

Purity rings send wrong message about sex



Jean Kaul

A couple of weeks ago, I was watching MTV's Video Music Awards when something interesting happened (finally). One of the presenters, Jordin Sparks, made a comment after the host mocked the Jonas Brothers for wearing purity rings. Sparks said, "I just wanna say, it's not bad to wear a promise ring because not every guy and girl wants to be a slut, OK?" Wow, loaded statement.

Hearing this made me think about my own feelings about purity rings, sexuality and the broad-casting of sexual activity (or lack thereof). My own hand is ringless (according to Wikipedia, I would

probably wear it on my left ring finger so it could be replaced with a wedding ring when the time came for marriage — eek.) because ever since I first heard of this practice during high school, purity rings have made me uncomfortable.

A major problem I have with these rings is the message it sends to the young people who wear them (most of them girls, but to be fair, some boys do too): Your sexuality is something that needs to be controlled — not by you, but by your parents who give you the ring to wear. Because the majority of purity ring-wearers are girls, it further enforces the patriarchal ownership of chastity. Your chastity is something you promise to your parents and then to your husband. I find this disturbing for the same reason I don't want to be given away by my father on my wedding day. Why do girls need to have their chastity guarded and then given away by their fathers? I can take care of that myself, thank

you very much.

Phenomena such as purity balls — father and daughter dances at which girls pledge their virginity to their fathers and receive certificates for it — just increase the "ick" factor. I have a friend whose church called all the young women of the congregation under the age of 25 to the front of church so they could reaffirm their sexual purity in front of their friends and neighbors. This ceremony cast a distinctly medieval shadow across what should be a deeply personal choice.

Another part of Sparks' comment discomfited me, although she tried to clarify it later on as she made the talk show rounds: Girls and guys wear purity rings so they aren't "sluts?" Hmmm. This declaration of anti-sluttiness struck a chord within me because she implied that those who are sexually active are sluts. And although Sparks included both men and women in her comment,

I think most readers would agree girls get slammed for being sluts more often than guys for the same behavior. I'm not lily-white in this regard either. I've called girls sluts before, but after thinking about this issue I've decided I need to try to stop casting judgment against my peers. Women need to be a little easier on each other, especially because it makes it more acceptable for men to refer to women as sluts when women continually deride members of their own sex for being sexually immoral. It's just another instance of women exhibiting insecurity about sexuality when we need to feel the need to stereotype one another as "Eve" (bad girl!) or "Mary" (good girl). Because of the confusing messages our society sends about sexuality, it becomes easy to label someone's sexual behavior if it makes you uncomfortable.

And, what is a slut? I have heard girls who are virgins called sluts because of the way they flirt,

dress or dance. So really, no one is safe from the label.

Finally, I wonder why one needs to announce their sexual status to the world. If a girl wants to stay a virgin until she is married, why does she need to tell the world about that decision? I know some might say that wearing the ring announces your pride that you've decided to stay chaste in an increasingly sexualized world. However, I think it is somewhat contradictory for those who regard their chastity as something so personal and sacred as the ring-wearers do to make such a public statement by wearing one. Why do we need a ring? Why can't you make a vow and tell those who you are closest to — the only people who care about your sexual status anyway? This is one case where the "don't ask, don't tell" policy is a good idea.

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Economic bailout plan requires further scrutiny by Congress



Andrew Kindiger

It used to be that when your corporation was going belly up, all you needed to do was file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, then hire a gang of high-priced lawyers to restructure an economic catastrophe into a profitable business. Of course many loyal employees would lose their jobs and many would have their pensions cut drastically, but at the end of the day the company would survive and the upper tier of executives would remain undisturbed.

Sadly, the U.S.'s economic woes have become even more complicated as abusive sub-prime lending practices and faulty mortgage backings have brought the most profitable financial institutions to their knees. Now not even the top executives are safe as major mortgage firms are receiving quite the shock from a record number of defaulted mortgages. Thus, the U.S. Treasury must find a way to sustain our nation's financial system.

