Column/Ben Z. Stanger

Do not confuse news with opinion

Many people are unfamiliar with the difference between one page and four pages of *The Tech*, as indicated by the letter "Haugland '89 ["Facts do not support the MSIG's claim of racism," Oct. 31]. As an editor at *The Tech* and one of the authors of the letter, I will try to clarify this important distinction.

Simply put, the front page contains news, and the fourth page contains opinion. The foremost role of news editors is to make sure that news does not mix with opinion, and they treat this separation extremely seriously.

Thus when Haughland asked, "Am I supposed to believe the claim just because *The Tech* says it is true?" she is really asking us to realize that the claims of the report pertain to a newspaper, not to a history book, and cannot be considered news value — the Associated Press has run a number of pages carrying an account of the MSIG report. But readers should be aware that by running a story on the report, a newspaper does not necessarily endorse the conclusions or recommendations of the report.

I share several criticisms raised by Haughland:

1. Many of the responses described MIT's negative or imperceptive environment. Apply equally well to blacks and whites, making it impossible to know whether the problems are unique to blacks or are indicative of the undergraduate experience," as Haughland said.

2. Black students' anecdotes are bandied about as made up by MIT reporters, only years after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

3. There is little or no delineation between "blacks" and "minority" students for an overwhelming part of the report. It virtually ignores American Indians, Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans.

MIT and the MSIG will need to take up these issues because the report has limited credibility as it now stands. Racism at MIT is a serious problem, but the report points a finger at the shadow of racism, not the figure.

It is necessary for *The Tech* to present the methods and findings of the report in a straightforward and unbiased manner. It gives a basis for a critical community in the classroom.

One should always keep in mind that there is a difference between an editor who puts a story on page one and an editor who agrees with the opinions expressed in that story. Therefore, when I pick up a copy of my favorite newspaper and read a story with views infuriating me, I don't bring my case up with the editor. I would rather say "To the Editor."

In the first place, Haughland misinterprets that the survey asked blacks whether they had received any negative treatment on a racial basis. She fails to see the difference between having negative feelings about MIT, as many may or may not have, and the study's claim that blacks have negative feelings because of racial bias.

Haugland claims that it is necessary to have a "parallel view of other students' perceptions of their years, treatment and education at MIT." Other students' perceptions may be totally irrelevant to whether or not blacks experience racial bias at MIT. Many students may have negative feelings about MIT, but if they do not originate from racial problems, I fail to see their relevance to this issue.

As a black I can personally testify to the complexities of the racial situation facing blacks. This is something which Haughland, a white, cannot do. She cannot understand the unique pressures and negative feelings that blacks experience, as well as the black problems from a white point of view. She discusses the study's claim that minorities feel that they must prove they are equal, both implicitly and superficially and by saying that whites feel the same way.

While I don't doubt that whites do experience some of these feelings, I must say that it is not because of their race. It is perfectly natural in a fast paced environment to feel some of these feelings, but those feelings should not be imposed upon you because your skin color is different from the rest of the white world. Since I have been at MIT I have felt the need to prove my right to be here as well as my ability to succeed. I have felt that in most intangible ways this has been put upon me by the general white population at the institute. To me it seems that no matter how good I am or how much I accomplish something that lurks behind.

Haugland completely misinterprets the fact that blacks have no place in the shadow of the white and common-

To the Editor:

I share several criticisms raised by Haughland: "Facts do not support the MSIG's claim of racism," Oct. 31. Lindsay Haughland is both ignorant of and insensitive to the racial problems facing blacks at MIT, and thus is unable to see their conflict.

Haugland fails to realize many things about the subject and the ex-

From the viewpoint of the student, the assasination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and civil rights activities during white parties is to get drunk. Most blacks that I know do find this so enjoyable as their white peers. Again this is not an absolute but a general rule. This is an example of a cultural difference that can make it difficult for a black to fit into a predominantly white living group. I chose not to have this problem and thus reside in "Chocolate City," the top floors of New House 1 which are all black.

These cultural differences also mean that MIT and the MSIG will need to take up these issues because the report has limited credibility as it now stands. Racism at MIT is a serious problem, but the report points a finger at the shadow of racism, not the figure.

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