

index special edition: a plea for tolerance

Marilyn La Plante
Dean of Students

opinion index

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Billie Fischer art department

In 1476, the magistrates of Florence received a statement accusing Leonardo da Vinci of homosexual activity. However, the charges, though probably true, were dropped because Florence was more tolerant than many communities and did not always enforce its laws regarding personal behavior. Had Leonardo been jailed or otherwise persecuted for his lifestyle, many of his works may not have come into existence: the *Last Supper*, the *Mona Lisa*, the beautiful and accurate anatomical drawings, the innovative studies of botany, geology, mechanics, and dozens of other topics.

I mention this incident not to stress the obvious fact that many great artists and scientists have been homosexual, but to emphasize the importance of every individual having the right to live and work without harassment. In an atmosphere of intolerance, it may be impossible for people to realize their potential, which is to the detriment of all of society. Perhaps no one at Kalamazoo College will ever attain achievements of a Leonardo, but do we want to be responsible for preventing the possibility, just in case?

John Bowden K'87

Early Sunday morning, June 1, 1986, I and many others saw what may well be billed as "the end of a dream." Malicious, demented attacks were made—not on a minority—but on the majority of this campus. I am a part of that majority and, like you, selected Kalamazoo College out of a wide range

of other colleges and universities because I saw it, alone, as harbouring something very unique within its walls for me.

What primarily sold me on K came to me during my final year of high school, when I picked up a copy of the 1983-84 academic catalog and read on page eight:

"It is... expected that students will develop increasing independence as they engage in intellectual and aesthetic inquiry, discriminate among moral and ethical values, and develop a humane knowledge of self in the context of history and society."

All in all, a portrait of people developing into self-reliant, mature individuals.

Unfortunately, earlier this week, I found myself questioning this mission of Kalamazoo College and the portrait was defaced. Apparently what I had read was nothing shy of a blatant untruth. But after a few days of soul-searching, readjusting, emotional discussions with friends, and, what was for me, a very much needed and moving gathering at Stetson I decide we cannot allow this to ruin a good thing. We cannot and will not tolerate for a moment the fun and games of very small and frustrated people to cause the end of a dream.

We, as a community, must now bond tightly together. We must become one voice. We can and will love and learn from each other and our differences.

I know for a fact that this letter is not alone. I trust that each and every one of us will read every word of these letters and discuss them, along with our thoughts, with each other. It is the first step on the road to rebuilding what we had, what we have, and what we dare never to lose—each other.

"Your conscience is the measure of the honesty of your selfishness. Listen to it carefully"—R. Bach.

Mary Ann Herrmann K'86

I am writing about the vandalism that took place last Saturday night in Dewing. My outrage is threefold.

First, I am disappointed in the means that some people chose to express their feelings of fear and being threatened. I believe graffiti and damage to any school property are cowardly acts of expressing one's feelings. As I recall from last week's *Index*, a couple of people wrote letters expressing their disapproval of these actions. This *Index* came out on the Friday prior to this incident.

Second, I had family visiting this campus on Sunday and I could not show them parts of the campus that I am proud of. I take pride in that my school tends to have an open-minded attitude and is tolerant of all people. Unfortunately, what I have believed in the past about K and have spoken to my family about was clearly untrue Sunday morning, so I avoided Dewing all day.

Third, I cannot believe that after my four years here at Kalamazoo College there is an outbreak of this kind. Part of my education here included the insight and understanding that various groups of people on campus wanted people to leave K with. I believe that not only did these statements throughout Dewing cut down these attempts at educating, but also hurt and threatened many people I care about, including myself.

We are a community that values diversity. To make this the kind of educational institution we want, it is essential to bring together people of different races, religions, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This is a time and a place for confronting people who act differently, think differently, talk differently, look different. Now is when we must learn to accept all those strangers as humans and seek the contributions they can make to us, to our college, and to our society regardless of, and because of, the differences.

This is not an easy part of education. It is risky to leave the security of similarity. It is frightening to suspect our own thoughts because a stranger's ideas make more sense than our own. It is difficult to learn new ideas that rock the very soul of us.

Though the tasks of education and development are difficult, this environment is protective. We can falter and even fail but still regain our footing with only bumps and scrapes, not broken bones. The acts of this weekend were failures. Those of you who used this method to confront your own fears about differences still have the opportunity to learn more appropriate ways. Diversity is a resource for learning; use it!

Priya Helweg K'89

My hat is off to the student body, faculty and others who responded to President Breneman's call on Wednesday, June 3 concerning the closed-minded, destructive display of "fascist terrorism" that plagued Dewing Sunday night. I was pleased and proud of this college when I saw the turnout for the all-campus meeting. By calling this rare gathering President Breneman stressed the severity of the crime committed. Everyone who gave precious time during this busy week to support him and the cause should be commended. I must say that it hurt to see fellow students walking outside while admirable speakers moved our hearts within Stetson Chapel. I would like to tell those who did not attend that they have missed an important event making the uniting of this campus against the person or persons who cowardly displayed their sick views under the cover of night.

These individuals are akin to any thief or murderer. They have tried to steal freedom of speech and expression from any individual who does not hold their opinion. The groups attacked are respected members of the community who express their commitments openly and legally through educated means. The fears and beliefs of the attacker(s) could be respected and more easily understood if they were expressed through constructive means. Fears are legitimate but are solved and quieted through discussion—not through cowardly acts. It makes me sick to think this would happen at Kalamazoo College by members of the supposedly open-minded student body. Opposition to all views and beliefs are allowed, even welcome; that is what the college and growing up is all about. But they can only be respected if expressed intelligently. The fiends who had their hands on the walls of Dewing should turn their energies to figuring out a solution for what they see as a problem. The fact that they expressed themselves secretly and violently shows that they are not secure in their reasoning and really have no intelligent argument. If I am wrong then I hope they will respond in the same way that I and many others are responding to what we do not approve of.

John Anzalone K'86

The activities taken on by an apparently closed-minded group of heterosexuals Saturday night in Dewing go beyond just offensive. Considering that members of my immediate family and friends are homosexual, I consider this not only an attack on my loved ones, but a personal attack that cannot go unnoticed, or in my mind unpublished.

In the same breath, I would like to pose a question to this group of overkillers heterosexuals. If your body (biologically) and mind (psychologically) told you that you preferred your own gender over the opposite sexually, would you give up sex for a lifetime? I certainly wouldn't; orgasm is too important to me. And if you would, I think you're crazy. But then again, you probably think you're real men or real women.

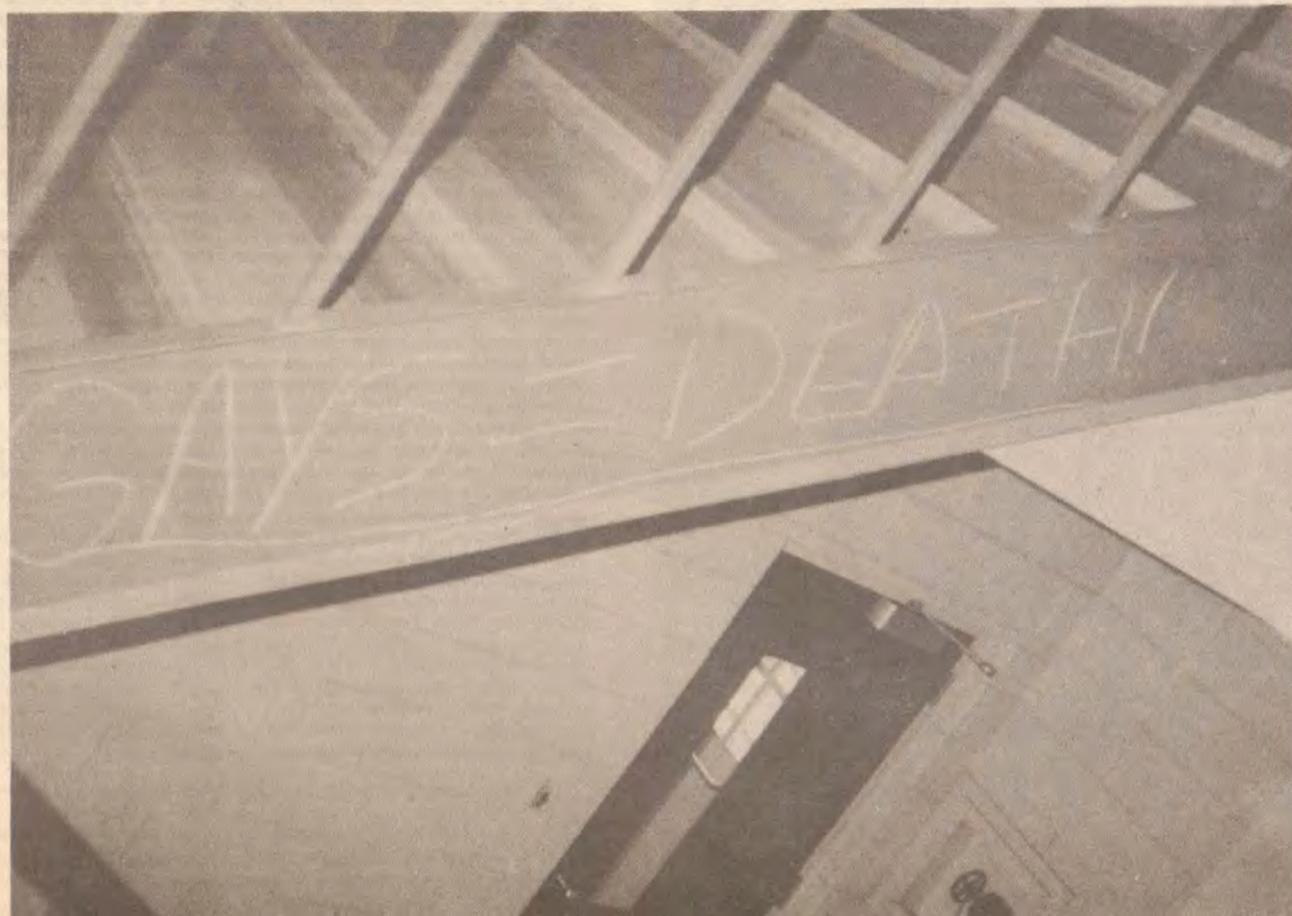
Diane Vanderbeke K'86

The spiteful children who felt compelled to turn Dewing into a giant coloring book simply succeeded in depicting their inability to express even a semblance of rational thought.

Beth Blachut K'88
David Bright K'86
Kurt W. Brubaker K'86
Vince J. Dattilo K'86
Matt Ewend K'86
John Kline K'86
Isabel Lange K'88
Jim Walker K'86

At times, each of us finds ourselves among the minority in our society. Speaking as athletes at Kalamazoo College, we have been at times subjected to stereotyping and prejudice. For example, many unexplained acts of vandalism on campus are insinuated to have been caused by athletes. These and other admittedly milder forms of prejudice have served to make us more sensitive to the dangers of hidden intolerance like that displayed this past weekend. Although we are not all in agreement about the moral, social, and religious aspects of homosexuality, the real issue we wish to address is the socially unacceptable behavior which marred our campus Saturday night.

Each of us has the right to freedom of expression. However, this right is not a license to attack others who differ from us. Instead, it is a guarantee that GLSG, athletics, cheerleading, drama, and the *Index* will be available as socially acceptable methods of expression. Anonymous statements which attack minorities will not be tolerated. These actions are cowardly and socially unacceptable to an educated community such as Kalamazoo College.



This past week in my psychology class my professor stuck labels on the foreheads of the class members. At first it was quite funny to look around and see others being labeled as "dumb," "weak," "worthless," "friendly," "sexy," "funny," and "studious." It is fun to laugh with one's friends. But as soon as we were told to treat each other according to the labels we wore, things were not so funny. After all, we could see others' labels, but couldn't see our own. My own label was that of "the nice guy;" consequently everything I said was responded to by the phrase "oh, that's so nice."

I began to feel frustrated. People were not listening to my ideas, rather they were treating me according to my label (which was unknown to me). It seemed as if I had lost my identity and become my label. But I was still me, a unique and complex person who shouldn't be pigeonholed into one specific category. As I was feeling upset and frustrated because people just didn't understand the real me, I noticed something even more frightening. I was treating others according to their labels, too. I didn't listen to "worthless" and felt sorry for "weak." I even laughed at "funny." Without even realizing it, I was doing just what I didn't want done to me.

In light of this past weekend's events, I caution others to realize that we all do what we don't want done to us. By suggesting that certain groups are responsible for the damage due to their label (which they may be unaware of), we fall into the very process we are so horrified by. None of us deserves to be pigeonholed by a label. We are all unique and very complex individuals. Behind labels, we lose our identity and become nothing more than vulgar words.

I am writing this letter to voice my opinion of the barbarous activities that occurred in Dewing Hall during the weekend. Let me say first that I am not a homosexual, nor have I ever felt inclined to be one or attend any of the meetings of GLSG. To be perfectly honest, I am not all that comfortable with homosexuality as an institution.

However, I am outraged that anyone at this school would feel the need to express themselves in the base manner that was displayed this last weekend. I would like to address these sides of the issue. First, the fact that these people felt it was all right to deface school property for any reason at all leaves me absolutely livid. Second, personal attacks against professors and students is totally unacceptable, especially when the people being derided have no opportunity to respond to the accusations and insults. Third, I was under the impression that these sorts of narrow-minded attitudes were not part of the people who would choose to attend K. It only takes an instant of indiscretion by a few thoughtless individuals to destroy a reputation that was a long time in the building. This school is known for its open-mindedness and its sense of community. It would be very sad if anyone at all decided that they could not attend K because of fear of reprisal. Not only were the people who perpetuated these acts guilty of weak-minded bigotry, but they were also stupid. Someone correct me if I am wrong, but to the best of my knowledge gays do not yet have a homeland. To write "go home gays" is stupid at best, and dangerous in the extreme. The very best thing that could be done is for these people to be found and suspended from the school pending a formal hearing.

