Letters to the Editor

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OPINION

Intelligence Does Not Imply Open-Mindedness

In wondering "One would think that people at MIT are a bit more intelligent than average..." I have often been among the very smartest, how can a group of individuals be so ignorant?" the co-signers of the letter "Out For Yourself: Ban With Students" (Dec. 1) both strike at the heart of the problem and must be the joint completion.

The question strikes at the heart of the problem because the most insidious aspect of sexism, racism, homophobia, and any other pattern of thought which relies on the exaggeration of perceived differences between people to obscure their underlying essential sameness, is that intelligence may be used equally well as a tool for buttressing as for dismantling the mirage of intelligence.

The problem with sexism and racism and homophobes is not their lack of intelligence but the vigorous way they apply their intelligence toward sexist, racist, and homophobic ends.

To argue otherwise is to define intelligence as belief in a given set of principles, rather than as the ability to manipulate information, most people, after all, accept as "fact" only what they or their family and friends have been exposed to as "fact" and then corresponding to their preconceptions and prejudices.

It is precisely in this distinction between intelligence and open-mindedness that the question minces the point. The MIT community, staffing itself on a solid diet of conventional and egomaniacal unsubstantiations, seems unable to digest the idea that our excellence would empower the campus police to stop a student on Rollerblades and assign that student a $25.00 fine if it" which I am writing this letter in response to the 10 minutes officially allotted between classes to be so ignorant?" the co-signer's of the letter "Out For Yourself: Ban With Students" (Dec. 1) both strike at the heart of the problem and must be the joint completion.

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Don't Blame CPs; Look Out For Yourself

I am writing this letter in response to Matthew Herrich's column "Don't Blame Campus Crime on the Victims," Dec. 4. He writes "As a student and, damn it, I am paying the price of the Corporation, I expect nothing less, and I will not accept the administration's criminal negligence in regard to my safety any more..." Campus Police, stop whining and start doing your job." Takes out of context, it would seem Herrich is speaking about the recent stabbing of west of campus; instead, he's only complaining about the recent plight of pickpockets. While I am very concerned about campus safety and have often discussed (sometime even flaunted) about the campus police, and do not usually believe in blaming the victims of crime, I think Herrich's article was written in an irrational tone.

I do not believe that it is unreasonable to ask MIT students to be aware of their own belongings, including those which are on their persons. Skaters, pedestrians, and everyone else go somewhere and get stolen, I don't believe the campus police are to blame for not being there watching over my bag while I am not there. If I get pickpocketed crossing Massachusetts Ave. some day, I do not think the campus police should have been standing there watching every pedestrian's pants belt buckle to make sure no one stole money out of my wallet. That kind of police presence (overwhelming number, ready to detain anybody who does anything suspicious or looks like they might be not one, and effective, and if anything would likely be to create more problems on campus, not less. If more police were to be deployed, I'd rather that the police force be deployed at the times and places when past police tell us violent crimes tend to occur than to stop pickpockets.

There are serious political and personal issues being alluded to when one talks about "blaming the victim of the crimes," especially in crimes of violence like rape or mugging. (Clearly, if pickpockets are the non-bond, non-confrontational, non-armed wounds that Herrich suggests they are, pickpocketing does not fall into this category.) To accuse the campus police of blaming the victim is a manipulative attempt to co-opt the significance and emotional impact of crimes which are not our fault. The safety-conscious people are quintessentially concerned to protect us, indeed, but part of their job in the past is to inform us of the things we might protect ourselves. We are also responsible for looking after our own possessions and our own safety, too — something which Herrich seems to deny in his last paragraph, believing that he is entitled to perfect safety 24 hours a day, anywhere he is, without taking any precautions or preventive action on his own part.

Peg-Shun Huang '94

In the case of pickpocketing, however, there are a few things the police can do. They can keep a closer eye out for pickpockets and warn students of the possibility. They can also work with the campus police to address the issue of pickpocketing.

Discuss In-Line Skating Ban With Students

I have recently been informed that in-line skating will be banned from the interior of MIT buildings. This is a great mistake on the part of MIT. The MIT campus is large, and the 10 minutes officially allotted between classes is not adequate for me to travel from Building 5 to Building 10. In-line skates allow me to make my class on time.

Many of our freedoms are already restricted here at MIT. The freedom to walk without fear of our lives. The freedom to work without sexual harassment. Removing this additional freedom with out any discussion of the issues with students, without any alternative proposals debated, would be a great mistake on the part of the administration.

Cyrus H. Steward '93

Erratum

Tuesday's story on pickpocketing ("[In]visible pickpocketing"
January 30) incorrectly stated that pickpockets had stolen students' backpacks. In fact, the victims' wallets were taken out of the backpacks.