Luckily for us, President Bush is able to pick from the pile of taxpayer money and allocate a proposed \$700 billion bailout to companies like Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae. Although Congress might not protest the fact that its action is needed in order to save the stock market and help the economy, the issue of assuring that the same problems will not continue to happen is still on the table.

Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson and Ben Bernanke, chairman of the Federal Reserve, have been arguing for a "clean" bill to pass through Congress so that these financial issues can be dealt with as quickly as possible. However, Congress is leery to simply dive into the plan that was handed to them on Sept. 13th and let the Federal Reserve handle the situation as it sees fit.

In an article in the Sept. 23 issue of the New York Times, Sen. Christopher Dodd of Connecticut called the initial plan "stunning and unprecedented in its scope and lack of detail." A major criticism of the treasury's proposal is that the plan does not include measures

for oversight. The Federal Reserve will argue that oversight would clog the process of trying to buy back and re-sell devalued mortgage securities from crumbling firms, but when you're asking the federal government and including the taxpayers to float the bill that was brought on by the dysfunction of greedy executives, there is no quick and easy solution.

A bill meant to correct a distressed economy should not be passed without guidelines to specifically address how a lump sum of bailout money should be appropriated. Furthermore, the amount of money being allocated for corporate restructuring needs to be considered and put to debate by Congress and financial wizards alike for longer than a week. A bill that will actually work is needed as quickly as possible but that does not mean Congress should pass the first thing they get from Bush.

It may seem unfortunate that as an average taxpayer you have to compensate for the mistakes of others, but keep in mind what had to happen for the problem to get so big that Congress and the taxpayers had to handle it. Many Americans have lost their homes because a banker loaned them \$50,000 when a \$30,000 loan was all they could legally borrow. It was only a matter of time before the loss on these sub-prime loans, which was due to mortgages defaulting as interest rates rose, took a slice out of the top and started affecting companies with enough money to buy these bad loans. The owners of these businesses thought for a while that a few defaulted mortgages would make paying the bills much easier on them, but soon found out that too many foreclosures would end up breaking the bank.

The economy might still have a chance if financial organizations look to profit from healthier transactions, which would lead to economic growth for a change. But for that to happen oversight needs to be increased to limit the frequency of delinquent and unpaid loans due to the fault of a manipulative lender. In the meantime Congress needs to keep a closer eye on the greed forgiveness fund, an outdated regulatory commission needs to be updated, and major American lending companies and financial firms should brush up on their business ethics.

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AROUND THE QUAD

How do you think a new University president should be chosen?

 <p>"By whoever writes the best want ad response."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Kayla Stierwatt</i> freshman</p>	 <p>"I don't think there should be a contest. I believe in interviews."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Emanuel Taranu</i> senior</p>
 <p>"I don't think the president does too much, so I don't really care."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Britney Axtell</i> senior</p>	 <p>"Gladatorial combat."</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Matt James</i> senior</p>

Bicycle regulations require greater publicity to be effective



Kelsey Landhuis

Call me square, but I like rules. I think it's good to know what you're allowed to do and what you're not. I'm grateful for the little signs on the side of the highway that tell me how fast I can drive, and I'm glad the residence halls enforce regulations about who can enter the building after 10:30 p.m.

Regulations like these are designed to keep people safe and bring order to chaos. I would be terrified of driving on a highway with no speed limit. I definitely wouldn't feel comfortable living in a residence hall where Johnny Creeper can come and go as he pleases at any time of the day or night.

Rules like these work because they usually are enforced. Sure, you might consider the speed limit more of a suggested minimum speed, but if you start driving 80 miles per hour every time you get outside the city limits, the chances are that sooner or later those flashing lights in your rearview mirror are going to be for you. If, on the other hand, you regularly change lanes in intersections or as a pedestrian, fail to

cross the street at a crosswalk — both also technically are illegal — well, let's hope the police have better things to do with their time than ticket jaywalkers.

But suppose they suddenly did start issuing tickets for these things. What happens when a regulation that never was enforced before suddenly becomes a priority for law enforcement? Students who park their bikes in places other than the bike racks found out this week because the Department of Public Safety started cracking down on the bicycle regulations.

