



Viewing Sochi from a new perspective



John Riti

Ed. This column is a work of satire. Boris Avdeyev is not reported to be confined to any prison.

Greetings from Sochi! I hope this letter finds you well. Honestly, whatever you're up to probably is better than where I am. Let me introduce myself. My name is Boris Avdeyev. I'm part of the Olympic Opening Ceremony planning committee here in Sochi — perhaps you were one of the millions who watched it two weeks ago. Then I'm sure you're one of the millions who saw the mechanical snowflakes that bloomed to make the Olympic logo, except for the fifth ring that didn't open because of a technical malfunction.

Yep, that was me. That darn fifth ring. You think Bob Costas and his eye infection is embarrassing? Try having only one job in the whole opening ceremony and messing it up. First, despite the Internet rumors from the past few weeks, I wasn't stabbed in my sleep or killed by the Russian police. I'm VERY much alive. But trust me, the backlash is all too real.

Putin's sky cells aren't too bad, but I seriously think this is where they filmed that Game of Thrones scene. Prison provides some great scenic views of the winter wonderland that is Sochi — take my word for it, fake snow is way prettier than real snow. Plus I have 12 stray dogs to keep me company.

Regardless, there's a larger reason for me sending this letter. I've had a few weeks to reflect and I've recovered from the embarrassment of the whole situation. Now I want to speak out and plead my case.

I understand this mishap was funny, hilarious, what have you. The BuzzFeed lists and the memes were great water cooler talk, I'll give you that. Putin taking a nap during the ceremony? Hilarious! But I have to ask, can't people put their focus elsewhere?

God forbid people forget about this ring and instead talk about the \$50 billion Putin has spent on Sochi, stalling our economy with corrupt price overruns. I get the Olympics are lavish, but as a Russian citizen, I have an inkling some of that money could be used elsewhere — how about paying our citizens?

As a worker on the Opening Ceremony planning committee, I've been lucky to escape some of the harsher conditions construction workers of state corporations have experienced. Many of the low-skilled workers had no contracts, no training or insurance and weren't always paid. Millions of people know about my infamous ring malfunction, but how many know there were 25 deaths during construction here in Sochi during 2012?

Putin's plans for glory play by their own rules. Following the non-discrimination policy of the Olympic charter? For everyone but the gay community. Staying true to their Zero Waste Olympic pledge to the International Olympic Committee? Not for the rail monopoly that dumped construction waste into landfills and the Sochi water supply.

And while the Internet posts about my failed ring were funny, be thankful you live in a country where you can post anything you want. I think that's what you guys call freedom of speech? Not sure over here.

Maybe I'm just bitter here in my little cell, thinking back to that stupid ring and how this all could have been avoided. Either way, I hope you enjoy the rest of the Olympic games. I'll try to send a postcard soon — Russia's beautiful this time of year.

Degrees are overvalued



Parker Moyer

When it comes down to it, the United States no longer needs the gross amount of college degrees it is churning out. Most people call it the “college experience,” and that's exactly what it is — an experience. That piece of paper you slave away four years or more to earn is nothing more than a status symbol, proving you have walked the walk.

I assume the majority of readers are students in the process of getting their degrees. I think I am not alone by saying I think everyone in college has thought about how nice their life would be without tests, grades and all-night cram sessions. That life seems really nice until the little devil on your shoulder reminds you that bums don't have degrees — If you don't have that piece of paper, you won't even get a foot in the door.

I respectfully disagree. The United States has produced a false demand for college degrees. We have all heard it before — go to college, get a degree, get a job and proceed to earn money. But in many cases that job will not even require knowledge of the material you learned during college. Yet people insist if you have only a high school diploma, all you can hope for is flipping burgers at McDonald's.

This unnatural demand is taking its toll on college grads. The U.S. Census shows there are proportionally more unemployed college graduates than there are employed people without college degrees, according to buisnessinsider.com. Additionally, Andrew Sum, a

professor of economics and the director of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, said of the graduates that do land jobs, 40 percent are employed at places that don't require their degree.

It seems the job market is pushing back against the artificial demand for college degrees. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, three of the 11 most-demanded skill sets include construction, manufacturing and auto service. Most of these vocational skills require a very small amount of schooling, usually about four semesters, and when you are done you can begin to rack up certifications, which will give you better job prospects and a larger income. In fact, a study showed men with vocational training earn on average 24 percent more than men with bachelor degrees, according to a June 2012 usatoday.com article.