I have nothing to say to the terrorists who defaced Dewing on June 1, 1986.

I do, however, have something to say to the victims. And who are the victims? Anyone who ever felt safe on this campus to express themselves, to make themselves vulnerable, to take a risk. We are all victims.

We come to Kalamazoo College to learn, and to grow. But learning requires the courage to make ourselves vulnerable. We must not let the vicious actions of the fearful make us afraid. So, to the victims I say this: heal your wounds, and move forward.

Christopher Vreeland K'86

It is with great sadness that I learned of the vandalism that occurred in Dewing Hall early last Sunday morning. The cowardly way of expressing their viewpoints that these people chose (assuming that more than one person was involved) is, unfortunately, all too typical of the way such viewpoints are usually expressed on this campus and in our society as a whole. The intolerant, anti-liberal attitudes reflected in the anti-gay, anti-liberal graffiti written in Dewing Hall, in my opinion, have their parallels in fascist political movements everywhere and represent the forces of ignorance which, hopefully, Kalamazoo College is struggling against. All that is being asked of people is tolerance for individual differences, but yet this seems to be something of which these vandals are incapable. Hopefully, this is not so for most people in our society. I call upon the parties responsible for the graffiti in Dewing Hall to come out from behind the cowardly shield of anonymity and present an articulate argument to support their viewpoints.

I am wondering how the people who plastered the walls of Dewing with anti-homosexual graffiti think. We can assume that they are somewhat intelligent, attending this "fine" liberal arts institution as they do. How could members of this community show such a high level of ignorance and cowardice? Ignorance I can stand in small doses, but not cowardice—and it was mostly cowardice, a fear of the unknown transformed into hate, that drove these people to do what they did. Why could they not face their fear? Or even sign their "work"? Could it be that they are not "real men," "real women"?

I also wonder how this problem can be resolved. We can write letters; we can hold meetings. Still, these cannot change the path that the narrow mind takes. These are, after all, people who cannot face their feelings, who do not realize that what they fear may be buried in themselves.

Gail B. Griffin English department

Sunday was a perfect First of June. I was wandering from theatrical event to musical event in FAB, relishing the spring, relishing the creativity, relishing my life here at the College. Then I ran into Marilyn La Plante and heard about the ugliness in Dewing.

It's kind of ironic, when I think about it now: all the myriad beautiful forms of expression in Fine Arts that afternoon—Kym Kelchak getting her act together and taking it on the road; Vivaldi getting his act together, with help from Chamber Orchestra and College Singers, to praise God; the stunning visual images in the Gallery; all of these ways of exploring and celebrating what it is to be human. And then, juxtaposed against them, the hateful, cowardly, anonymous scrawls in Dewing, revealing the other end of the spectrum of humanity—the end that is ignorant, fearful, violent.

I used to think that as a teacher I was supposed to deal only with "knowledge." I was supposed to pass on information to students, help them to a certain competence in a certain subject matter. I haven't believed that for a long time, thanks to Kalamazoo College. I believe now that education is meant to change you—to deepen and enrich your humanity, to increase your sympathy with other human beings and with the earth itself. I believe that education divorced from values is poverty-stricken and barren. And, yes, I do believe that some values are better than others—that values of peace, justice, and understanding are superior to those of bigotry, violence, and intolerance. And so I believe that the literature of hate printed in Dewing Hall is no digression, no incidental irrelevance, but is instead precisely the point of our being here together. It is our subject matter, our text. I ask all our students to study it carefully, think about where it comes from and what it means, and know it for what it is: the enemy of everything we stand for.

Ike Pulver K'88

People:

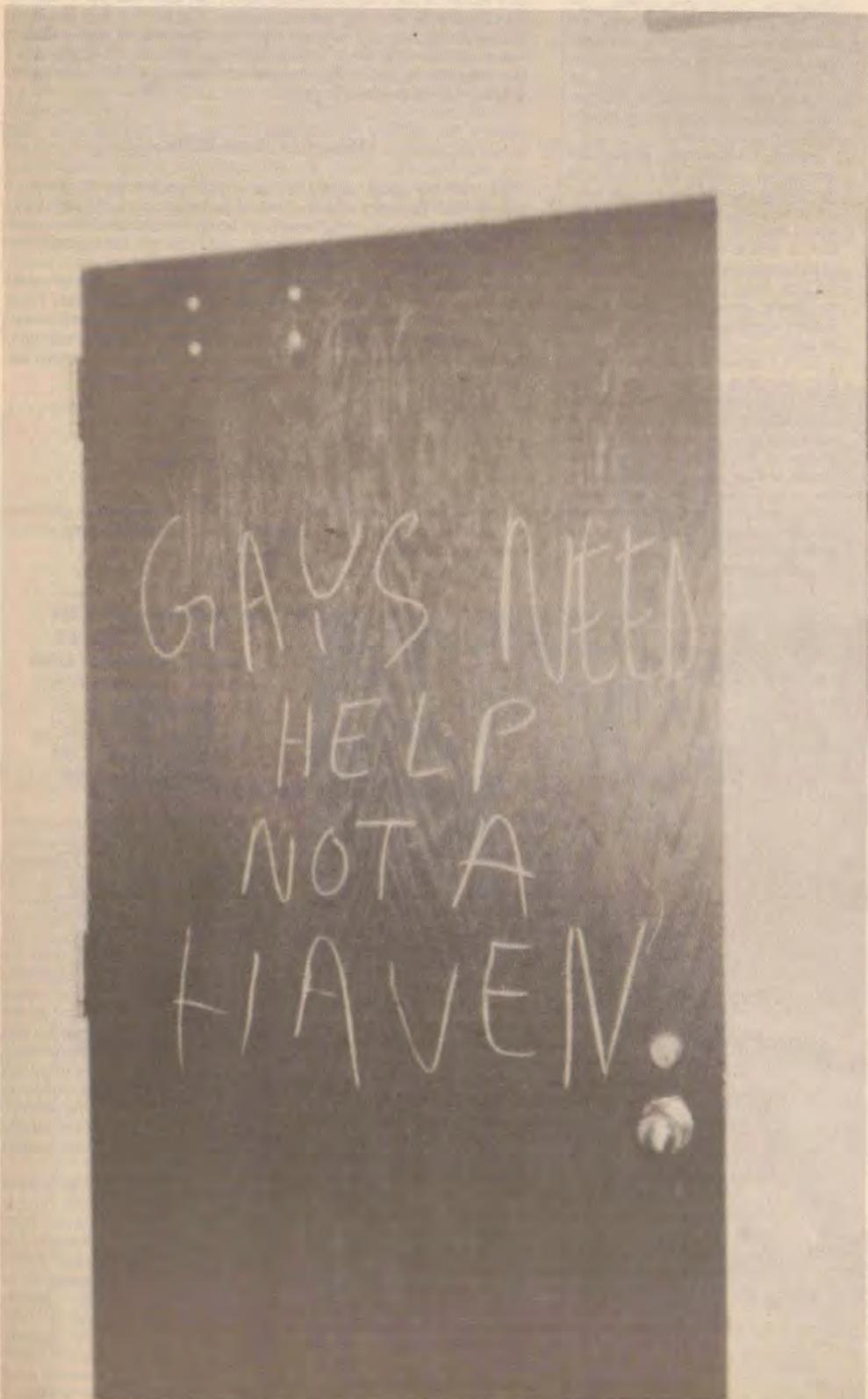
In last week's *Index* I wrote in response to a letter I had read there. I am again writing in response to something that I read; however, this time I did not read it in the *Index*. What I read was scrawled on the sidewalks and pillars outside of Dewing: "Gays go home," "Death to homosexuals," "Homosexuality equals death." My reaction to this is anger and disgust. My first thought was, "Never in my life have I heard of someone with such a vehemence of homosexuals other than Adolph Hitler." Only later did I learn that the entire inside of Dewing was plastered with the same type of graffiti, and some of this graffiti mentioned my name. One of them read "Death to WIG, GLSG, homosexuals, Anne S., and Ike" (The commas I added myself because I am assuming that the person who scrawled this was not intelligent enough to use proper punctuation.) I am angry. I am sad. I am disgusted. I am becoming intolerant myself—of people who express their opinions in this manner. I am scared—not scared of some idle threats scrawled on sidewalks and bathroom walls, but scared that this is the type of person at K College, scared that the people who are supposed to be the future of our country must stoop to such a primitive form of expressing themselves, scared that there are people who emulate Adolph Hitler, scared that this type of person even exists. I am also very sad for all the above reasons.

I am also perplexed. Why homosexuals? Why me? Why Anne Schwartz? Neither Anne nor I wrote anything about sexuality; we both merely stated our opinions in very well-articulated and intelligent letters. We both questioned the choices of some people. However, we did not attack them for the choices they made, we merely disagreed with them—possibly vehemently, but not to the point of fascism. I am furthermore perplexed because neither Anne nor I are homosexual. If the person or persons who wrote the graffiti in Dewing think that saying you don't like to see other human beings being degraded is a proclamation of homosexuality, I pity them, and anyone with whom they may have a relationship.

No one who has spoken to me about the letter has disagreed with what I said. Everyone has told me they liked it very much. What should I think about the mentality of those holding an opposing viewpoint when the first negative thing I hear about what I had to say is in the form of a death threat? I'm sorry, but I don't find that response to be an even remotely intelligent one. As for considering me a homosexual—I can think of worse things I'd rather be called, one of them being a fascist. In fact, if the mark of a good heterosexual is the ability to scribble death threats on every blackboard, both sides of every door, every bathroom stall, and some walls in Dewing, by all means consider me a homosexual—a non-practicing homosexual, but a homosexual. Consider me a feminist because I like women—I am a feminist, but not only because I like women, but because I like humans. Consider me a "liberal humanist" to coin a phrase. Consider me a lesbian. I'm not sure how you can justify that one, but I'm sure that if you can determine that I am gay from the fact that I don't like to see women degraded, you can figure out some way to justify calling me a lesbian, and threatening my life. Justify that, please. Justify persecuting blacks, women, Jews, Christians, gays. If you can justify degradation, do it. Please. If you can't justify it, please don't do it. Don't threaten me if I don't threaten you. Or do I threaten you? If so, why? Is terrorism necessary? I don't like the institution of cheerleading, but I am not going to threaten the lives of everyone who is a cheerleader, or who associate with them. What kind of human has the ability to threaten a whole entire subset of humanity? Please don't address me if you can't do it humanly or intelligently. If you don't have the capability of addressing me intelligently, why are you here, at K College? Maybe YOU should go home.

I'm upset. I'm disturbed. I'm agitated. I'm angry. I'm mad as hell. I don't think I could be more upset if I were a homosexual than I am now. There is more to this than the issues of cheerleading and homosexuality. This was a pure, unadulterated act of fascist terrorism. It was an attack on a very specific group of people by an anonymous person or persons. Everything I am saying here is what I really feel, my opinion. I'm signing my name to it, for everyone to see. I am not ashamed of the way I feel. If "homosexuals must die" is truly the way you feel, please have the conviction—the balls, as it were—to sign your name to it. Don't make us wonder who among us has the ability to threaten us because of a doctrine that they think we might subscribe to. Don't make us wonder at every face, "Does this person have the capability, the capacity, to do what has been done?" Am I overreacting? Was your life threatened? How would you feel if it were? Think about it.

I am worried about our future. I am perplexed—why? I am mad. I am outraged. I am enraged. I am sickened. I am disgusted. I am becoming intolerant—lowering myself. I am honest. I am myself. I am intelligent. I am thinking. I am very sad. I am very mad. I am not alone. I am not a homosexual. I am not a fascist. I am a Democrat. I am a liberal. I am a humanist. I am a human. I am a man. I am very very mad.



Annemarie Statsick K'89

Oh those brave souls who defaced inanimate objects while no one was watching. What grade are you in now? And who in God's name gave you the right to judge and persecute others? You, who write such slanderous messages, are the ones I am afraid of. I shudder at the thought of you as future leaders. I pray for you so that someday you too will mature; so that you will be able to handle what is foreign to you without lashing out, but by finding answers. I really don't understand homosexuality either. But that does not give me, nor you, the right to judge them. If you want to express your opinion, try to do it in a constructive manner.

Lynn Staley K'86

I wish to express my feelings of horror and revulsion regarding the incident in Dewing this past weekend. The stupidity of the act is overwhelming and is worthy of nothing but complete censure. The sentiments expressed by the perpetrators reveal only their mental inferiority and societal ineptitude; their mode of expression was beneath contempt.

Nearly as repugnant as the act itself were certain responses to it. People that I had thought to be insightful, concerned individuals adopted the attitude of "nothing can be done now, so why bother to protest? Why bother with a petition?" It is this self-absorbed, irresponsible attitude which leads to more overt, perhaps violent expressions of intolerance. Silence in the face of outrage is no less disgraceful than the outrageous act itself. On this campus and elsewhere it must be made clear to everyone, loudly, confidently, powerfully clear, that intolerance must not and will not be tolerated.

If "they" choose to threaten individuals they must realize that they now threaten the entire campus community. If they had intended to use this as a rallying point for all their bigotry, they must understand they have failed almost laughably.

If the people who did this and similar acts wished to deny the rights of homosexuals, feminists, blacks, *Index* writers and editors, to study and live free from fear and prejudice, then their rights to these same things are forfeit. Once they are found (and they will be) they must be immediately expelled from the College. They are the very worst of what our society has to offer, and have no place at Kalamazoo College.

