

# FORUM



## Editorial Comments

By WILL HALL &  
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In the past, when University students have complained about seemingly unfair prosecution by local police concerning alcohol, there has often been a serious lack of, well, logic. While many agree that the drinking age should be lowered, 21 is the law of the land. In addition, the statutes in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania expand penalties beyond the most obvious infraction, consumption, to aspects related to drinking. What results are some of the strictest underage drinking regulations in the U.S. Recently in the city of Scranton, these regulations have been expanded to include even more vague infractions, with dubious results.

The outcry over excessive citations by local law enforcement is not completely baseless. Many underage students have been prosecuted under a concept called "constructive possession," an extension of laws applying to underage purchase, attempt to purchase, consumption, transportation and possession of alcohol. Under constructive possession, according to a flyer posted in University housing, local magistrates have deemed it okay to prosecute people under the age of 21, "by determining that alcohol was readily available to a minor who apparently made no good faith attempt to distance himself or herself from it." The same fines and suspensions apply equally to those who possess and "constructively possess" alcohol.

Like those who have protested injustice in the past, this interpretation seems devoid of said logic. In a public statement issued by President McShane several weeks ago, which appeared in both *The Aquinas* and *The Scranton Times*, he expressed concern over constructive possession, voicing a skepticism in the local philosophy which seems to unjustly place underage non-drinkers in a position of guilt. Someone who makes a mature decision not to drink at a party is just as guilty under the law as the person nearing alcohol poisoning beside them.

The original application of constructive possession was in a drug case, not in one involved with underage drinking. Judges are using the drug case as precedent for their actions. Could constructive possession be extended at will, then? If a 17-year-old is hanging out with his cigarette-smoking, 18-year-old friend, should he be running the other way for fear of legal implication in the act of smoking? Does he "constructively possess" that cigarette?

In the Crimes Code of Pennsylvania, there is no reference to or justification of policies resembling constructive possession. A representative of the ACLU responded to inquiries made by *The Aquinas*, stating that constructive possession seems, as many may have already feared, unconstitutional.

The police are using constructive possession to quell concerns of the Hill Section community, enabling them to issue citations to many more partygoers than usual. This, on paper, can be interpreted as a police force that gets things done. As one might expect, the number of citations in the past year has risen dramatically. This is no doubt a result of increased patrolling and the use of constructive possession.

Unfortunately, and the policy's greatest safeguard, legal fees to defend against a "guilty-by-association" drinking proviso often cost more than the citations themselves. People pay up, victims of a local invention.

## Letters to the Editor... Student decries acts of bigotry on campus

Dear Editor:

In its broadest sense, diversity is variety or multiformity. One who embraces this definition accepts others for who they are, despite race, ethnic or gender barriers. Given the events that unfolded Thursday, March 2, I have been forced to question whether this is truly a diverse campus.

When I returned to my car that evening, I was dismally surprised by the word "Nigga" sketched on the driver-side window. In light of the laudable efforts that the University has made in the past few years to diversify this campus, one could

hardly believe that someone would have the audacity to victimize another.

As most of you already know, I was forced to reckon with the same problem last year when someone wrote "House of Nigga and Fag" on my University owned house. Only then did I realize how cruel and insensitive some of my peers could be.

Am I angry? Yes. Am I bothered by the small percentage of shameless bigots at this university who cannot and will not set aside their differences and accept others for who they are? Yes. I am tired of battling this seemingly obsolete issue!

My friends often ask me why I choose to remain in such an unsympathetic and intolerable environment. And every time they ask me, I reply with the same trite answer: One person can make a difference in the lives of others.

My purpose in writing this letter is not to capture a sympathetic audience, but rather to address this unspoken issue. I am indeed asking for a call to action.

Racism holds no place at this university (or anywhere else), and it is our duty to suppress such ill-conceived beliefs and enlighten those around us. I will not tolerate undeserved insolence and hope others feel the same.

*Demetrius McCord is a senior from Bronx, N.Y.*

## Barcelona (continued from page 6)

remain nameless and his friend figured out a great pick-up line for a guy to use on a girl from Barcelona.

How do you say, "You have the most beautiful eyes", in Catalan? (Of course, you have to say it in Castilian.) Just be careful that you choose your words correctly, or you could wind up telling her that her leaves, not eyes, are the most beautiful that you've ever seen!

The culture exists not only in the language but also in activities.

Try watching "Chicago, The Musical," "RENT" and Shakespeare in Castilian, or even in Catalan! I guarantee you will never forget it! If theater doesn't interest you, go to one of the parades for Carnival, the Spanish equivalent to Mardi Gras. Some people don't even sleep that week. Some pass out three minutes

into the parade. It's all up to you.

Growing up and attending college in Scranton can be a somewhat blinding experience. Studying in a big city at a university with more students than residents in your town can be a real eye opener! Take, for example, my daily routine. There are some days I actually spend more time on the metro than I do in class!

I used to complain about walking up and down Monroe Avenue twice a day. That's funny. Try walking ten minutes to the metro stop, sitting on the metro for ten minutes, changing lines (which means more walking) and taking that train for another fifteen minutes only to find out that you still have to walk another five minutes to get to your class.

Never again will I complain about having to walk a lot in Scranton; it pales in compari-

son to how much I walk here!

The best part of this whole experience, besides learning a new language, is living with a host family. My host mother, or my "big sister," as she likes to call herself, has taught me so much.

Not only can I listen to her speaking and have great conversations, but I can also listen to her give half an hour dissertations on anything from Franco to theater.

Coming to Spain—exposing myself to a brand new culture and learning a new language—was the best decision I have ever made. I can never forget this time of my life—the people, the experiences, the feeling inside of me. I guess some would call it "finding yourself." I call it living, experiencing all that life has to offer. I suggest you all do the same.

Hasta pronto.

*The Aquinas* and Forum Section encourage members of The University community to send letters addressing or responding to issues that concern campus affairs and lifestyles. Letters may be submitted by mail to: *The Aquinas*, Box C or dropped off at our offices on the 2nd floor of Gunster.