"Wait a second," you might be thinking, "shouldn't DPS have better things to do than impound bikes that are locked to light poles?" The answer is, no, not really. The University has a small and relatively safe campus, and aside from the fairly regular MIPs and the occasional thefts, DPS officers have a pretty simple job. Hunting down bike regulation violators is an effective way to keep them occupied through the long and uneventful shifts. It's kind of like an Easter egg hunt, without the candy.

"Okay," your next argument might be, "but I didn't even know it was against the rules to lock my bike up to that railing!" That's a legitimate point. Unlike the multitude of signs designating every parking lot on campus as either resident, faculty or commuter and stating the penalty for leaving your car in the wrong lot, you would be hard-pressed to find

bicycle regulations posted anywhere on campus. Although a complete list of rules and regulations for all vehicles can be found on the DPS Web site, it's a safe bet that most students would never think to check this Web site to find out where they can and can't park their bikes. Instead, most students learn about bike parking regulations from the stickers DPS slaps on their offending bicycles. If DPS wants to enforce these rules, it should make sure students are aware of them first — not after the fact.

Publicizing the regulations about where students can and can't leave their bikes will alleviate student complaints about DPS enforcing these regulations because at least students will have a fair shot at abiding by them. At a time when gas prices are continually climbing with relief nowhere in sight, the University should be encouraging students to explore alternative forms of transportation, whether they are bicycles, skateboards or sneakers with pop-out wheels. The Bike Co-op is a great step in pursuing this goal, but perhaps an informational session about campus bicycle regulations is in order. If DPS works to make its rules public and students work to obey them, campus can become a safer, more bike-friendly place.

Kelsey Landhuis is a senior English major from Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Skills for academic success should be learned outside class



Ryan Carothers

On Wednesday afternoon I walked to my Skills for Academic Success class reviewing the five chapters our class was going to be taking a test on. The only thing that kept going through my mind was how annoying the whole concept of taking a test about skills for being successful with roommates, relationships, identity, parents and social life was. As I walked into the classroom, I found out our class was going to play Wiffle ball trivia as our test. Yes, I had now transported back into the fifth grade, with a couple of key differences: The winning team all received As on the test and the losers received Bs, and I actually played money to play Wiffle ball.

When I first registered for this class, I still was nervous about the whole idea of college and signed up for the class because I was told it was required. I would have never enrolled if I had any idea of the time I was

going to be wasting on life lessons that have been streaming through my brain since I started puberty in a public school district. The University should be more up-front about what the class entails and whether it is required, so hapless freshmen like me don't get hoodwinked into taking it. I now know that this class is not required, but regardless, Skills for Academic Success should not be a graded course.

From what I understand, an academic adviser's job description is to advise students on their decisions in college and to help students with any problems they have in their college experience. The academic advisers at Truman do an exceptional job helping and advising students, but freshmen for the most part are not so naïve about earning good grades that they need a course to learn how to achieve success. This class degrades the common sense that every student should have gained from past education. It takes self-motivation to correct problems such as procrastination and poor studying and students should seek help if they are struggling.

The book we used in my class not only discussed issues with studying and roommates, but it even contained information about topics such as a healthy sex life and sexual orienta-

tion. The class is designed more like a high school health class and takes the approach that all freshmen college students have been living in a cave for the past 18 years. The University staff's perception of incoming freshmen is slightly ridiculous — and it seems as if they are trying too hard to transition us into college. A classic example is Truman Week, which is designed more like a summer camp than a normal college experience, giving us no time to just soak in the fact that we are actually in college. It reminds me of a mom who won't let her children near water without throwing water wings and flippers on them even though they already have learned how to swim.

It's obvious that this course needs an overhaul — taking a Wiffle ball trivia test isn't a good use of University resources and money. The topic of proper study skills could easily be discussed during a Truman Week forum, for example, instead of during a class for credit. Grades in college should be given for knowledge of information, not for receiving health tips and definitely not for Wiffle ball skills.

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