Luis Salazar K'89

To the authors of anti-liberal and anti-gay graffiti:

You are no doubt reading this paper and enjoying the commotion you have created with your pathetic display of ignorance, but I will not concern myself with senseless diatribes. You wrote that all liberals and gays should be killed; perhaps this means you consider yourself conservatives? Perhaps you would vote for Lyndon LeRouche, who espouses identical views to those you wrote on the walls of Dewing, and who is capable, unlike you, of attaching his name to his statements. LeRouche will not last in this country, because the very people he alienates with his intolerance are the people who might otherwise elect him. You will find that unless you confine your remarks to puerile jokes in locker rooms, you will find yourself surrounded by people who share the same views, who hate, and who are easily capable of hating you, and making you the target. And you realize this fear, otherwise you would be able to say publicly what you are now only capable of scratching on walls. If you were capable of expressing your views like an adult, you would know the fear of being different, of being a minority, and you would not inflict this on people who are your teachers, relatives, and who will be your co-workers, bosses, and interviewers. In fact, you might know this fear now: how many of your friends have been approached by petitioners who condemn this? How many people do you know that are disgusted? Perhaps you are a minority now, afraid to own up to your inane remarks? Maybe you should be aware of the fact that anyone can be on the receiving end of persecution, and you good Christians are kneeling before the image of God nailed on cross out of the same vicious shortsights. Learn at least to deal with your fears in such a manner that you do not hurt people coping and growing in the same world, and feeling the same fears as yourselves.

Barbara L. Brickman K'86

The recent incidents in Dewing, as well as the threatening notes and phone calls received by students and faculty, are so horrendous that I had a difficult time deciding whether dignifying them with a reply was really appropriate. However, because these incidents are an insult to the entire college community, not just the homosexual population, I feel compelled to respond.

I have always been proud to be a part of Kalamazoo College. I do not subscribe to all of the views expressed here at K (I don't believe that anyone does), but I never felt that I could not express myself freely here. Never having been a member of a continually-oppressed minority (such as the homosexual population), I cannot relate to the fear and hostility they must endure. However, any time the rights of a minority are threatened, the majority is threatened as well. For if we allow the homosexual population on campus to be harassed, what will we do the next time, when another group has threatened?

We must take action now, to put an end to such infuriatingly cruel and needless incidents. The same individual(s) may not be responsible for everything that has gone on recently, but as long as even one person feels that (s)he can get away with this, we will all pay the price. The cost will be extracted from the reputation of the College as a place of learning and enrichment. We will pay for the negative impression others have when they realize how little some here will tolerate. Most importantly, our gay and lesbian friends will live in fear and unhappiness. We will all suffer the loss of self-respect for not having done what we could to ensure that everyone at Kalamazoo College be treated equally, with dignity and respect. It is unfortunate that dignity and respect are so hard-won when ridicule and threats are so freely given.

No matter how each of us as individuals feels about various groups, we must act to demonstrate our intolerance for the kind of harassment we've seen recently. Otherwise, we all lose. The people responsible may never be caught, but they will have to live with the knowledge that they have done a lot of damage to people they don't even know. Where is the enjoyment in that?

As far as I'm concerned, anyone who isn't willing to tolerate (not necessarily accept, but at least peacefully coexist with) others who have different values or lifestyles doesn't belong here at Kalamazoo College. People of such low intelligence that they resort to writing obscene slogans on walls and making threatening phone calls are not the kind of people who deserve the benefits of this school. My advice is that they either learn to live with the differences of else they get the hell out of here before they degrade the rest of us by association.

Many people are already responding to the incidents, hoping that the harassment will not be repeated. It is my hope that those responsible will see that what may have been intended as no more than harmless pranks were actually vicious, bigoted, and cruel, and that they will feel some amount of remorse for the feelings of security which they have destroyed. In the meantime, the rest of us can all benefit from taking another look at ourselves and making sure that we don't, inadvertently, do damage also.

A terrible thing has happened in these incidents, yet some good may come out of it. Those responsible may realize that their behavior will not be tolerated, and the rest of us may become more sensitive to the feelings and rights of others. Rather than rehashing what has happened, let's try to pull something positive out of it. We'll all be better off.

Thomas Dolan Kardel K'89

I did not see the scribbles on the walls in Dewing. I was spared the pain of viewing them myself. I know what they said. I have heard their messages repeated over and over again in the past few days. Those very messages have echoed through my head repeatedly.

My first feelings were anger. Anger because the "authors of the evening" had succeeded, they had won the victory. That is, for the moment. In this, I am sure they rejoiced. I am positive they had not planned to cause such a huge upheaval, only to let off some insecurities that had been pent up inside themselves. Their cowardly, unsigned comments had, at least for the moment, shaken this college community. I saw friends frightened for their very lives. Friends who had never once locked their dorm room doors, who began to secure them, even when they were inside.

But as I said, they had only won for the moment. They had not counted on the anger of the collective student body, and anger which produced a petition, an unprecedented all-college meeting in Stetson and this very issue of the *Index*. My feelings changed. I began to pity those who had written on the walls. I pitied their ignorance. I pitied their insecurities. I pitied their own fears which manifested themselves on the walls of Dewing.

If I take their messages seriously, I take my life in my hands as I write this letter. So does everyone else who writes to the *Index* this week and in the future. So does everyone who carries a petition or speaks in chapel. At Kalamazoo College, whose basic principles lie in diversity and discovery, this intolerance cannot be tolerated.

My condolences to the victims of the scribbles in Dewing and to the "adults" who placed them there.

Julie Bargo K'88

I am not afraid to admit in print that I oppose the means by which a nameless and faceless group of students wish to voice their intolerance toward homosexuals—that I, too, will be labelled a "deviant" on some bathroom wall, as have been Anne Schwartz and Ike Pulver—because I am exposing myself to similar criticism. What I am afraid of is that this form of expression has attempted to profane both the natural sexual practices and moral integrity of three of my very close friends, not to mention both gay and straight members of the college community.

All three of these friends have examined and faced their own sexual orientation and I don't glorify them because they have done so—we all question our sexual identities at times—but I have seen their openness received with ridicule, stereotyping and degradation. They are confident enough in themselves to counteract and respond to verbal onslaughts but are basically defenseless when attacked by these nighttime artists. Those who may have been more damaged by this cruel barrage of homophobic sentiment are those who are not as comfortable with their own orientations and feel an even greater threat by this unwanted exposure. Yet my friends speak openly and with relative ease of their lifestyles and deserve the same type of honesty when attacks are waged against their identities.

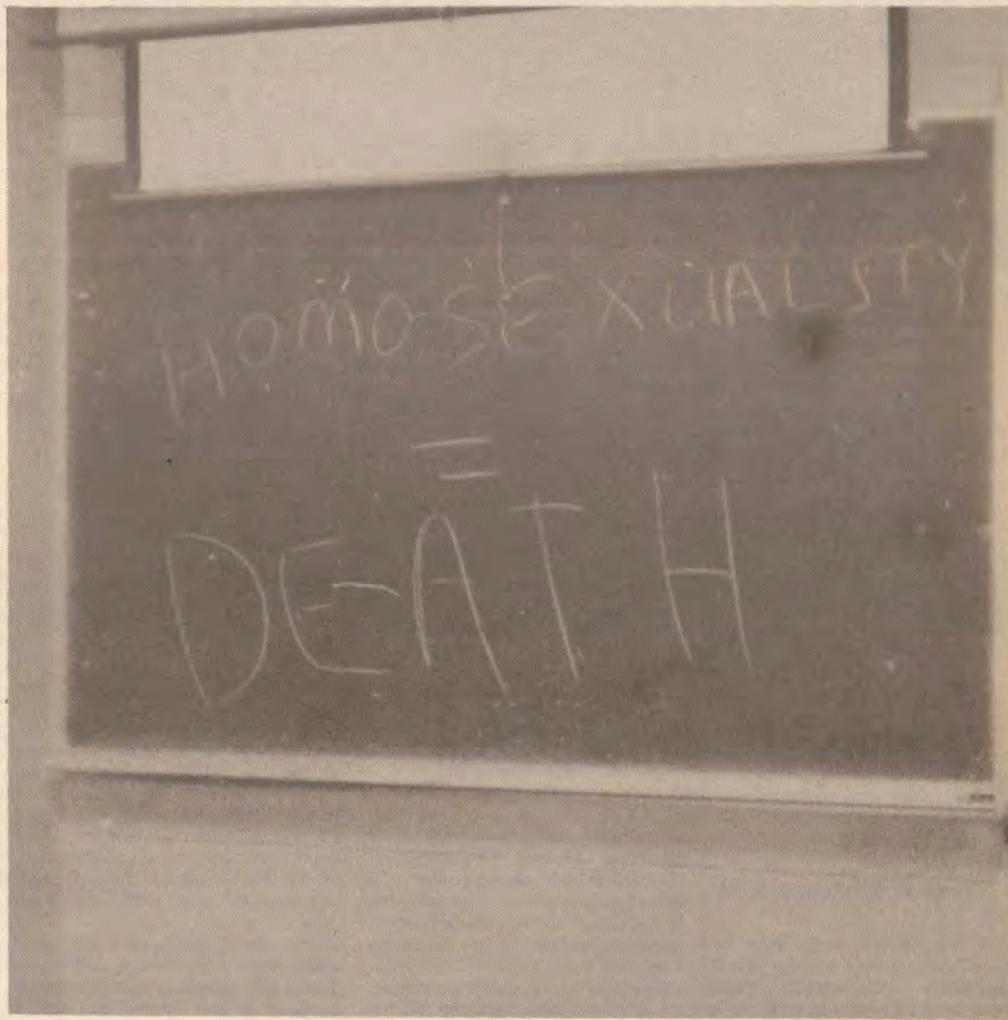
I value these friendships as anyone values a friendship, but especially because we have learned (sometimes painfully) not to judge one another's sexual activities and, although we may question and advise, we make no value judgments based on the gender of our partners. They have standard needs not unique to the gay population but which pertain to us all, showing me

that homosexuality is merely a variation on a heterosexual theme. I have been asked whether my gay male friends provide a neutral ground on which sexual issues are impertinent. Are friendships usually so well-planned and motivated by fear? I hesitate to think that we are all so manipulative as to categorize the "right" or "wrong" type of people with whom to associate based on their sexual partners. Yet I do have special relationships with my gay friends, not in that I revel in their "rebelliousness" because it attests to my own liberal beliefs, but because we have transgressed what are considered differences and focus upon what we share. Those who are truly different from myself, and assumedly the majority of the student population, are the deviants who do not face their own fear of the sexual "unknown" but deface not only classrooms but themselves with their thoughtless words.

If "No gays (are) allowed" (according to such thoughtless words), then exclude me, too, because I will be without three friends who mean more to me than any label can convince me otherwise. In fact, when this campus finds the homogeneity that some seek, it will be empty, or maybe just seem that way, as it will be filled with those who are too afraid to come out of the closet and prefer to lurk behind closed doors (and blackboards and bathroom stalls and in elevators)—with chalk in hand.

Kelly G. DuCap K'89

To the children who scribbled their ignorance on the walls of Dewing: I thought I left graffiti, cowardice, narrow-mindedness, and most of all ignorance back in high school. I guess not. GROW UP!



Jennifer Burton K'86

Although it should be obvious to anyone who has spent a quarter here that Kalamazoo College is not the haven of intellectual, artistic and personal freedom that we expect it to be, incidents like the recent graffiti in Dewing cannot fail to shock and upset the campus. While homophobia on campus is certainly a serious concern, even more serious is the issue of how people can feel that this is a valid way of expressing themselves.

Many students perceive, in the student body, a division which forms two groups. Some people might arbitrarily name these two groups "Conservatives" and "Liberals." However, we at Kalamazoo College could just as easily call them "the Blue Room Group" and the "Western Room Group," because, in the minds of these many students, each group has its own specific "doctrine" which is based on its own set of values, its own set of

assumptions, its own set of truths held to be self-evident. Supposedly, this ideology is wholly accepted by, is universally agreed upon by, and dictates the political beliefs, sexual orientation, artistic preferences, positions on social issues, frequency of showering and preferred room in SAGA of the members of the group.

The unwritten establishment of these ideologies leads to the making of all-encompassing generalizations, one activity not restricted to any particular room in SAGA. In the "Us" and "Them" situation that develops, many generalizations are about "Them," whether the "Them" are "those Western Room punks and hippies" or "those Blue Room jocks and yuppies." However, the more dangerous generalizations are those made about "Us." No one has the right to assume that I share his or her principles simply because we eat in the same room, listen to the same music or smoke the same brand of cigarettes. When people think like a group instead of like individuals, the members of the group

begin to believe that any action or any opinion expressed will be supported by the group as a whole. This belief permits these members to express their opinions in a manner that does not invite or even allow criticism or discussion. Certainly, in order to have expressed their opinions in such a way, the people responsible for the graffiti in Dewing must have felt that those opinions would be accepted and supported uncritically by some portions of the college community. By the same token, the apparently appalled student that I overheard Monday must have felt that his opinions would be accepted and supported uncritically by some other portion of the college community in order for him to have said indignantly, "Let's find out who did it and gang-rape them."

Incidents and reactions like these only serve to make everyone more deeply entrenched and self-righteous in the generalizations and group mentality, and reveal that the different groups have at least ignorance and intolerance in common.

Anne Okon admissions

As someone whose relationship with Kalamazoo College has spanned fourteen years—as a student, a “stop-out,” a student again, and now an alumna and an employee—I feel an enormous sense of disgust, bewilderment, and sadness over the events that have been occurring on our campus over the last few months, and which came to an ugly head this past weekend.

First, I am disgusted by what strikes me as a kind of terrorism—the obscene scrawl on the bulletin board, the cowardly threat delivered from an anonymous row of dorm windows, the caller in the middle of the night who offers no name, no face. I am bewildered at the incredible venom directed at members of our community who, after all, have harmed no one. Mostly, I am very, very sad—sad that there appears to be a group of individuals on our campus who are so angry, and so insecure about who they are and what they believe that they perceive anyone different from themselves as a threat. I regret too, that these students don't seem to have absorbed one of the most valuable lessons that K has to offer—that “different” does not necessarily imply “better” or “worse.” “Different” is merely that—different.

