

The Mac Court Controversy



MARK McTYRE/Emerald

Two sides of a deep divide

ONCE AGAIN, THE UNIVERSITY IS MAKING HEADLINES all over the country. After ASUO President Matthew Scotten and Vice President Glen Banfield made the bold move of roping off 228 student seats at last night's men's basketball game against Arizona, the reaction was strong on both sides of the issue.

Banfield said the decision was made in response to inappropriate behavior by fans at McArthur Court this season. Students, in their own response, have come out strongly both in support and in opposition of the executive decision.

We at the *Emerald* are no different. As an editorial board and as a newsroom, we are as deeply divided on this issue as the student body. While our function as a board is to formulate opinions through consensus or clear majority, coming to a conclusion on this issue turned out to be impossible. We are frustrated by this fact, but in truth, it reflects the deep division on this campus on issues of race.

We do feel a duty to present our readers with as much information as possible, however, and let them form their own opinions. With an issue of this nature, the ability to come to an individual conclusion is especially necessary. Many factors play into one's views on the subject, and groupthink is not only dangerous (as always), but an impossibility.

Here are the main viewpoints expressed on this most volatile issue, and in turn, any major problem on this

campus and how to deal with it.

PRO: The decision by Scotten and Banfield to take away the seats was an administrative decision by nature, and therefore, was better executed without outside influences.

CON: The decision that affected hundreds of students was made by two people without any input by other parties, and is therefore highly questionable.

PRO: Scotten and Banfield, as part of their position, signed the contract with the Athletic Department for the seats, and therefore have the executive privilege to take away the seats if they see fit.

CON: The ASUO Executive has no right to take away the seats, and in essence, is stealing from a student body that paid for the seats in question.

PRO: Taking away the seats is not so much a punishment, but instead serves to spur campus awareness and discussion on issues of race, discrimination and general attitude. Other methods like Coach Jerry Green speaking to the crowd and handing out fliers on diversity will help accomplish this.

CON: This decision is simply a one-shot publicity stunt that will have no tangible effect on the student body. Instead, it may backfire with negative publicity and reaction. Other, more long-lasting tactics are needed to combat the problem, like changes in curriculum or seminars.

PRO: While the racial slurs have not been proven, the accusations by UCLA Forward Kris Johnson cannot be ignored. With the present environment in Mac Court and on campus, the slurs easily could have happened and probably have happened.

CON: This whole action has been caused by an assumed truth, unproven accusations by one man. And no other incidents of racial slurs have ever been reported at Mac Court.

PRO: This action runs deeper than just one incident of racial slurs. The decision to rope off the seats was in response to students' general attitude at games, including homosexual slurs and extreme taunting.

CON: The decision was an extreme reaction to a single alleged incident involving a small number of students. The whole student body is being unfairly punished for the possible action of a few.

PRO: The lost section of seats will send a strong message to students that any inappropriate behavior at games will not be tolerated. Seeing the empty section on television and in print will have a lasting symbolic effect.

CON: Controlling crowd behavior will not come from symbolic gestures, but rather by heightened security and other more practical ways of enforcement.

PRO: Cheering the team on is great, but extreme rudeness, profanity and rushing the court after major victories to taunt opposing players is immature, dangerous and unacceptable.

CON: Racial slurs will not be tolerated, but taunting the opposition in an extreme manner is all part of the college game, supported by the team and is practiced by fans all over the country.

PRO: Such profound action may cause students to be more willing to confront fans who are using objectionable slurs and taking part in inappropriate behavior.

CON: Students are not, and never were, afraid to stop fans who were involved in racist remarks or other extreme misconduct. This makes the alleged racist remarks unlikely.

PRO: The ASUO Executive decision may make students think twice before taking part in inappropriate fan behavior in the future.

CON: Taking away one section of courtside seats will do nothing to deter the small number of offenders. If anything, it will make them amplify their behavior.

In short, these are the arguments. Perhaps they will help you make up your own mind. As always, we welcome any feedback on this issue and will try to print your comments. Speak your mind and contribute to the dialogue.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board.