

LIFE AND ART

COLUMN

The subtle problems of race

By David J. Neal
■ Indiana Daily Student
Indiana U.

I can't skip class. That's the first thing I think of when someone asks me if there are any disadvantages to being black at a large university. Broad problems like the dearth of minority faculty and the barbs of obnoxious racists don't really affect my day-to-day existence, but the everyday things that touch minorities are small and irritating.

Like the attendance situation. I can't skip class with any sort of impunity.

As soon as an instructor looks over the class, he knows if I'm there or if I decided the adultery and mental cruelty on Divorce Court was more interesting than whatever he had to say.

One of my classes has a lecture section with roughly 150 students. Any of the other 149 students can take the morning off, knowing their absence will not be conspicuous. Not me. I'm a footprint in the snow.

The professor once identified me solely on the assistant instructor's physical description of me. I'd bet my Stevie Wonder albums he couldn't do that with anybody else in the class.

Can you see the assistant instructor trying to come up with distinguishing characteristics for one of my classmates? "He's kind of between 5-10 and 6 feet, has black hair... wears a corduroy hat... uh, I think he has blue eyes... maybe wears a Cubs jacket..."

Tough job. But with me, I'm sure it was easy. "Bout 6-2, 6-3. Black guy."

"Oh, yeah." Then there are those times when people say something, notice you're there, and think they've become this year's Jimmy the Greek.

I was scanning the magazine rack for the latest issue of *Women's Physique World* while three Caucasian junior high girls in front of me flipped through a magazine. One said, "Tracy Chapman is so ugly. I mean, her music is good, but she's just ugly."

The other two girls turned and

See RACE, Page 15

Acid House reaches America

By Darren Cahr
and Stacey Bashara
■ The Northwestern Review
Northwestern U., Chicago

An NU student strides down Sheridan Road, her chest covered with an enormous, yellow, smiling face. The eyes on her shirt are oval and the smile turns up at the sides. It looks like a visual homage to Bobby McFerrin, except for one element: a bullet hole and blood sit where the nose should be.

In a dormitory room, hunched over a Macintosh computer, senior Adam Buhler manipulates beats and measures, baselines and samples, until a mass of rhythm and noise pours from his speakers.

What these images have in common is acid house, a movement of music and fashion, philosophy and social politics that has already swept across a great deal of England and which is now making inroads in the United States.

"I like acid house because it allows you to see nirvana and jack your body at the same time," says senior Jay Haesly. And it is that concept of pure hedonism which underpins the appeal of this throbbing collage of sounds and sensation.

Buhler, whose in-room studio is an acid house laboratory, says the music is a catalyst for "forgetting the superficial class structure and fundamentalist attitudes" of modern life.

Many music critics and trend-watchers dub acid house a re-emergence of drug culture (though some would argue it never died). A great deal of the movement involves consumption of large quantities of either Ecstasy, a pill-based drug similar to LSD, or plain old LSD.

Since arriving on continent, acid house has left a distinctly bitter taste in the mouths of some local musicians. NU grad student John Kezdy, vocalist for Chicago punk band the Effigies, says acid house may be fated to fizzle out in the United States.

"The acid house movement is just the most superficial and vapid thing," Kezdy says. "It's not like punk, which was more politically-based. It's a very fashion-oriented and hedonistic thing. It realistically couldn't be anything but superficial."

Buhler is also skeptical of the movement's domestic longevity, but insists there is a message behind the music.

"The fashion element is unavoidable," he says. "It's all that people tend to see because it's all that's shown to them. But



DARREN CAHR, NORTHWESTERN REVIEW, NORTHWESTERN U.

The mutilated smiley face has come to represent the nihilism and nirvana of the American acid house movement.



actually, acid house is about ideas that have been circulating since the '60s. Timothy Leary is often sampled and quoted. It's part of a very liberal movement that wants to rise above this crack-down on morality."

Acid house as a music form is difficult

to define. Its precursor is house music, created in the black gay clubs of Chicago's South Side. DJs oscillate sounds, turning the beat into something not unlike a rhythm orgy held within a digital alarm

See ACID, Page 15

19-year-old seeks Scrabble crown

By Lisa Luboff
■ The Daily Bruin
U. of California, Los Angeles

UCLA, a school often associated with Olympic champions and football stars, is also home to the youngest top-ranked Scrabble player in the country.

Brian Cappelletto, a 19-year-old sophomore from Arizona, is just a step away from becoming the number one player in the country.

Ranked second nationally, Cappelletto has won 11 tournaments in three-and-a-half years of competition. He has placed second or third in five other tournaments.

Scrabble is a popular board game where each person gains points by spelling words in a crossword-like formation on a specially marked board. Players pick seven tiles with letters and point val-

ues printed on them. The tiles are then used to create words, and players' total points are tallied to determine a winner.

Many of the top competitors Cappelletto plays against at tournaments are 30 to 40 years old. At a tournament in Boston, the next-youngest competitor was 28.

In addition to tournaments, Cappelletto usually plays between 10 and 20 games a week with local Los Angeles competitors. Although his friends often ask to play Scrabble with him, none of them are at his level.

"I'm number two right now and I want to be number one," he says. "There's always pride in doing something when you're one of the best at it."

Being the best is not easy. Although Cappelletto has played Scrabble since he was 10, he still studies words and ana-

grams, or letter arrangements, and remembers what letters create specific words.

Training for a competition is similar to athletic training, he says. A positive mental attitude and preparation are important, as are knowing words and remembering strategies.

When he began competing at the age of 16, Cappelletto studied anagrams every night. He now studies about once a week using computer-generated books of anagrams.

Although for many Scrabble becomes an obsession, Cappelletto is careful to remember that winning the game is not as important as enjoying it.

"Some people are over-engrossed in it, and it can be detrimental," he says. "If I couldn't control it, I wouldn't be in school right now."