While it is important that the college community condemn the actions that have taken place over the last few months, I don't feel that this is nearly enough. First, we need to let the students and faculty who've been the victims of these attacks know that we're behind them. Some of us may not agree with their opinions or beliefs, or feel comfortable with their sexual

preferences, but I think that all of us can support their right to express those opinions openly, or to be who they are without fear of physical or verbal assault. Secondly, I think we need to do what Marilyn La Plante suggests in her memo of June 2 to the college community, “. . . we cannot tolerate this cowardly way of confronting fears or differences. Each of us has a responsibility to confront bigoted and slanderous behavior, with friends, in classes and with colleagues.” To challenge prejudice—our own, as well as others'—is the first, and most necessary, step toward eliminating it. The knowledge that one's bigoted remarks and actions are unacceptable to those one likes and respects inspires strong incentive to change.

These steps are necessary not just because they are “the right thing to do,” or for the sake of the members of our community who have been the most recent victims of prejudice, but for ourselves. Bigotry is remarkably non-discriminating. Hatred toward one group spills over into hatred of many. Soon, all who are “different” are included as targets. And each of us is different. Perhaps we're women in a society in which men dictate the rules of the corporate and social games we must play. Maybe we're political conservatives in a community which prides itself on a strong liberal tradition (liberals can be bigots, too). Perhaps we play baseball for a college whose students are—by and large—indifferent to athletics. At some point, we all find ourselves swimming against the tide that is the norm. To defend the right of all people to be who they are, unmolested, is in the self-interest of every one of us.

Jim Bunzli K'86

Just as human beings we have a great deal in common. And as students of the same small college we are amazingly alike. We differ in small ways of course, and it is these differences that make us a diverse and interesting community. And we are a community—a community with similar goals. Why, then, should the minor differences between us split our community apart? Why must our individuality, minor in the face of our great affinity, but precious in its little way, fill our atmosphere with hostility? And why—*how*—have we allowed that hostility to reach a point where it can be expressed in the violent, destructive ways that it was expressed in Dewing Hall?

Emilie Richmond K'89

Unsigned graffiti written on walls and sidewalks attacking individuals and groups for differing views is both cowardly and childish. I am embarrassed for those who found it necessary to launch these types of attacks; I am embarrassed to be a part of a community which shows such destructive intolerance. I truly hope that I don't know the responsible persons, although I'm sure that these unfortunate souls need our help and understanding so that they can learn to face their fear in a constructive manner. I am able to hold nothing but anger and contempt towards them. I apologize to the members of our college community who were hurt by this harassment in the name of those of us who value diversity and open-mindedness at Kalamazoo College.

Margaret Wood K'87

Sure, at the ripe old ages of 19 and 20 we all understand the complexities of human sexuality. I mean, we're all experienced and our identities are solidly formed, right? And so we've made the decision about what is right and obviously the decision is the correct decision for every individual, right? So why not let those “deviants,” those . . . (oh, I can't even say it!), those “homosexuals” (ah! yuch! I hate that word!), why not let them know that they're all total screw-ups? I mean, we all know what's really right, don't we?

Fredrick R. Strobel economics department

Last Sunday around noon I entered Dewing Hall and headed to my office to plunge into reading term papers. Proceeding from the elevator, to my office on the third floor I noticed a number of defamatory writings on several classroom and faculty doors. Parking my briefcase, I then went and looked further and discovered these writings to be almost universally placed on any kind of dark writing surface including blackboards, doors, and stalls in the men's rooms. The second floor of Dewing was equally covered with such garbage. I called President Breneman's home about the time several concerned students were paying him a visit and the Brenemans immediately came over to inspect the scene.

Let me briefly share with you, my impressions of that moment. First, not in my eleven years at Kalamazoo College have I seen anything that vitriolic or violent. Nor did I see anything like it during the late sixties where, at Holy Cross, I taught, and that campus was shut down twice in one year, the institution shaken to the brink of closing permanently by student disruption. These writings escalated from the “go home, gays” variety, to the threat of “death to homosexuality,” and then finally, and disgustingly, to the threat of death to two named members of this community.

We all know, and we should remind the perpetrators of this act, that to threaten physical harm to another individual is a criminal act. But there is another serious element here, besides that of criminality which strikes at the heart of this institution. If there is one major lesson that has been learned in the United States in the twentieth century, which ought to be reflected in its educational institutions, it is the tolerance of many different races, religions and lifestyles which exist in this country today. This is a country of freedom, particularly a freedom of private action, as long as that action is not harmful to others. It is not, however, an unlimited freedom. My freedom to act ends where it interrupts your freedoms. And no one has the freedom of speech to threaten physical harm to another individual.

I view this type of sick behavior in the same league as someone who has broken the honor code, in the same league as someone who has cheated on an exam. College policy dictates that initially steps will be taken to punish known cheaters, and if the occurrence happens again, to expel them. We don't want people here who are dishonorable, or have broken the honor code. When members of this community act like fascists, they too have broken our honor code.

As a liberal arts institution, we have a right to say to them: “we don't want you here. You do not belong.”

This institution contains a privileged and special cross section of American youth. The student is rewarded with a fine education for hard work, as the world will reward the graduate for possessing that education. To whom so much has been given, much is expected in return. We as a college community expect honorable behavior from all our citizens. Let us continue to demand it.

Nicole L. Wolf K'86

I address the following to those too narrow-minded to accept the unfamiliar, too afraid to face their own fears, and too stupid to understand and read important but perhaps lengthy passages. It will not appear on any blackboards, walls or doors:
GROW UP OR GO HOME!

Michelle Goodwin K'86

While I will always harbor some sadness over the graffiti activity in Dewing, this sadness is comforted by overwhelming supportive campus action. On Monday alone, campus concern led to over 500 signatures on a petition circulated by students who felt the need to speak out. I am heartened by those who felt it necessary to voice their opinion and signed the petition. In one sense, I am also pleased with those who deliberately and honestly chose not to sign it. By not signing, you too are showing your voice in a fairly constructive fashion.

Due to certain circumstances—such as lack of space and inconsistent petitioning methods—the petition could not be printed in the *Index*. As an alternative to this, copies of the petition are posted downstairs by the games room in Hicks, in Mandelle, in Upjohn Library, and in Dewing Hall. Copies have also been sent to President Breneman and Dean La Plante as a show of campus support against the destructive display of opinion.

At one point this week I remember saying, “What a way to remember my last few days here.” But in light of tremendous campus support against this type of behavior, my feelings are slowly changing.

I leave feeling some hope that this will never happen again, and that it will not soon be forgotten. I leave hoping that further steps will be taken to understand our differences. There is no better time than now.

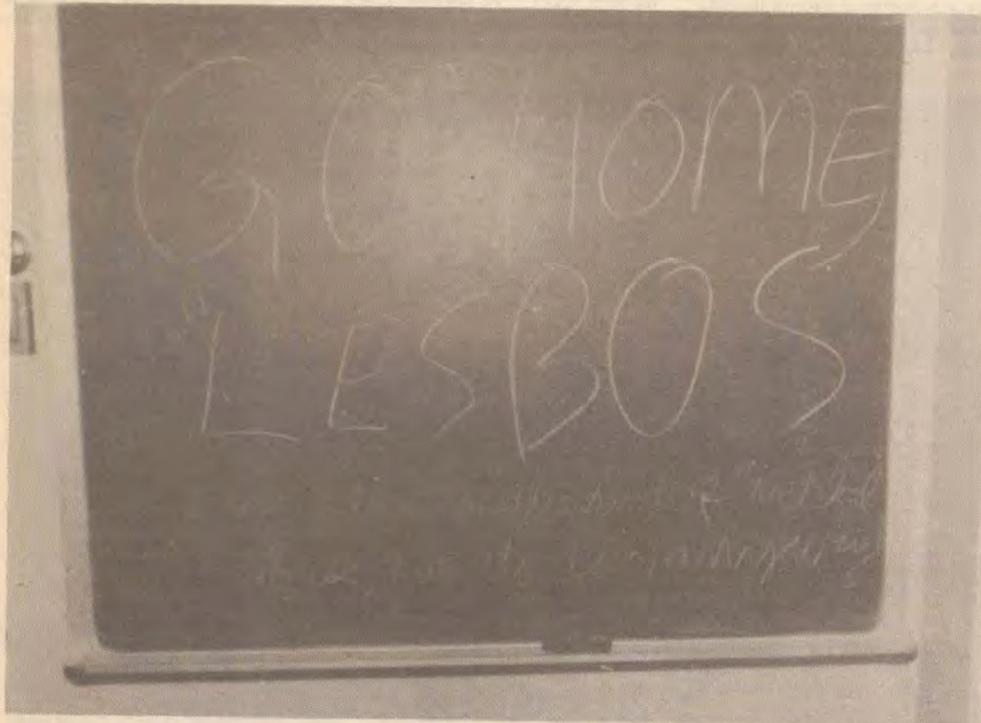
Cordula Draeger

I first heard of the weekend's incidents on the telephone on Sunday: Terrorism at K College. I could hardly believe it. Terrorism among young people just emerged from adolescence. How could this have happened? I must admit, that after some thought, I am actually not so surprised.

In truth, I can only say that this incident confirms the observation which I, as a foreigner, have made already for half a year: many students have never learned to fairly and critically analyze their environment; it occurs to me in my classes that the material is absorbed rather than discussed; a so-called friend removed himself from a discussion with me of a very personal affair by saying, “Let's stop arguing about it, we won't come to an agreement, anyway,” now this extremely embarrassing incident.

Behind this device of avoiding problems I see several reasons. First of all, it is unbelievably easy, because one can excuse oneself from facing the discussion of a problem. This, in my eyes, is a form of cowardice. Second, and this I find even worse, I feel that this reaction stems from ignorance, and that these people have never learned to critically approach a problem and defend their standpoint in an open argument. It is on this point that the faculty and administration of this college must take the initiative to remedy, and to compensate for this facet of the students' education which has been overlooked: namely, to teach them to address a problem or a “deviation” open-mindedly and, after the consideration of all pros and cons, to find a stable point-of-view which can hold its ground in a discussion. Only then, hopefully, will this extremely questionable means of communication which we have just experienced become unnecessary.

In addition, I think one must free oneself from the fear that arguing weakens and threatens the harmony within the community. The opposite holds true; I consider it to be extremely necessary in a large community such as K College to exchange contrary opinions. I see it as a sign of maturity and balance to acknowledge other points of view. The stupid and dangerous form of communication we saw this weekend reminds me of fascism, and the thought that these students will hold socially responsible positions in the future frightens me.



Tricia Wagner K'89

I wish I could understand why. I only hope that this will never happen again.
Hoping . . .

James K. Lindquist K'89

In the past few weeks there have been many intents to ruin the fine reputation of this school's “liberal” view on the students as an individual and not as a whole. There seems to be an increased animosity towards certain individuals and their personal choices in what or whom they want to be . . . this referring to the recent attacks on homosexuals and cheerleaders. Being someone who has friends in both fields I would like to lay to rest the childish beliefs that you can catch some strange, incurable disease in relating to either of these people.

In the most recent attacks, Dewing was subjected to the acute retardedness of persons not informed, or choosing ignorance, that just because someone is different than you doesn't mean that they can't feel like anyone else. Being called “faggot” or “dumb blonde” is just as revolting and upsetting as calling someone “dumb jock” or making a crack about someone's race or religion.

In writing this letter I would also like those who put people down for being what they want to be to think of the things which make them the person they are, and to think about what it would be like to be put down for those beliefs and values.

Thom Myers Public Relations

I deplore the name-calling, divisiveness, and lack of respect for others that is increasingly apparent on the campus of Kalamazoo College, and I'm talking about both what appeared on the walls of Dewing Hall and on the pages of the *Index*. There can be no doubt that the type of graffiti found in Dewing on June 1 must be condemned, but let's also condemn the inflammatory articles in the *Index*.

Granted, the *Index* as a vehicle for demeaning your fellow student is not nearly as hard on the custodial staff as writing on the walls, and no one has said “Death to cheerleaders and conservatives” in the pages of the *Index*, but I hope that what's being criticized is more than just the tactics employed or the medium of the message. Let me take just a moment to quote the opening four sentences from the now much-discussed letter “Cheerleading: boo, hiss,” which appeared in the May 23 *Index*.

“Let's play word association. ‘Cheerleader.’ What do you say? Well, according to an informal survey I recently conducted, typical responses include ‘unintelligent, degrading to women, and ridiculous.’ I feel confident in saying this represents a good portion of the people on campus.”

Now one might argue that these and other statements in the letter are hardly very sympathetic to the feelings of the women on campus who have chosen to be cheerleaders, but—no matter—anyone who was so

“unintelligent” to be a cheerleader is probably too damn dumb to know she's being publicly insulted in the school newspaper anyway. Right? Besides, I'm not really that upset about the original article. It is, after all, only the opinion of one person, despite the wholly unsubstantiated claims that it represents the views of the silent majority.

I'm upset because a week later, the editor of the *Index* chose to legitimize the letter on cheerleading and, indeed, elevate it to near-Pulitzer Prize winning status. Mind you, the editor never said pointblank “this is great journalism,” he just said, “The ability to relate seemingly insignificant problems . . . to far greater cultural deficiencies is a complex and sophisticated one.”

There is an obvious difference between writing “faggots go home,” and clearly implying that those who want to be cheerleaders are not welcome on this campus: the latter requires “complexity and sophistication.”

Surely, I'm not trying to equate the *Index* articles with what happened in Dewing. Well, yes I am. I detest the continuing attacks on gays, and I'm equally angered with the ongoing assault on cheerleaders.

Yes, there are differences between threatening someone's life, and burning a cross in someone's yard, and painting swastikas on someone's synagogue, and more subtly discriminating against a person, and it is all done with regard for the rights and feelings of others, and all of it is wrong. So, condemn what happened in Dewing. I do. But don't stop there.

Valerie Thompson K'87

Monday morning, when I walked into my 8 o'clock class, someone was making an announcement about the incident in Dewing this past weekend. I could tell from the look on people's faces that something was terribly wrong. I knew very little about what had happened, so after class I decided to return to Dewing to see for myself just what had been written. As I approached, a Physical Plant worker was washing down the last of the graffiti on the outside pillars. But I saw enough, enough to be angry and disgusted.

