and help us establish our common convictions — commitment to unity, desire for peace, affirmation of human dignity.

Let us identify and celebrate our common humanity — then we can move on to identify and celebrate our human diversity. *Unite for Peace*.

Martin Price and Susie Eggers
Co-Chairmen
Student Government Steering Committee for "Unite for Peace"

Students should come to town meetings

One of the comments from the audience at the town meeting Oct. 14 was that it was not known when the meetings of the University Area Homeowners Association were going to be held so that students might attend.

My response was that notices/fliers were left at houses in the neighborhood — including those inhabited by students — on several occasions, that notices were published in the local newspaper a couple of times (until the *Winston-Salem Journal* would no longer do so), and that an announcement was run on TV-13.

I failed to mention that at least twice I spent several hours posting notices at five shopping centers and on telephone poles and in area businesses. One student did call and ask about a flier she had seen.

The fliers have now been replaced by newsletters, which also have been distributed widely by association members.

Our next meeting will be at 7:15 p.m. on Oct. 22, at the Reynolda Manor Library on Fairlawn Drive. And, as was stated in all of the notices and newsletters, all area residents — homeowners and renters — are welcome.

Mary Beth Roberts
President, University Area Homeowners Association

Disruptive behavior is intolerable

Last week many students living in areas surrounding the university met with community homeowners to discuss the deteriorating quality of residential life in their neighborhoods.

The town meeting was an effort to stimulate constructive dialogue about ways to repair damaged relationships and work toward establishing neighborliness as a guiding principle for all those, especially students, who live in these areas.

Instead, the general student response was to defend behavior that is clearly incompatible with neighborliness, not to mention Wake Forest values.

Homeowners, university officials and Winston-Salem police recounted stories of rude, drunken and disrespectful students who partied well into the morning hours, blocked traffic and cursed neighbors.

These incidents are a matter of public record and have been the subject of

news reports. This behavior is intolerable, and will not be tolerated.

The abuse of alcohol lies at the center of these incidents.

The disregard shown to our neighbors on Rosedale Circle, Polo Road, and along the University Parkway corridor is unacceptable. This conduct damages our neighbors, our university, and our community.

The time has come for accountability — actions of this sort have consequences.

The university cannot and will not permit the ruination of the neighborhoods around us where families live and work and rear their children. Students who violate the law will be dealt with harshly by the university and the police.

The university will take direct measures in the future to assure that students adhere to our policies and the law of the land.

Students who host gatherings that breach the peace of these neighborhoods will be given no further warnings. To continue disruption to the good order of our neighbors lives will be to imperil your education at this university.

I understand that this message is addressed to a small minority of our students. The actions of the few, however, reflect on the entire university community.

We are dealing with the most fundamental principle of morality — respect for your neighbors as for yourselves. This university cannot and will not allow alcohol abuse to justify the violation of this basic human requirement.

Thomas K. Hearn Jr.
University president