

University students must fight segregation



Zach Vicars

Segregation is alive and well in America today.

Sure, we may have done away with slavery, Jim Crow Laws and race riots, but in many ways America remains divided by color. Although there is no longer any law requiring it, evidence of segregation lingers in many American communities, churches and even schools.

I was reminded of this dilemma during Midterm Break on a mission trip to Memphis, Tenn. In Memphis, the separation by race is very apparent. Indeed, there are almost black and white boundaries. Over time the citizens there have clearly established where a white person may live, work, shop and go to church,

while the black members of the community also have established an area. The neighborhood where we stayed actually had experienced what some call "white flight," where the white community had vacated the area — almost overnight — because minority groups had begun to purchase property there.

Similarly, there is a starkly uneven distribution of wealth in the city of Memphis. On one side of town, many citizens had to pay for their meat and potatoes with food stamps, while just a few miles down the road, upper-middle-class folks could purchase organic foods and expensive liquor at a high-end grocer. And it's no coincidence that these two social problems — segregation and poverty — overlap. As America has learned the hard way, it is impossible to be separate and equal.

But this phenomenon of voluntary segregation is not isolated to Memphis, or even the South. You will find sharp contrast in color and affluence in almost any large city. In St. Louis, for instance, there are numerous rich suburbs with magnet schools and deluxe community centers where families feel they have a

future, but there are many more urban areas that are overrun with crime, drugs and — worst of all — hopelessness.

Perhaps most disheartening about the segregated condition of American communities is that by the year 2010 we ought to know better. In the 19th century, many people used ignorance as an excuse for slavery. Some people might honestly have thought, or been trained to think, that skin color really did affect one's humanity. By now we have no such excuse. In fact, in many instances it is the educated populace that institutes segregation. Often the first thing that college-educated professionals do when they land their first real job is buy a house in the suburbs where they are free from any danger or, at the very least, diversity.

Many see the sadly divided state of America as a lost cause, or as an issue that should concern only those in politics, but frankly, people who push such an agenda are part of the reason America is stuck in this rut of separation.

Segregation is not a political issue. It is an American issue. As citizens, it

faces each one of us. And as members of the academic community, we have a special responsibility to stop segregation once and for all. Professors must continue to acknowledge and educate people from all backgrounds, ethnicities and world views, but that alone is not enough. In the future we need to place a greater emphasis on educating people in the importance and beauty of human diversity. In Truman's case, we need to move beyond just the Intercultural Perspective requirement by emphasizing the value of all people in every area of the collegiate experience.

Truman and other universities also need to market themselves more aggressively to urban students. In many cases, urban children remain in a cycle of gangs, crime and drugs simply because they've never been given the opportunity to have a meaningful education, while many suburban kids, myself included, are able to have a rewarding college experience because of generous scholarships.

But beyond any education reforms, there must be a reform of the hearts and minds of the Ameri-

can people. As educated adults, as fellow citizens and fundamentally as human beings, we must demand that America be fully integrated. We must maintain that dream that someday whites, blacks, Hispanics and members of every ethnic group will be welcomed in the same community, church or school. We need to realize that having a neighbor who traces his or her lineage to Africa instead of Anglo-Saxony is not a dangerous proposition, but an important privilege that is afforded to free societies. And most importantly, we must begin to value people not based on "the color of their skin, but on the content of their character." If we can do that, then segregation will finally die in the United States of America.

Zach Vicars is a sophomore philosophy/religion and linguistics major from St. Louis, Mo.

AROUND THE QUAD

If you lost Internet access, what would you miss the most?



"Facebook for the constant communication."

Eric Hughes junior



"Facebook because it helps me stay connected with friends from home."

Shelby Wittmeyer freshman



"I would miss talking to my friends and family at home."

Kat Olsen Flaate junior



"Facebook, to see if anyone writes on my wall."

Colton Schmitz freshman



"Gmail because I'm applying for jobs."

Nicole Flood alumna



"Facebook."

Lynley Aleksandrian freshman

Festival returns music to art form



Tyler Retherford

Sunday was the end of a five-day city-wide musical festival in Austin, Texas, known as South by Southwest, or SXSW. There were no massive audiences, no amphitheaters, no over-the-top theatrical displays. Instead, the roughly 100,000 concert-goers bar-hopped across the city to see as many gigs from the nearly 2,000 musicians as they could. This massive, chaotic party is exactly the direction music culture should be going.

I'm not talking about the type of music SXSW tends to attract, although it's certainly the kind of music I prefer, but rather the way it's set up. There was no main stage in Austin, no pre-planning that guided concert-goers to specific bands. Instead, there were dozens of bars, clubs, parking lots and, in one case, even a church hosting a staggering array of musical acts for five straight days leaving attendees to decide what to hear and probably letting them stumble across bands they had never heard of or

intended to see. That, in my mind, is what modern music should be about — incredible, inexhaustible diversity.

These days the tools are cheap, whether they be a thrift store acoustic, a built-in microphone on a laptop, a hand-me-down Casio or some music editing software, and distribution is easier than ever thanks to the Internet. This means the days when music availability was driven by record companies is in its dying days. Now is the time when the audience's taste governs who makes it and who doesn't, and nothing is more representative of that than such a do-it-yourself styled festival as SXSW. Austin saw some big acts, certainly, but you'd be hard-pressed to find another festival that caters to lesser-known bands the way SXSW does.

