Thistle Maligned Bader,
Slants Racism Story

I regret that my comments on the events at Phi Beta Epsilon were quoted by The Thistle in such a manner as to imply that I believed a racist incident did in fact occur there ["FBE Involved in Racist Incident," The Thistle, March 17]. I was not present at the time and have no way of knowing what happened there. My thoughts on the subject were unprepared and only given in response to questions by Archon Jung, who presented the accusers’ version of the story as fact. At the time I was interviewed, I was not aware that FBE had denied that racist slurs were shouted, or that the shouting was apparently none directed at any individual. Nevertheless, I later called Archon to make clear that I was not taking a position on the accuracy of the allegations.

At this point, I am concerned that the way my comments were quoted may have worsened the chances of the accused to get a fair hearing in the event that disciplinary proceedings are held. Coverage in The Thistle has appeared to judge the accused guilty. And Provolest Provost Jay Keyser, who is in charge of the harassment policy and its enforcement, has breathed due process and compromised the integrity of the Institute’s disciplinary proceedings by calling the accused’s behavior “dispicable” before any charges have been proven. While the incident is very regrettable, the accusers’ version is accurate; students’ due process rights are important and administrates, journalists, and members of the community should make every effort to honor them.

Lars Bader G

Chocolate City
Sets Bad Example

Everyone agrees that racism is morally and socially unacceptable, but unfortunately it continues to plague us. Things are far from perfect. Indeed, we have not achieved the utopia that Dale LeFebvre ’93 referred to in his letter ["FBE Incident Raises Questions about Racism," March 16]. However society didn’t just sit by silently, allowing things to spin wildly out of control, in LeFebvre’s words. We have certainly come a long way in the days since the civil rights movement first gained its momentum some years ago. This progress has come as the result of many actions—from public protest and civil disobedience to education and growing awareness. While the former serves to stir immediate change, it is the latter which preserves those changes into the future. In short, only through organized, calm, and responsible forums will ideas be influenced and opinions converted.

Now that the dust has finally settled, the controversial events of two weeks ago can begin to be reflected upon with greater objectivity. The alleged shouting of racist epithets from a fraternity window awakened this campus to the ever-present problem of racism. Members from all walks of the MIT community immediately came forward to denounce racism and to demand disciplinary action against the perpetrators. "Chocolate City was quick to post fliers decrying the incident, and went so far as to stage a protest in front of the "guilty" fraternity house. Recently, CC has posted new notices, clarifying its position on the incident. It is the former that preserves those changes into the future. In short, only through organized, calm, and responsible forums will ideas be influenced and opinions converted.

Grant, Chocolate City is, as Tommie Henderson ’93 puts it, a "very vital part of the Afro-American population as well as the very vital segment of the whole MIT community" ["Entire Community Should Become Race Aware," March 19], but, it nonetheless surprises us that this group should be the one apparently handling the investigation into the matter. MIT’s system for dealing with harassment complaints may not be flawless, but it is the existing system. We must, reluctantly or not, rely upon it to dispense justice. Vigilance—like behavior should not be tolerated. This incident has definitely proven that MIT is not immune to racism. However, in the wake of the controversy, many have forgotten that these allegations and their consequences constitute more than a "reality check" or a catalyst to awareness of two relations. There are actual people involved here, and because of the supposed actions of a few, all the residents of 400 Memorial Dr. stand guilty of this hate crime. No formal hearing has been conducted regarding the incident, and yet the case already seems to be over. Whatever happened to "innocent until proven guilty?"

The tension between the MIT community and Phi Beta Epsilon, perpetuated by the actions of Chocolate City, should not exist. Everyone’s good-willed attempts to open a dialogue with CC has been met with suspicion and resistance. Instead of playing this out in the media, why haven’t CC directly confronted its "harassers"? In conducting an unannounced vigil in front of FBE, CC purportedly deprived those people of the opportunity to make its own story heard. Chocolate City must have realized that any testimony in defense of FBE would subsequently be discredited in the face of the public’s resistance to questions regarding the allegations. Frankly, the tension between the MIT community and Chocolate City has been a public itself has been ignored.

We are disappointed by both the irresponsible conduct of Chocolate City as well as the majority reaction of the MIT community to this incident. Like many others, we would like to see this particular controversy come to a close, but without a proper investigation where all of the facts are heard, the controversy will never be evaluated. Feelings of disbelief and anger must now be put aside in order for justice to prevail.

Stephen S. Hsu ’94
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