German students harassed by films

To the Editor:

I wish to thank Michael C. Lynch, '86, "Dean's Office continually asserts its authority," Jan. 10, for raising a critical issue which has long been in our hearts and on our minds. As members of MIT German House, we agree with Lynch that World War II films should be completely banned from the MIT campus, and that these films directly, grossly, and tragically violate our civil rights.

Germans are inevitably cast in a bad light in these films. All Germans are shown as heartless, unfeeling, and ignorable. The scenes of torture and death featured in these films are "subjected to" German students, without these students' knowledge or consent.

World War II films show Germans as objects of hatred, not as people. Misquoting from Salzberg, "the bigotry and contempt it encourages has feelings of hatred, and actions which demonstrated to us, "... World War II history, "in all its forms, infirmities on others - others in this case being German house residents. World War II films are part of a "symptomatic practice of exploitation and subordination based on" racial origin.

"The bigotry and contempt it promotes, with the acts of aggression it fosters, harms" German House members' "opportunities for equality of rights in employment and education" and promotes violence and harassment.

Clearly LSC has already taken our roots somewhat into account. We heartily applaud LSC's decision to show an alternative film to "The Beach" last Saturday. (I believe the alternative is "The Opening of the Bees of Leucosia.") However, this is not enough. Our civil rights will continue to be blatantly and willfully violated until all such films are banned from campus.

The fact that World War II films are shown at MIT proves that the administration supports the oppression of people of German descent that accommodates these films.

As members of my community, I am a German House member. I am targeted for violence. This is discriminatory. The only thing we cannot say is which individual "German House members" will be the recipients of the violence.

After such films, German House residents and others of German descent are "subjected to" detailed recounting of scenes from the film and to an increase in demeaning comments and plans.

We are forced to hear about relatives tortured or killed by Germans, about how Germans have been the primary cause of war in this century, etc. "Even without these actions," World War II films "as a traditional story that portrays the objectification and abuse of" Germans "in its harassment" of Germans.

Our objection to World War II films is not an objection to the bad idea of violating the rights of a group, but to the continuation of "laws" that we demand that the entire MIT community act at once in this issue of utmost importance, and ban all World War II films from campus immediately, without further discussion, and using whatever means are available.

This letter is not intended to represent the views of MIT German House as a whole, merely the members who are listed below. As absurd as this letter is, we think that it is only slightly more ridiculous than many of the views which have been expressed on the issue of pornography.

Our own views on pornography are mixed; many of us have strong objections to it. Yet we believe that there is a big difference between protest and censorship.

Max Haipel '85
Paul Hillner '88
Scott S. Lawton '86
Lauren Mahoney '83
A. D. Pollock '84
Chris A. Rauzen '86
Jim Wegmans '83

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Knowledge, belief and acceptance

(Continued from page 5)

The most one can hope is that the good lives on after the life is ended. My father did his best in his hope that my grandmother's virtues would be passed down through him, to my sisters and me. In this way, she would live on as long as the family remembered.

I wrote this column to share my experiences. Purely on a selfish basis, I have felt better to write it. The act of writing comforts me. Even if this column were not to see print, I would feel better having done it.

In print, it continues the dialogue on death as part of MIT life. There have been too many black-bordered boxes, too many Dean's Office letters lately, and if MIT is to be a community, we have to share the pain of our losses. We used to speak of the MIT family; it's sad that this has had to become the involuntary minuity.

Perhaps the trend can be reversed. A family has to share both the good and the bad. Death is common to us all, and by sharing my loss, I hope to lessen such pain for all of us.

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