SXSW represents a move toward audience-centric music, where live shows are the standard and records are the rough approximations we settle for. I can't help but make the comparison to the Grammy Awards, where there are a multitude of awards for production, boxed sets and even liner notes, but not one for live performance, energy or ability to really make a crowd get into the set. Music is an art form, but many large record companies and award shows treat it as merely a product they need to sell. Putting the fate of music in

the hands of those most interested in sales is going to result primarily in an interest in replicating the sounds of those groups that sell well rather than fostering a spirit of creativity and risk-taking. After all, the amount of sales needed to keep a band on the tour circuit isn't nearly the amount that record companies are interested in.

What I'm saying is that listening to super-popular musicians is fine — after all, they tend to be popular for a reason — but to really foster the kind of environment that can produce a drastically larger diversity of music we always need to be on the lookout for smaller groups, bands, or singers. If we only buy greatest hits albums, then those are going to be the only hits we get, endlessly repackaged. If the enthusiastic crowds dancing in muddy parking lots in below freezing temperatures in Austin last weekend are any indication, there's equally good, if not better, music being created by people you've never heard of. Do a little digging in a record shop or the Internet, or hit up some nearby venues for local bands and be pleasantly surprised. If nothing else, the seats are going to be closer and cheaper, so take a risk.

Tyler Retherford is a junior anthropology major from Springfield, Mo.

Church should hold priests accountable



Alex Boles

Spiders, snakes, open water, driving in the snow and religion.

Shocked to see religion among a list of common fears? Well, you shouldn't be. Less than a week ago Pope Benedict XVI publicly released a letter to Ireland apologizing for child abuse within the Roman Catholic Church. But he failed to give us any real answers as to why priests who have been molesting children still are allowed to practice in any church, anywhere.

Allegations have been made that Pope Benedict could be responsible for approving a priest's transfer to another church after engaging in sexual acts with children, and at the new location the priest was found to have repeated the acts again, according to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. However, the church instills a sense of secrecy when bishops report these actions and vow not to inform public officials for fear of furthering the negative image of the Roman Catholic Church.

This is insane, immoral, unlawful and unholy. Being affiliated with the Catholic Church does not and should not void one's responsibility to abide by the law. Religion is not an excuse.

You cannot tell those families whose children have been molested by a religious figure that everything is OK because he prayed, confessed his sin, God forgave him, no need to go to the police, it won't happen again.

These children, who are the victims of unholy acts of priests who once swore to uphold moral values, are seeing religion through the eyes of a molester and through the eyes of people who say it's OK as long as sins are confessed because God is all-forgiving. So are we saying that if a Roman Catholic priest was to commit murder he would be forgiven because he would confess his sins? Oh, now wait, murder? That's one of the Ten Commandments. Thou shall not do that, right? What about thou shall honor thy Father

and not make wrongful use of his name? It seems to me that sexually abusing children, shading it in secrecy and saying God is OK with it because the act was confessed is a wrong use of His name and definitely is not honoring thy Father.

Priests vow to uphold morality much like doctors vow to uphold ethical, thorough and precise treatment of their patients. If a doctor is found guilty of malpractice, his or her practicing license would be revoked, would it not? What makes this situation any different? There should be no second thought when it comes to properly and lawfully punishing a priest or anyone else who is found guilty of sexually abusing a child. How can we trust an institution that hides its faults? How can we not fear an institution that is responsible for so much pain, yet chooses to cover it up? Even the Pope refuses to address the issue.

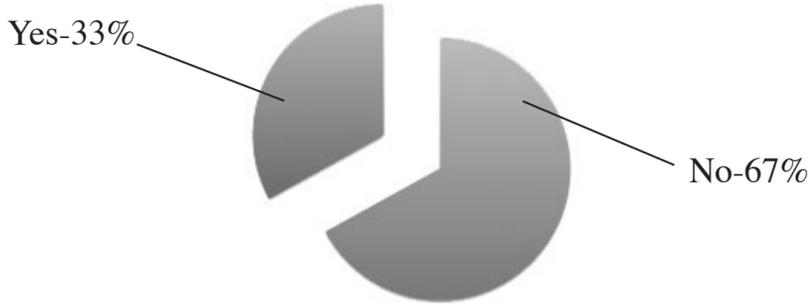
The Pope said in his letter, "Openly acknowledge your guilt, submit yourselves to the demands of justice, but do not despair of God's mercy." Translation: Feel guilty, submit your sins to the Lord, but it's OK, we forgive you, so we'll still let you continue to abuse and emotionally and physically scar children around the world.

Question the social institutions surrounding you. Don't let religious hierarchy hide behind the Bible and get away with situations for which non-religious figures would be sentenced to serve time in prison. To establish a little credibility, I attended a Catholic private school as a child and was raised Catholic, but after reading the Pope's letter and witnessing his blatant and obvious inability to address this religion's negative image, I wonder if religion is even something worth believing. If the figure at the top of the hierarchy still refuses to admit wrongdoing while the world is watching, then how can you support, trust or belong to that institution? God might be forgiving, but how sincere is the confession if no action is taken? It's not, and they should be punished — properly.

Alex Boles is a senior communication major from St. Louis, Mo.

WEB POLL

Is the University "green" enough?



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