That same day I was shown the petition that was circulated which listed a few samples of what had been written inside of Dewing Saturday night, and I was told about the phone call made to DeWaters residents that same night. As hard as I tried, I was unable to concentrate on my books that afternoon... I was shocked! And I still find my thoughts drifting to what has happened on this campus lately.

I never dreamed that prejudice could get so out of hand here on this campus, which likes to take pride in its striving for a diverse community and tries to promote appreciation of different views, ideas, customs, and ways of life among its students.

Sure, prejudice has shown its face here before (maybe more often than we give just attention). It's everywhere and K College does not escape the "real world" in this respect. I have seen the hurt of discrimination here among friends who are black, friends who are Jewish, friends who are homosexuals, and friends who are women. I, too, have felt it at times, as I would assume those who have been on the Foreign Study program or traveled abroad have experienced it, and any individual for that matter. But for those of you who may think that this is beyond any of your experiences, let me tell you it HURTS!

Normally the prejudice I see and hear about causes anger, disgust, sadness, and frustration in me but never has it caused such fear. As I read the death threats to both individuals and groups on this campus, they evoked images of the fear and hatred which led to the atrocities during fascist Nazi Germany and the Salem witch trials. I can't help but wonder now, as I walk around this campus, "who is capable of such things?", and I will never understand how people who apparently hate so much and so many who could write "KILL" and adorn it with peace signs! Furthermore, I feel sorry and shameful that this college has yet to teach these individuals how to express their view in an appropriate manner.

I am ashamed to know that I belong to a community in which there are members who hold no respect for the views, ideas, lifestyles and feelings (of others). There is no excuse for the malicious conduct that took place in Dewing last Saturday, and I wish to extend my sympathy to those who were attacked and will return for another quarter here knowing that the individuals have not been caught and may cause further problems, and especially to those about to graduate, who will carry this horrible memory with them as on of their last memories of K.

Robert D. Dewey Dean of Chapel

Note: the following is Dean Dewey's statement delivered in the chapel convocation held Wednesday, June 4.

During the rise of Hitler in the 1930s, Martin Niemöller, a German Lutheran pastor, tells about the day they came for the Jews.

"I did not speak," he said. "Then they came for the Catholics. I did not speak. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak."

We have spoken today because we are one body. When one part suffers, all parts suffer together.

Whether the attack is on homosexuals, blacks, Jews, women, athletes, or economists, it is an attack on every one of us. Each member is a part of the body, contributing either himself to its growth or to its sickness and its deterioration. The word for what was done to all of us last Saturday night, and the Saturday before, an attack covered by darkness and anonymity, is shameful. The word for what is required of all of us now is awareness. The good that can come from this sad experience is sensitivity to others, whether individuals or groups. The word to express our hope following this kind of cruel and cowardly behavior, which has come from within the body and from which, therefore, we cannot separate ourselves, that word is renewal.

David Small artist in residence

Please add my name to the list of faculty and associated people disgusted with the actions of those responsible for the anti-gay graffiti in Dewing Hall, threatening late-night phone calls to students, etc.. All of this would be shameful anywhere, but at K College it is execrable.

Joni Overton K'87

"I don't think I can support this—anyway, my signing this petition isn't going to help."

"This petition isn't going to do anything—no, why should I bother?"

I look around the table for other responses to the petition I am carrying around—I see two faces turned down—I wonder if it is because they have no opinion, nothing to say on the matter, or perhaps peer pressure. Maybe they don't care, but peer pressure? Oh, we don't deal in this here, do we? We're such individuals...

A fellow petition carrier, about ten minutes after I have confronted this table, confronts it again to see what response she will get. She is told that they've already signed it, but interestingly enough, their signatures are nowhere to be found. We wouldn't want to call that a lack of guts, would we?

Perhaps this petition wasn't your idea of how to handle the whole situation. Perhaps you thought it would do no good, but its purpose wasn't to solve any problem. Its purpose was to get people to think, to take a stand individually, and to talk this situation up. Perhaps you may think this issue has been talked about too much—overdone. But perhaps you fail to take yourselves and others seriously enough. It's about time, time past due, that this campus got stirred up about something. If *this* isn't worth it, neither are our lives, nor is anything that happens to us in this world. Perhaps the question should be:

What is we let this go too?

What if we didn't do anything?

What does it take to get us to take a stand for ourselves and for others?

Betty Mouth

What was done last week in Dewing is a cowardly deed of sheer wickedness. This anonymous manifestation of open violence is the strength of a weak and sick mind.

Marta Kaemmer K'88

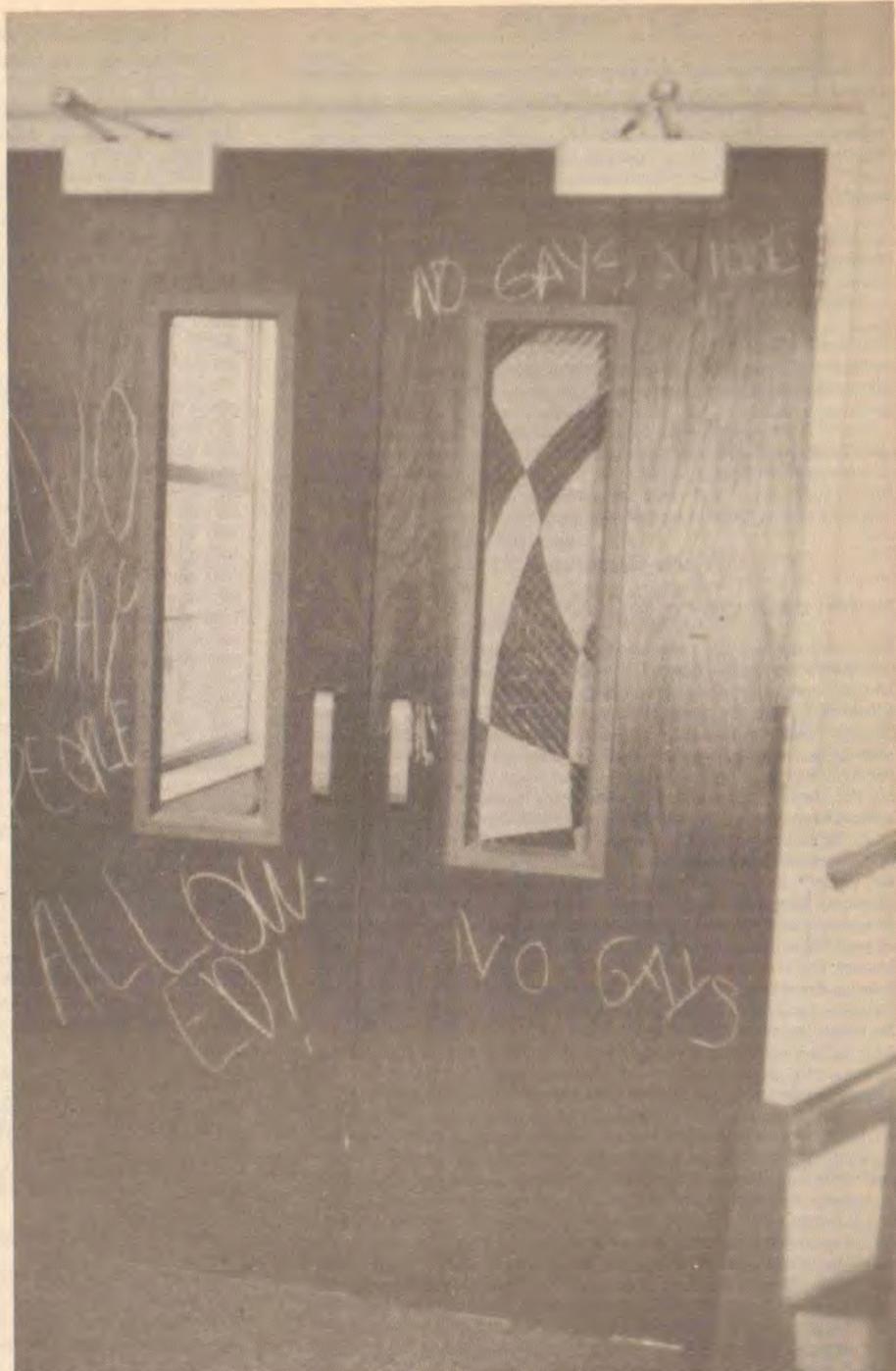
Fear of people who are strong enough to articulate their opinions, knowing that these opinions don't merge with that status quo. I don't know. Who am I to analyze someone else's thought patterns? Maybe I will never understand how people can be so callous and cruel and unfeeling towards other members of the human race.

And maybe some people don't understand how I can consider gays, blacks, Jews, and other minorities all members of one human race.

This is my opinion. I'm not trying to force my opinion on others, just as I don't expect others to force theirs on me. I'm offering my opinion in hopes that it may stimulate constructive thought from others with differing views. People can't be forced to change. Fear can force people to act in certain ways, but it contributes nothing to resolving differences.

I wasn't going to write anything to the *Index*. Why should anything from another bleeding heart liberal on a soapbox make a difference to persons who have demonstrated their firmly rooted prejudices with such finesse and verbal skill?

Probably it won't. Has this episode turned into a war of carefully articulated opinions versus blind inarticulated hatred so soon? Ignorance is bliss. Not in this case. Ignorance is fear. Fear of something one can't file away under social norms after years of cultural conditioning as to "this is right" and "that is wrong." Fear of acknowledging that not everyone thinks in the same way. If one acknowledges differences, perhaps one will have to acknowledge that one can't flow through life in his or her own protected shell. Other people have views that someday might start a crack in that shell. Being forced to bring oneself outside of the comfort of this shell is not always anticipated with pleasure. Fear. Fear of people who are strong enough to leave their shells behind and be happy with what they are of themselves.



Larry Bauer K'86

Wednesday's chapel convocation left me quite disquieted. My emotions are peaking. I hadn't known the content of such graffiti. It shocked me that violence was threatened. I hadn't known that individuals took it personally. I'd learned how not to, and forgotten that others would take such ignorance as an insult. But few people are writing such things as "Tennis-playing-white-heterosexual-males-of-a-good-family should die." Then maybe I'd be scared too.

Shocking was much of this. Angering, too, that graffitiists expressed themselves in such a way that I have to pay for the clean-up (Physical Plant washed walls Monday). It's bad news, though, that they felt free to deface school property.

But why? No one asked why they did it. Rather, we labelled *them*. In spite of all, we made it us and them, even though they are a part of us. They may always be. How are we going to deal with it? We must accept them or bear the effects (long and short) of their existing here knowing that most of the campus ostracizes and/or hates them (petitions signed by 500-plus students).

This us-them problem runs deeply as any in this school, in this world. "They" aren't cancer; they are the body. Can they stay? Would it help to learn tolerance from us? Dare we teach them? Tit for tat teaches little.

I like that the chapel convocation and letters vented anger. That's a positive. Yet what have we left for ourselves as follow-up? The chapel speakers led me to believe these graffitiists would be expelled. But when you flush shit down the toilet, it just stinks somewhere else.

By showing merely anger we may have sealed the lid on this scenario. "They" are in "hate" prison. There they will stay until we stop hating them. No one gains in the meantime.

One follow-up suggestion is more administration-supported action to educate all the incoming frosh at K'XX. Another is more accessible people to talk to about such angers. At the moment, who would one approach to get help in dealing with this anger towards gays if, for example, one felt uncomfortable with our counseling staff of one?

How many gays on campus would lend a hand? Make yourselves known right now if you would. I, for one, would love to sit with "them" and listen. I might learn something.

Sure people bring problems here and these are aggravated by pressure and lack of familiarity and the like. But sometimes school hands us problems unwittingly. And I've learned it takes two to tango with most problems. Will we individually and collectively make any *positive* moves, or do we stop here?

Loren Andrulis K'86

The people that committed the acts in Dewing on Saturday night ought to realize and be grateful that they are protected by the same right which they seem to be denying other people; that is, existence. It strikes me that their behavior is offensive as most other offensive behavior from society's viewpoint, and that it shouldn't be tolerated.

Stacey LaBahn K'87

Why?

Andrea Rundell K'89

There are a few of us who, in conversation, have come to the conclusion that direct action against the people committing these incidents of vandalism and verbal abuse may well be more destructive than constructive. The maturity, stability, and mentality levels broadly displayed by these people seem to be such that a "we know who you are so don't do it again" type of lecture will have little effect. Indeed, we feel that it would be fuel to their fire, in the way that children enjoy antagonizing each other.

However, neither do we feel that simply ignoring their immature behaviour will put a stop to such actions. A quandary, indeed. I'm sorry to say that I'm afraid this bigotry may be hard, if impossible, to overcome, as all narrow minds are.

Meanwhile, I am behind freedom of the press and would be thrilled to find a letter stating the actual view of one of these persons.

I wholeheartedly and volubly support the abused people and their organizations.

A. T. Conrad K'88

The following is my solicited response to the vandalism that occurred in Dewing Hall the morning of June 1, 1986.

"Why, then, do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, and pay no attention to the log in your eye? How dare you say to your brother, 'Please, let me take that speck out of your eye,' when you have a log in your own eye? You hypocrite! Take the log out of your own eye first, and then you will be able to see and take the speck out of your brother's eye."

Matthew 7: 3-5

"As they stood there asking him questions, he straightened up and said to them, 'Whichever one of you has committed no sin may throw the first stone.'

"When they heard this they all left, one by one, the older ones first."

John 8: 7, 9

"Do not judge others, so that God will not judge you—because God will judge you the same way you judge others, and he will apply to you the same rules you apply to others."

Matthew 7: 1-2

I regret that even on this "enlightened" campus one must fight for the individuality that makes him special. Rising above the controversial subject in question, I must say that although I may not be party to the lifestyles of others, I will defend to the end the right of their being led.

