

Degradation of Anyone Is Inherently Disgusting

To the Editor:

We are writing this letter in the hopes of sorting out some of the confusion surrounding the recent Delta Upsilon "Back to the Womb" party. Many people have expressed bewilderment as to exactly what those who protested the event found "offensive" and "abusive" to women. Remarks by various groups and individuals, as reported in The Lafayette about the event, indicate that many on campus feel that the issue is essentially one of taste and that surely mere tastelessness or vulgarity might be accepted with good humor rather than what are termed "overreactions." What happened at Delta Upsilon goes beyond tastelessness and should be seen as offensive to a group of people, namely women.

The party's theme derives from a demeaning stereotype, in this case that of woman as reproductive system, and mocks the violence that always has resulted from such dehumanization. By focusing on biological processes related to

birth for derisive amusement, the members of Delta Upsilon fraternity again have enacted the stereotypical definition of women as childbearers and rearers, and thereby limited and oppressed us. This type of amusement and the reinforcement of such stereotypes are in and of themselves forms of violence against women.

Had there been a fraternity party on the theme of "Back to the Old South," complete with a slave auction and a lynch victim with a noose around his neck, it would not have been dismissed as "spontaneous, light-hearted...hedonism." The man dressed as an aborted fetus with red clothes and hanger trivializes the brutalization of women. Countless women have died as a result of illegal mismanaged abortions occasioned by laws which have denied women control over our own bodies. Furthermore, portraying the aborted fetus as solely associated with a woman's anatomy denies male responsibility.

The sign referring to ALW as the Association of Lafayette Wombs also fragments women's bodies, and focuses on us as sexual and reproductive objects, instead of as people entitled to equality with men. Moreover, that sign was aimed directly at a campus group specifically identified with women's concerns.

That this incident could occur, and be accepted by many students, both female and male, reveals that the social climate at Lafayette is generally dehumanizing to women. It has been argued that the large attendance signifies that the party was not seriously offensive. On the contrary, we believe that it signifies that the sexist climate here is so pervasive that many women feel powerless and afraid to challenge it. Many students are consequently led to accept the terms of social life as dictated by the male tradition of the campus.

We call on all campus groups to discuss the issues involved, in the hopes that this incident can be used to foster better communication between women and men students on campus, thereby increasing their mutual understanding and respect.

*The Professional Women
of Lafayette*

Equality

To the Editor:

When Thomas Jefferson said that "all men are created equal," we are sure that, by implication, he was referring to women too. We are absolutely appalled at the humiliating treatment that our female population was subjected to at DU's "Back to The Womb Night." We feel that the males on this campus should be proud to share their educational experience with such intelligent and well-bred members of the opposite sex present at this fine liberal arts institution. Let's face it guys, it's time that we all cleaned up our acts and treated our peers with the reverence and respect that they deserve.

*Bernie Fitzgerald, '81
Mark Mulholland, '81
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D.U. Must Be Held Responsible

To the Editor:

One week has passed since the disputed "Back To' The Womb" party and once again all direct concern has fallen by the wayside. The brothers of D.U. have repeatedly defended themselves by saying that their intent was not malicious. But that is not the charge. Must something be done maliciously in order for it to be considered offensive? D.U. very conveniently overlooks this crucial point. Agreed, the party was not intended to "aim a degrading missile toward the ego of Lafayette women," but that does not mean it was any less a disgusting display of insensitivity. This was an offensive act and there is no way around it.

We are elated that D.U. regards their party "as an example of a serious problem that must be confronted." But they argue that they should not be used as a focal point because the party was well-attended by

both men and women. Things are not that simple. It is not necessary for us to be speaking for every woman on this campus. Since when has that ever been the case? We regret to declare that it is impossible not to use D.U. as a focal point. Any protest must have examples of the injustices which exist.

D.U. regards their "Back To The Womb" party as only an example of a larger attitudinal problem and, therefore, they reason, they should not be focused upon. The crucial point here is this: simply because they are one example of many does not lessen the degree of offensiveness resulting from that particular party. To absolve oneself of responsibility for one's actions on the grounds that a larger problem exists is clearly an effort to sidestep the issue rather than rectify it.

*Sincerely,
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