I don't think college is all bad. I truly have enjoyed my experience and have made great friends. College still is important for professional degrees like doctors, surgeons, veterinarians and lawyers, to name a few. I firmly believe college is extremely significant for those who want to go forth and teach grade school or high school. Furthermore, college is imperative for the progression of research and scholarly material. Within the walls of a university, research can be conducted and shared among a brilliant group of individuals who propel our society forward.

Lastly, college is useful because it offers an intensive education. I know many people who are attending college not for the benefits of their future, but simply because this is the only place they would be able to learn how to write a killer research paper or analyze a piece of British literature. I am not calling for the downfall of the higher education system. Rather, it is time to step out of this suggestion that college is required for everyone.

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What has been your favorite Olympic event so far this year?

“Ice skating. I wish I could do it. They're super strong, yet elegant and graceful.”

Kasia Hood
Sophomore



“Biathlon. This is the first time I've watched it ... They have to be skilled in shooting and skiing, and [race] 10K.”

Sarah Griffith
Sophomore



“Ice skating. It's interesting ... I like to watch people do crazy tricks.”

Sam Gentry
Freshman



“Slopestyle snowboarding. There's been a lot of criticism because the course is bad ... sometimes it's fun to watch people fail.”

Preston Jordan
Freshman



AROUND THE QUAD

Be more conscious of interaction in public spaces



Conor Gearin

Civil rights attorney Fred Gray, who served as a lawyer for Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., and victims of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, spoke Feb. 8 in Truman State's Baldwin Theater. His inspiring and insightful speech got me thinking about diversity and discrimination around me.

Soccer pickup games at the Student Recreation Center are a place where people from many different cultural backgrounds interact on a regular basis. This environment highlights the challenges and potential for growth

created by bringing different people together. My experience with it has convinced me such spaces are necessary, even if the results can be messy.

Gray was aware he was speaking to a mostly white audience. He told a story about once asking his daughter Deborah Gray, who runs the Tuskegee Human and Civil Rights Multicultural Center, what he should say to such an audience. She told him the problem today is different ethnic and cultural groups still do not talk to each other and therefore do not truly know each other. He emphasized the importance of personal relationships with people of different backgrounds.

Like the Tuskegee multicultural center, soccer pickup games at the Rec attract many different people — international students from Asian, African, Middle Eastern, South American and European countries and students from the United States of different ethnic and social backgrounds. Men

and women lace up soccer shoes together for coed periods.

During a single evening you might hear five different languages being spoken. Playing styles differ between cultures and individuals. I have met students from all around the world, and in general they have been friendly and welcoming to me — a much less skilled soccer player than most of them.

Yet the soccer bench also is one of the few places I go where I still hear the phrase “that's gay” used as an insult. Furthermore, I have seen and heard from women friends that some male players, who would not think twice about passing to another man in the right spot, will hesitate to pass to a woman, and will wait for the women to ‘prove’ themselves before trusting them with a pass. And this prejudice does not come just from students from countries where women have fewer rights — it often is white Americans.

I do not exclude myself from this trend, either. Who knows if I

might have unintentionally treated a female player differently than a man? Though I would never intentionally do so, unintentional harm still has a victim.

Please understand I am not calling out any one person, but rather talking about a problematic atmosphere that stands in sharp contrast to the many good days of pickup soccer, during which the players are friendly and inclusive. As an English major, I have been trained in queer and feminist theory, and most of the time I am in environments where people have similar opinions about women's rights and an inclusive attitude towards LGBTQ people. It is a strange experience, then, to suddenly find myself in a different, more exclusively masculine atmosphere.

Gray said if you see a problem you feel called to do something about, you should not leave it up to someone else. What he was advocating was not an approach of trying to solve everything wrong

about the world you saw. Instead, he wanted his audience to focus on problems they personally felt motivated to change.

There are some, especially men, who might say this issue is insignificant and not worth the attention of a column, especially given the many good qualities of pickup soccer here. But as men, it is our unearned privilege to ignore problems related to gender, since we are the ones that often benefit from inequality.

Stereotypes and negative atmospheres do not change unless we discuss them openly and until we interact meaningfully with each other in places like the soccer field, as well as Truman's other largely overlooked hotspots of diversity, where people of different backgrounds can come together. Friendship is the only antidote to prejudice.

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