Who of us are really in a position to judge?

Chris Corcoran K'87

I decided to gel my response into a prose poem.

It is 3:14 in the morning. I feel threatened by the silence in the Red Lounge with the T.V.'s diagonal lines. I have a choice between diagonals, static, or Wagner and community news. But, always the wincing fluorescent lights—no choice. I'm getting a migraine like the fluorescent tube in the hallway. I never understood how Sylvia Plath fit hissing potatoes, fluorescent lights, and Lesbos into her consciousness. I'm alone as usual although there's someone around. I think I heard his or her knees crack, but I'm alone. "His or her" is so distracting. I can't use "his" or "her" without complicated implications. I want to give them a new context, but I can't. Words are so damned autonomous. I try to be independent. This building is so large, and I'm alone which makes me stupid, but nothing will happen anyway because I figure somehow if I imagine all the gruesome things that could happen, I'll be safe. I'm getting one of those flickering headaches that starts in the periphery and, when it arrives, takes up your entire consciousness. I'm so afraid of what's coming; I can't think anyway, and I still don't understand the title from the poem *Lesbos*. What I mean to say is I don't like it. I don't like the sound of the word. I never did. My sister doesn't like it either, but she likes the word faggot and says it all the time. She knows the sound is quick and makes people uncomfortable. As a child, I remember wishing to be a man. I had dreams of running in boxer shorts, topless, and having no one notice. I wanted to be John Adams. My father suggested I was the reincarnation of Abigail Adams. I didn't want to be Abigail. Abigail isn't in the dictionary. John is. I wanted to be a man. Was it impossible to think I was a man in a former life? And anyway, much to my dismay, I'm the reincarnation of Alexander Hamilton. "Ah, violence will get you nowhere," I thought. Aaron Burr didn't think; he just shot me, but he only outlived me by a year—poetic justice, I guess. But, if I were John Adams. . . Still young, I realized I didn't want to be a man. I wanted to be a person because, after all, the people in history were men. Oh, I don't want to be a person or a man. I want to be John Adams with all his idiosyncrasies and inconsistencies—I want to call the president a king. But I never want to make my bed. Sylvia Plath made her bed every morning, but she probably didn't want to be John Adams; she was never a pink triangle wanting to be a gold star. I bet she listened to Wagner, though, and read Nietzsche and walked home alone at night and nothing ever happened. Nietzsche was born in December, I think, and so was I. He loved Wagner. He tried to understand Wagner's love of state. After all, he loved Deutschland. "What happened? I am so alone, Richard. I loved you and your sounds for so long. Did I miss you all along? Were you never here? The notes feel like nothing to me. A nothingness. I'm too tired to write and give my abstractions reality. Richard, I thought our cluttered abstractions meant something in words, in music, in object reality. What is the name Deutschland?" I want to go to Dewing, hang hundreds of pink triangles and gold stars.

Mila Visser 't Hooft K'89

Last Sunday morning at quarter of ten, I walked around second and third floor Dewing and was disgusted. I felt personally attacked, although my name was not used in the graffiti. For me, the most hurting phrases were the ones saying "No Gays Allowed" and "No Gays." Immediately, flashes of signs saying "Für Juden Verboten" (prohibited to Jews) came to my mind. I grew up in the Netherlands, which has suffered a lot under the Nazis. Throughout my life I have been exposed to the impact fascism had on Europeans. I would like to describe point for point exactly what was fascist about the act in Dewing.

First, *the focus against a minority*. In Nazi-Europe the most prominent group of victims was the Jews. Last Sunday it was homosexuals, but it could have been any minority group: chicanos, Italians, blonds or jocks.

Second, *irrationality*. In Nazi-Europe Jews were accused of anything that went wrong in society and they were looked at as communist radicals as well as capitalist exploiters. Last Sunday the Women's Interest Group, liberals and criticism against cheerleading were verbally assaulted along with the Gay/Lesbian Support Group and homosexuality in general, thus combining and confusing all topics that are different or threatening.

Third, *glorification of power*. The Nazis' commitment to power is clear. The graffiti in Dewing was extremely threatening by its extensiveness and contents. Slogans like "Death to all Gays" written in two foot high letters and personal threats certainly are a manifestation of violence and of an urge for power.

Fourth, *anti-feeling*. The National-Socialist movement in Germany was based on negativity. First negativity was directed against Jews, gypsies, communists and homosexuals, then against the enemies in the war. In Dewing, there were no signs whatsoever that those who wrote the graffiti had been thinking about a positive approach to solving something that is obviously a problem to them.

Fifth, *anonymity*. The Nazis used a system of divided responsibility, so no one face could be associated with the atrocities committed. We have no idea of who wrote the graffiti. It was done in the middle of the night, in secrecy and no names were signed.

Sixth is the point of *triggering responses of people who wouldn't speak out without encouragement*. People joined the National-Socialist movement because others did, not particularly because Nazi politics were important to them. In Dewing 300 someone had written under one of the phrases: "I don't believe in this kind of 'verbal' abuse, but it's fun anyway."

Fascism in Germany started slowly, with things too little to make a fuss about (including graffiti). Step by step, fascism grew into a monstrous movement. The graffiti in Dewing doesn't stand alone as an incident on this campus; it is merely the latest incident. The main difference between fascism and that what happened last Sunday is that fascism implies dictatorship of a mindless crowd over a smaller group, and what happened in Dewing was the loud voice of what I believe to be a minority terrorizing a much greater community. I am angry and sad when I think that last Sunday morning tendencies that erupted into much worse only 45 years ago.

Why can't we learn from history?

Marigene Arnold sociology department

I was both saddened and angered at the recent attack on homosexuals, feminists, liberals, writers of "unpopular" *Index* articles, and like souls. A letter sent by a group of concerned students also alleged similar attacks on members of Chaverim and the Black Student Organization. I take time to list those who were specifically named in the attacks in order to draw attention to the range of people who would, no doubt, fit one category or another.

Kalamazoo College is a place that is proud to proclaim its diversity; diversity, however, is not the same thing as factionalism. As I pondered this I started to think about the way we label ourselves and others: as male or female, as heterosexual or homosexual, as liberal or conservative. The labels are not, in and of themselves, bad, but become so when they become stereotyped. "Jock" hardly has the negative association it once had and is merely a label attached to those who play sports; a "pre-med" hopes to go to medical school; a "blue roomer" eats dinner in a particular place in SAGA; and a "theatre major," surprisingly, majors in theatre. But consider the stereotypical associations that accompany these terms. "Jock" is associated with "dumb," as in "dumb jock." "Pre-meds" are "grinds." "Blue roomers" are "fluffy females" and "preppy males." "Theatre majors" are "weird" and either, depending on one's sources, "gay" or "promiscuous" or both. Unfortunately when we meet a pre-med who's fun and interesting and bright and cooperative, we don't say, "I was wrong about pre-meds." We say, instead, "this pre-med is different from the rest," thus preserving the stereotype while not passing up the friendship. Most of the time, though, we don't even get that far because we "write off" whole categories of people before we even give them a chance. Diversity at this college will make no difference if we do not take advantage of this diversity.

The fact is, if all of us who belong to some minority group that is stereotyped were together, the entire student body, faculty, and staff of Kalamazoo College would be present.

Kit Almy K'89

As I look back on my first year in college, I am happy to say that I have grown immeasurably in ways I would never have expected over the past three quarters. My life up through high school was very sheltered in many ways. I was never directly exposed to homosexuality nor to such hate and terrorism as appeared on campus this weekend. I didn't know any blacks or Jews either. Since coming to K, I have met many people who are different from me, and I have grown from knowing them. These people have brought me many new perspectives on life, yet as friends, they are fundamentally no different from anyone else.

I realize that different lifestyles like homosexuality can cause people worry and doubt. I admit that I have felt some confusion about the subject, but I would never let my personal confusion affect the way I react toward others. I would hate to think of letting any form of prejudice determine who my friends are. If I did, I would lose some of the nicest friends I have.

We are each a member of some minority; this includes the individuals who wrote the graffiti in Dewing. I hope it becomes obvious that they are a minority on this campus. They certainly have a right to their own opinions, but they do not have the right to slander other people who express their opinions in a more civilized form, nor to condemn people who have different lifestyles so violently. They must also realize that as a minority, they are vulnerable to the same kind of treatment they give to others.

I wonder what sort of people would write such hate-filled messages in the middle of the night. In commenting on Sunday's incident, someone told me that K was just "a \$10,000 a year playground." I only hope he is right. I hope that the terrorists are only childish individuals who do not realize what they are doing. But I fear that they are reasonably mature adults who are fully aware of what they are doing and the reaction that they will get. If they are children perhaps they will learn from their mistakes and grow up. If not, we must all be concerned, for then they are the same sort of terrorists who put bombs on airplanes or poison Tylonol.

James C. Duchamp K'87 John Schreiner K'87

Ahem...a poem:

*There once was a closed-minded twit
With whom different folks didn't fit.
Went into Dewing
And ended up spewing
An ungodly assortment of shit.*

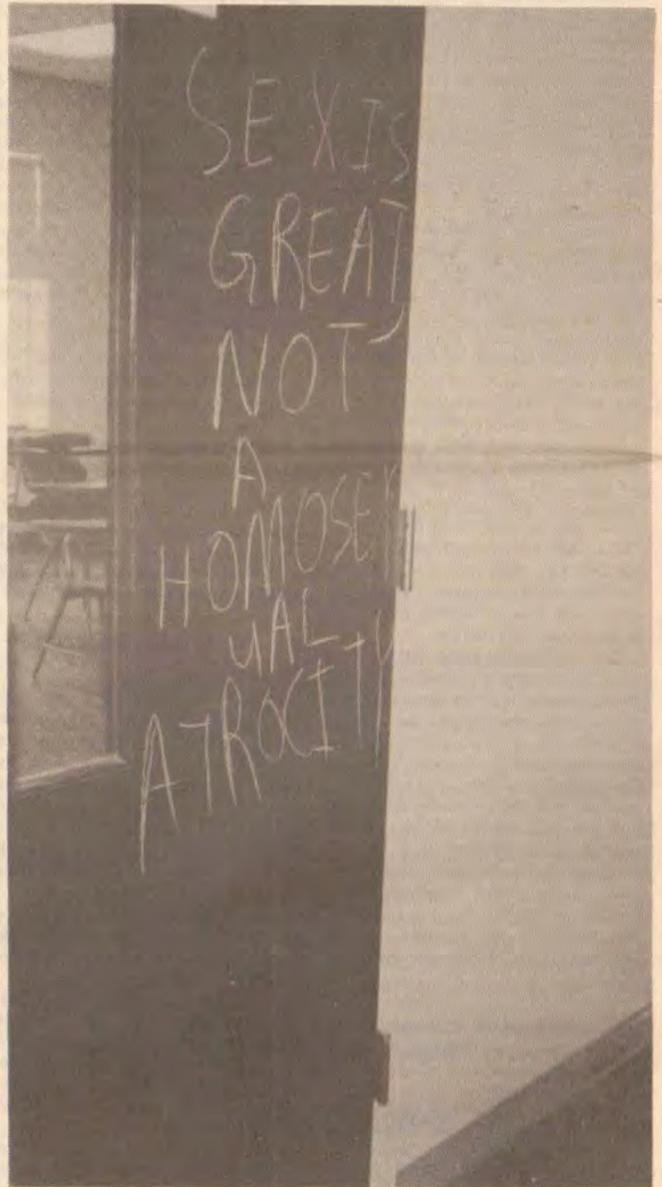
Meredith Robertson K'88

We at Kalamazoo College are a community. A community is an interacting population of various kinds of individuals. We are members of a college that is highly competitive—we have been selected because we are the most intelligent, well-rounded, mature, capable, and responsible individuals from our peer group. Students who display behavior and attitudes of intolerance for divergent views, narrow-mindedness, and prejudice should not be allowed to remain in our community. Students who are incapable of maturely communicating their own views and respecting others' should not be tolerated at Kalamazoo College.

Gail Kidder K'86 Dan Talayco K'86

The incident in Dewing last weekend is an important issue in itself. We feel, however, that it points to a larger fractionalism on this campus, divisions that seem to be growing out of intolerance. This intolerance appears to be one of the major motivators for forms of expression like the abusive slander seen in Dewing. This is destructive not only to individuals, but to the community as a whole. It deserves an outspoken response. Paradoxical though it is, the only thing tolerance will not tolerate is intolerance.

Expression of opinions is the basis of communication, but it is futile without a receptive attitude trying to understand. The form of expression used will generate more problems than it will resolve.



Janette Foss K'87 Ann M. Weltevreten K'87

The following was found in Dewing on June 1: "I don't believe in this kind of 'verbal abuse' but it's fun anyway." What kind of fun is it to abuse people and to destroy community property?

First of all we are objecting to the defacing of public buildings. Everyone has a right to express their opinion, but they should do it in a responsible manner. If you have an opinion that you believe in strongly, there are many acceptable ways to express them on this campus—for example, a letter to the editor, or by public discussion. By not signing your name you're closing off any chance of discussion.

We also object to the use of names. This was a personal attack made public with no evidence behind your accusations. We find this a crude and unnecessary form of gossip.

We are proud of the diversity of people at K. These differences provide a unique aspect in liberal education.

Tim Webster K'86

The real issue raised by the Dewing incident Sunday morning is one of tolerance. Which would you rather have at Kalamazoo College: a person who advocates, in the tradition of neo-Nazis and the KKK, even as a stupid, cruel "joke," death for a minority group, or a person who has different sexual preferences? The dividing line between "heterosexual" and "homosexual" is vague if it exists at all, and while it may be an exaggeration to suggest that everyone is, in some sense, bisexual, it is equally absurd to believe that there is a radical difference between the lifestyles and desires of heterosexuals and homosexuals.

The perpetrators of the recent acts of mental violence express a fear we all share: a fear of those who differ from ourselves. To confront this elemental human fear is to uproot it, and, paraphrasing Emerson, recognize that all men and women proceed out of the same spirit, alternately named love, justice, or temperance. May we all come to recognize our relationship to one another and value the power of tolerance of diversity offers us.

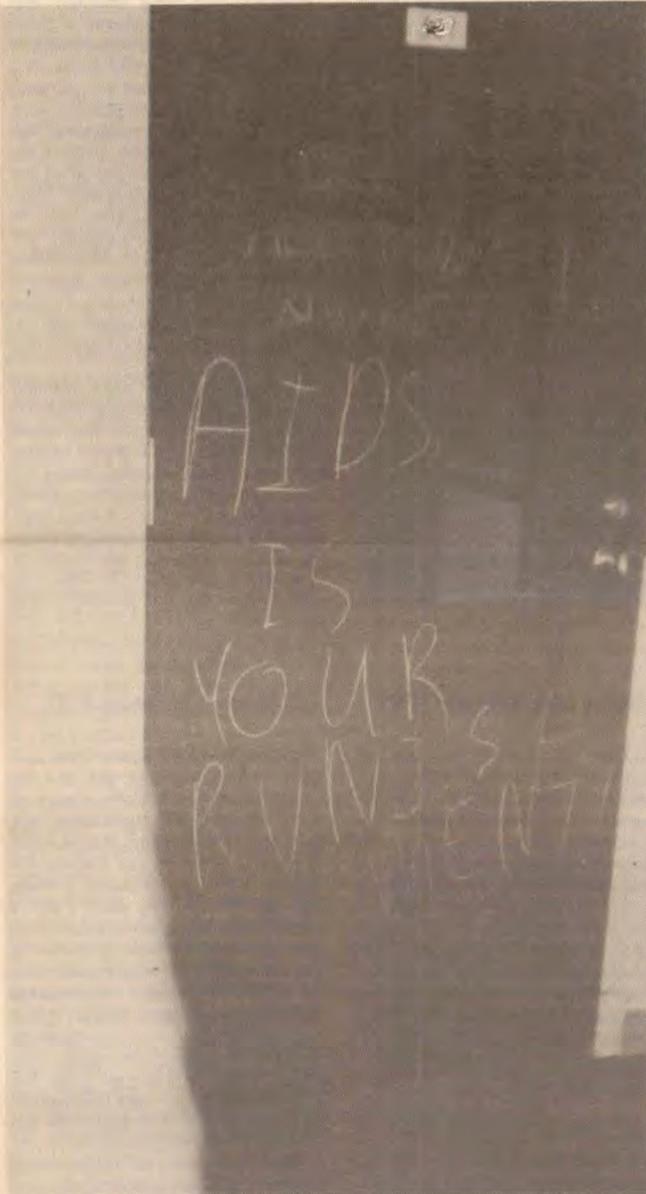
Benjamin R. Clarke K'89

I left Wednesday's special convocation wondering about the whole question of fascism in our culture. The individuals who advocated using force to oppose the actualization of homosexual activities seem to me a specific example of a larger precedent in American society.

Our republic does not simply take action against individuals who violate the rights of others. There is a strong legal precedent against "victimless crime." The use of certain narcotics is legally prohibited, as are certain types of sexual acts. In many states, homosexual acts between consenting adults is, in fact, illegal. It is my assertion that our society as a whole perpetuates a more sophisticated form of "fascism." Whether it is through legal, economic, or social sanctions, society forcefully dictates certain norms of behavior. Any person who is satisfied with our college's condemnation of a blatantly fascist act should now examine the more subtle despotism which is characteristic of American society. In order to fully understand the vandalism issue, we must place it in the context of our fuller social reality.

Elizabeth K. Whiting K'88

Why are people getting so hung up on other people's sexuality? Who are the masses to judge what's right or wrong for the individual—especially with something as personal as one's sexual preference?



Patrick Joseph Mahany K'88

In response to the graffiti found in Dewing last Sunday, I would like to quote the lyrics from the song *The Joke Isn't Funny Anymore* by the Smiths:

*When you laugh about people who feel so very lonely,
Their only desire is to die.
Well I'm afraid
It doesn't make me smile.
I wish I could laugh
But that joke isn't funny anymore.
It's too close to home
And it's too near the bone.
It's too close to home
And it's too near the bone.
More than you'll ever know.*

The joke isn't funny anymore.

**Laura Doty K'88
Veronica Hope K'88**

After leaving Wednesday's chapel meeting, we were concerned that the meeting had not touched all members of the campus community. Afterwards, we were impressed by the concern and sensitivity of a certain student. This student expressed that, although he had not come to terms with the concept of homosexuality, the meeting showed him that violence is not a humane way to confront any issue. The sensitivity of this student begins to overcome the violence and hatred of the Dewing graffiti.

I would like to express sympathy and support to the victims of the recent repugnant and terrifying display of intolerance on this campus. Perhaps it was naive of me, but I was greatly shocked to realize that K College students could act in such a hateful and ignorant manner. The purpose of education in general and a liberal arts education especially should be growth through the exposure to new ideas and the broadening of the mind through confrontation with a wide variety of concepts, experiences and people. It is precisely for this reason that K includes the Career Development, SIP, and Foreign Study programs in the K Plan and in choosing to go to K, most students are choosing this sort of mind broadening education. From the recent graffiti and verbal attacks on homosexuals and others, however, it has become sadly clear to me that some K students have missed the point of their education. Such hateful intolerance denies the basic right of people to lead their lives as they see fit and is a frightening sign of ignorant, narrow minds. In the wake of this episode, I would hope that the K community would come together to denounce such behavior and to reaffirm the very purpose of this institution, to dispel the dark clouds of ignorance and intolerance and to open minds to the light. *Lux Esto.*

Anne W. Schwartz K'89

All that I felt at first was anger and fear. Those feelings have faded; all that I feel now is sad.

Laura Livingstone K'89

Responsibility is something that many of us strive to get from others—parents, teachers, friends. We want to be recognized for being who we think and believe we are: capable, intelligent individuals who are willing to suffer (or enjoy, as the case may be) the consequences of our actions.

Usually by the time a person is in college it seems to be true that he or she has been able to prove his or her worthiness as being independent and responsible. Some people, however, do not seem to have this characteristic. Instead they maintain childish ways and means of handling adult issues (i.e. homosexuality and feminism).

These people scribble on walls, call names, use "bad" (mean, vicious) words to label those who, because they hold a different, perhaps greatly conflicting opinion, are deemed by these children as "strange" or "weird."

These people also prove themselves to be immature and irresponsible (hence, I and probably others will not even consider listening to them for their viewpoint—although many consider it if hearing it from a different, more trustworthy source) children because they like to call names but won't be identified. They want to do the action but go anonymous. This in itself is, in this case, entirely absurd. If these people feel so strongly about others' beliefs, then they should stand up and say so, admit that they disagree.

Considering the likelihood that this strength is probably not to be found in these personalities, we may never know who these "name-callers" are. Hence, I agree with David Torresen—the writers for the *Index* should "continue spewing forth (their) 'objectionable' ideologies, presumably unopposed." How can one address a problem if he or she doesn't know where the problem lies? The name-callers, from what I gather, were not specific—they only made gross generalizations and commands which sounded similar to those shouted by other thoughtless (even perhaps crazed) people, such as Hitler.

It is reassuring to have thoughtful, responsible people on campus, like David, Anne, and others who are willing to say what they think and take responsibility for it. It is horrifying to think we also have a group of people at K who behave in a terrorist manner in response to differences in their opinions. If these students, the anonymous ones, would behave more like adults, perhaps this issue may be better understood and dealt with. It probably will never be resolved, but that is not the point. The point is to resolve the conflict between people and their feelings. No one should be terrified of believing what he or she feels to be right or true.

Take hold, children! Stand up and speak if you have something to say and let us see you! Don't be afraid—we won't hurt you. We won't resort to violent means of defense/offense, as you have done. Come on . . .

I am sure that the Dewing graffitiists were fully aware of the devastating impact they would have upon gays and the entire campus community. All of us have (or at least should have) felt that we were part of a minority at some point in our lives. To experience that isolation leads to understanding, but the graffitiists clearly lacked the ability, or even the willingness, to understand people with beliefs different from their own. The vandals can't be so "mainstream" that they have never had a thought or an action which could be labelled "different."

As a member of a minority myself, I was able to empathize with the gay community. To be singled out by society as "different" and to be chosen as its punching bag is painful. For many years, Blacks were the societal punching bag subjected to verbal and written abuse. As late as Christmas, there were anti-Black slogans written in Mandelle. Now with the evolution of time, it is the gay community under attack. Don't worry. The stream of narrow-mindedness will eventually flow through another camp. Who knows, maybe we'll find anti-woman, anti-Jew, anti-administration, anti-European, anti-oriental, or anti-Black (again) slogans in another building on campus. There are so many minorities on campus, and I would hate to think that these people are limiting themselves. Get the global perspective and broaden your horizons.

Not to single out any particular class, but what if these vandals were seniors? They would be leaving K in a week with some slanted views. It's a crime that they didn't take advantage of one of the most important things this college has to offer—personal growth. If these people are underclassmen, maybe there is still hope.

**Richard J. Cook
chemistry department**

The recent case of anti-gay graffiti in Dewing Hall represents an apparent escalation of this type of activity on our campus. I am deeply disturbed and disappointed to hear more frequently reports of disdain and intolerance directed not only toward gays, but also toward others whose politics, lifestyles, gender, race, or religion do not fit some arbitrarily-defined mold.

A college campus should be a place where ideas of all sorts are exchanged and examined, and where diversity should be valued, not scorned. My hope is that hate and intolerance are held by a very small minority, who will quickly learn that such attitudes and actions have no place at Kalamazoo College.

Ji-won Kim K'87

It was Sunday afternoon when I heard about what was written all over Dewing. And I remembered what had happened to me in high school about five and a half years ago, when I had moved to Saginaw, Michigan from Seoul, Korea. One day I found my locker slimed all over with soda-pop, and some comments—personal comments—such as "Go back to your country," "Go to China," "slanted eyes," etc.. That day I was so upset. Well, I was more confused than upset! I went to talk to my counselor, who just assigned me a new locker. About a week later, a guy whom I barely knew shouted "Damn!" at me several times. This time I wasn't just going to let it slide by. I walked to that guy and shouted at him about his hostility toward me. I hadn't done anything to him, for heaven's sake. I hadn't even had a remote conversation with him! It wasn't a matter of whether he disliked my "yellow Korean entity." All I knew was that NO ONE had any right to insult me just because of an apparent difference in my nationality!

Now, in a "respected and liberal" Kalamazoo College, I again have to face a similar immature action. It is not a matter of to whom those statements were directed, but simply is an action which shouldn't be tolerated any longer in this community.

Everyone, even an alien, deserves a very basic respect as a being! And there is a lot more to be said about this respect. Well, I'm confused, and more, much more, angered this time!

David Torresen K'87

I have written four versions of letters this week. Three of them contained such confusion, hostility and resentment. I don't need to acknowledge or express those feelings to anyone but myself. This is the fourth version.

Naturally, as a male homosexual, I was devastated learn of the "Dewing incident" when I returned from an out of town trip on Sunday. I wanted to cry, but, having been primed for much of my life to suppress innate emotional responses which may not appear "manly," I somehow couldn't. I saw other friends cry, though. I feel as though some of them have cried sufficiently for myself, for the gay community, for the college community in general, and for the graffitiists themselves.

I am sorry if any of you have no conception of what it is like going through life feeling some sense of alienation. I am sorry if some of you cannot understand homosexuality and cannot respond to it compassionately, just as I am sorry that I cannot understand organized Christianity and cannot respond to it with very much genuine compassion. However, I do try to be much more than simply tolerant of Christians. I live, work, and play with them; I try to discuss theologies from my admittedly limited perspective; I caution myself against making slight or direct slurs; and I try to appreciate the beautiful aspects I see in certain Christians as *individuals*. Although I may not agree with, or wish to adopt, their underlying doctrines, I admire their earnest efforts—if they seem earnest to me—to bring about what they consider "good" in our world. I admire their conviction in their beliefs—if they seem to be truly practicing Christians to me. I admire their willingness to discuss their faiths, in public and in publication, if they seem indeed willing. (Note how I try to use *seem* rather than a form of the *be* verb. How will I ever ascertain what they *are*?) I do not believe that all Christians are "good," just as I do not believe that all homosexuals or hispanics or English majors or athletes or supermarket checkout cashiers or Diet Coke drinkers are "good." What is "good"? We must stop searching for "good" in this world as it conforms to out subjective definitions; "good" is not good enough, as it superficially requires us to accept and dismiss things without a far more complex, individual, fluctuant analysis.

I sat in Stetson Chapel Wednesday with only one hope: that everyone in that building would feel, as I did: "I, too, am capable of committing such injustices." I, too, have dismissed individuals through using labels. I, too, have acted before I thought. I, too, despite my having been labelled a "fag-got" since early adolescence, have, in the past, resorted to calling others "dykes." I, too, have scribbled in chalk before. I, too, have been terrified by my enormously negative feelings toward athletes and scientists and others because of what their labels "represent" to me. I, too, am weak and vulnerable and imperfect and troubled and confused and bewildered and overwhelmed and exhausted and unable to cope as well as I'd like to with this twentieth century.

My wish that everyone in that chapel would feel a similar pang may not have been entirely realized. I heard chuckles, whispers, and snickers throughout this sobering session. Nonetheless, thanks to abundant signatures, letters to the editor, and remarks like "I really admire you for throwing all of your energies into a project like this," my overall impressions of humanity as it exists at Kalamazoo College are warm, despite this gross violation of human sensitivity.

Thank you, Dr. and Mrs. Breneman, for erasing the graffiti off the walls and halls of our college. Thank you, faculty and administrators, for your concern and compassion. Thank you, student body, for responding as you did. I only hope we can all act similarly the next time swastikas or "nigger" or "jocks suck" or "AIDS is your punishment" is written on our property.

Nathan Guequierre K'87

The incident in Dewing last weekend is simply the face of what I consider to be the major problem confronting Kalamazoo College: that is, the intense elitism which characterizes the student body both academically and socially. The rifts which separate the students are reinforced daily by everything from who eats where in SAGA to the emphasis placed on unity of the students within a specific major. We each hold on to a group of people whom we assume hold the same truths to be self-evident as ourselves, and deviations from this line of thought are not deserving of consideration. The gulfs between any two differing points of view are widening all the time: my own sense of personal elitism and self-righteousness and that of the social and academic group among which I count myself a member is reinforced, either positively or negatively, with every conversation I have, every action I take. Incidents such as occurred over the weekend are, due to their directness, particularly strengthening to the unquestioning beliefs of both the assaulted and the aggressors, and pushes both sides a little further toward discounting the ideals and beliefs of the other as inconsiderable. The assaulted say, "Just look at those ignorant assholes," while the aggressors think, "Maybe those faggots/liberals/weaklings learned a lesson." Everyone involved moves further apart in their own self-assuredness. Likewise, any reply, such as this letter, does the same. However, the actions cannot go always unanswered, as historically, pacifism in the face of aggression can only lead to eventually being overwhelmed.

So what is the solution? I honestly can't think of any direct remedy. The problem is deep-rooted, and the path we are walking seems to be moving downhill. Ideally, it's a matter of a) critically questioning the truths that each of us *individually* hold to be self-evident, and b) realizing that they are not self-evident to everyone (or even anyone) else. Other than that we can only mark the aggression off as ignorance and stupidity, see to it that these people get at least a passing D in their two required literature courses/science courses/whatever, make a nice speech at commencement, give them the boot down Academy Street into a world of their making, and hope for a better group next year. Like my own elitism, this cynicism is strengthened daily, and events like those of the weekend give them both a big push. Consequently, this saddening sense of defeatism is at times nearly unbearable, and I know it can only lead to catastrophe. All I am really left with is the mouth of Kalamazoo College singing to me the song which goes: "Am I flattering myself or am I the one who made you cynical? da-da-da-da-da-da-da..."

Eva Maria Biss German exchange student

Why was I scared when I saw the graffiti smeared in Dewing?
Because it reminded me terribly of a dark chapter of my own country's history.

I guess everybody—including the person who did the graffiti—will agree with me that the cruel extermination of Jews under the Nazi regime was one of the most terrifying things that humans have done to other humans in this century. I only wish the person knew also that it all started with something that seemed harmless in comparison: with graffiti smearing against minorities.

Andrew R. Haupt K'86

Speaking as a graduating senior, I must say that I have never been as deeply disturbed about any campus incident in my entire four-year career at Kalamazoo College as I am about the vile anti-homosexual graffiti written on the walls of Dewing Hall this past weekend. It was a loathsome act: one that no student who truly cares about this school or his/her education should allow to pass without doing *something*. At the very least, a thorough soul-searching about the depravity of the individual(s) who could do such a thing.

I would hope that anyone who knows anything at all about the incident will come forward so that the cowardice of its perpetrators can be exposed and that proper judicial action can be taken. I believe that anyone guilty of committing such an act should be permanently expelled from this school.

Kristin Neily K'87

To the writers on the Dewing walls:

Death to homosexuals. Death to the college community. Death to relationships. Death to people. Death to my friends. Death to me.

I came to Kalamazoo College ripe for growth. Thus far, I have been allowed and encouraged to search and to expand my own interests and talents both academically and personally. Saturday evening you stunted my growth. Not only did you bar a specific minority from their growth, but also men and women as individuals. You have harmed every person functioning on this campus, including yourself. You made maliciously visible the chains and walls which prohibit people from opinion. "Kalamazoo College is committed to the concept of equal rights, equal opportunities, and equal protection under the law." You, my friends, have violated our rights and we do not approve of your actions. This is sexual harassment. This is personal harassment.

The result of your actions—acts of cowardice, a child playing with chalk on the walls of Dewing, late at night, deep in darkness, secretly scratching away your fears—will never be fully known to you. The ripples affect far more lives than any of us will ever realize. You have seen the outward banding of the college community telling you we do not approve of your actions. We are angry and we are deeply hurt. Can we ever help those who have been personally accused? Can they still hope, search, grasp for understanding, dare to be different, or be true to SELF?

Your writing is also found in other forms around campus—gossip, jokes, harassing phone calls—which have the potential to destroy reputations, friendships, and self esteem.

We do not think you are cool. We think you are weak. Refuse to dance. Tie down your feet. Stand still in your individuality. Voice your opinion with pride. And most importantly, as you grasp for understanding, do not close yourself and others to growth, change, and search for SELF.

Marilyn La Plante Dean of Students

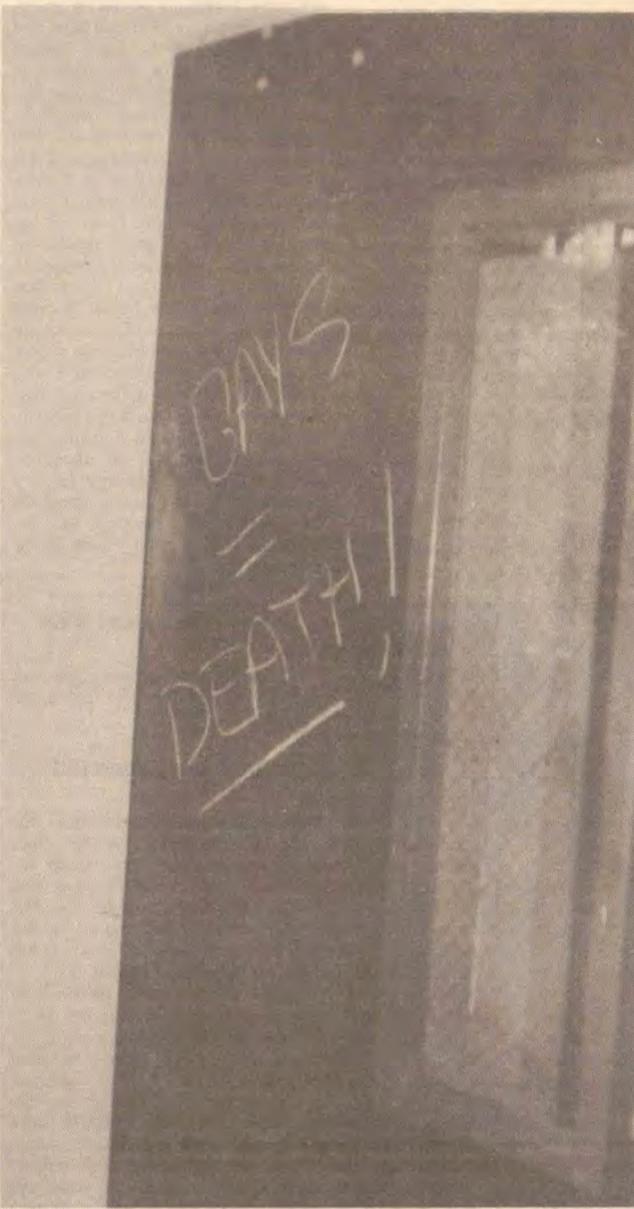
Over the weekend, vicious attacks against homosexuals were written on the walls of doors in Dewing Hall. This is the most recent in a series of incidents which includes defacing bulletin boards with racist and sexist slurs, sending anonymous slanderous notes to faculty, shouting derogatory statements and names out residence halls, making harassing phone calls.

This type of activity is unacceptable to a community which values diversity, seeks to open minds to differences, and encourages dialogue about problems and concerns. As a community, we cannot tolerate this cowardly way of confronting fears or differences. Each of us has a responsibility to confront bigoted and slanderous behavior, with friends, in classes and with colleagues. I ask that each of you takes this responsibility seriously.

Please report incidents to me or come to talk with me if you have not found ways to express your own concerns within the community.

Joe Schmitt K'86

So these are the halls of academia. What happened Saturday night in Dewing is an embarrassment to the campus community. Courageous people sign their names. If people can't say what they think without fear, then they might as well not think at all. I might not agree with everything they say, but why should I be afraid to say that Anne and Ike are my friends? What the hell is going on?



Nicolette Hahn K'89

I hope this letter comes with a flood of others expressing the same shock that I experienced. I understand that there are people on campus who have difficulty accepting homosexuality, but I never realized the extent of their problems until the incident that occurred in Dewing happened a few days ago. Anywhere in the United States, even in the most conservative areas, it is generally recognized that all people should have the same basic rights. In a place of higher education, where it is assumed that everyone has at least a certain degree of open-mindedness, it is almost inconceivable that these virtually fascist ideas can be expressed. I am certain that the views expressed in the Dewing graffiti are only held by a very small minority of the people at K, but I think it is crucial that the entire college community express their rage at this violent act.

Robin Herrick Piehl K'86

On the basis of my religious faith, I cannot condone homosexual acts, and I believe every individual has a right to take a stand for whatever he/she believes. I feel it is desirable that one maintains dignity, integrity, and, above all, maturity when making such a stand so that one need not be afraid to put their name next to their beliefs. Unfortunately, those who did their damage in Dewing displayed none of the above characteristics. If this is what K College is coming to, I'm glad to be leaving.

Nancy Crump K'87

A part of who I am has been blatantly violated, and I have struggled to know what to write in response. The emotion is still so raw—anger, frustration, and the overwhelming sadness—that I must say this again:

"It is all right to be scared, but it is not all right to manifest that fear through violence."

Index, May 16, 1986

Samantha Whitney K'87

Before the school assembly on Wednesday, I had been feeling quite cynical toward the college community in general due to the mounting number of incidents this past year, but after hearing the student and administrators speak and observing and taking part in student response to these issues, I think it is an important and positive step forward that the College has taken regarding those incidents. It is only by recognizing and acknowledging a problem that we can begin to turn things around.

Kenneth M. Dietz K'87

During the past several weeks much has been said about homosexuals—most of which has not been good. Now, I realize the the *Index* is probably receiving many letters about this topic, but I feel some things need to be said. I am appalled that a campus such as ours could allow the verbal abuse and the terrorizing of members of the campus, merely because they are homosexuals. If we do not confront this problem, we, by lack of action, condone what is being said and done. One of the results of this lack of action is that we allow the possible future abuse of another group of individuals. Today it is the homosexuals. Tomorrow it could be people who are tall or those who have blond hair. Don't laugh, people used to be terrorized (and still are today) because of the color of their skin, why not the color of their hair? If we allow ourselves to fall to the terrorizing of individuals, we can no longer consider ourselves mature and civil people.

I remember as a freshman that all were accepted for who they were—individuals. I don't know what has happened since then, but I would like everyone to remember before terrorizing an individual for any reason that tomorrow the person terrorized could be you.

Lawrence R. Smith music department

There is one group in the pluralistic society who have the responsibility for curing the cancer of ignorant hate wherever it begins to grow. That group is the often-complacent majority of rational people. Each from his own individual place, every member of that group must speak out against any beginning of a campaign of fear and distrust directed against a minority within the society.

In some small towns in the rural midwest when I was growing up there, Catholics were persecuted. Slogans were painted on walls and fences. Taunts were hurled from windows or passing cars. Trash was dumped onto lawns and porches in the night. Businesses were boycotted. Children were shunned in school. It was not until, in one sorry town, the violence turned to murder that the reasoning people of those communities spoke out through their churches, newspapers, town meetings, granges, schools, and social groups to put a stop to the evil growing among them.

The cure was simple (not necessarily easy): education. All the malicious hate was based on LACK of knowledge. When people don't know enough of the facts about other people, they fantasize enormities based on too few bits of information. Based on knowing little about a very few of their neighbors who were (fearfully and secretly) Catholic, people in those little towns fabricated terrible stories of depravity and voodoo-like magic, and spread those stories among themselves as truths.

I can't say that there are not still some people who believe some of the anti-Catholic myths. I can say that any who still hold those prejudices know that their dark imaginings will be challenged by thinking people any time they are expressed. I do know that such ignorance-based hate does not survive the light of day, and that the fear that feeds the hate can only be reached and dispelled by knowledge and reason.

The healthy society must maintain vigilance against vigilantism. Then the victims were Catholics. Other times and places they have been blacks, orientals, Irish, Dutch, Germans, Italians, Gypsies, Jews, Mennonites, Lutherans, etc., etc., *ad infinitum*. Here and now they seem to be gays. Bring the light of knowledge and reason to bear against ignorance this time. The next time you may find yourself among them.

Maureen Francis K'87

Do you feel like a victim? I do. Like many of you I am not gay, and my name was not specifically mentioned in the Dewing chalk desecration incident. But I still feel hurt. Maybe much of my pain is for my gay friends—the objects of the vicious attack. It really hurt me this morning when I saw a man from the Physical Plant scrubbing the outer walls of Dewing to remove the few remaining traces of chalk missed by the Brenemans and a small delegation of students. Finally, it hurt enough for me to do something besides discussing the issue with others. I spent a good part of my day explaining to people what had happened and asking for their signatures in a petition condemning the event.

Most responded in overwhelming support, others were reluctant to commit, some refused to sign their name to anything, and a few treated me like a leper trying to infect them—instead of a fellow student trying to offer them a vehicle to express their concern about an event that effects our entire community.

But now as I sit here and write this I find my views changing. I don't think that we as a campus are the real victims, as much as it would seem that we are. Even though school property was defaced and members of our community were violated, the true victims are the people or individual who committed the act. They are the victims of their own ignorance. Their graffiti is not the act of an imbecile, but rather of an obviously articulate person who has some distorted views of him/herself. Many people have attacked this person for the manner in which he/she went about voicing an opinion. But perhaps it is us who has made this person a victim by not providing a proper arena in which that person felt comfortable to express his or her opinions. While I vehemently oppose both this person's opinions and methods of expression, I hope that we can work together to find a positive way for people to express themselves without any form of victimization.