

# COMMENTARY

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## A real resolution? Cutting down on oil consumption

Guest commentary

It is a beautiful thing to express a conviction openly. It is an even more beautiful thing to live by that conviction.

It may be a positive thing for the University's faculty to uniformly declare that military action in Iraq is wrong. This is assuming the majority of the faculty feels this way.

If such a declaration is officially stamped, it is possible that other institutions may follow suit. There is influence behind the voice of a university.

But regardless, if your stand is for or against military action, it is ultimately personal choice and not official declarations that will bring the peace that everybody wants.

There is a growing number of people who are willing to listen to ideas that would have been thought of as conspiracy theories not long ago. Particularly, the idea that oil — and ultimately power and money — is the primary reason that the U.S. has been so interested in the Middle East for the past few decades, if not longer.

This is precisely why charter signing, banner waving and marches are not answers in themselves. These things are part of an overall change and are important, but can only have so much effect.

If present and historical military action against Iraq is ultimately about controlling the flow of oil, then personal choice is the only real means toward peace. This nation, and increasingly the world, operates on a basic economical principle — supply and demand.

It is good to rally together and march peacefully against the war, but if we then get into our cars and drive home, we've effectively undermined ourselves.

It is just as good to make official declarations, but if the school itself is a wasteful consumer of oil — heating and electricity — then again we've undermined our own cause.

The supply of oil, and thus its sometimes violent and environmentally destructive acquisition, will continue until one of two things happens: Either it runs out, or we stop buying it.

The second is our personal choice, and it's the most powerful statement we can make. If the school wants to make an effective statement against military action in Iraq, it should invest in solar, wind and other non-petroleum sources of energy to heat and light its rooms and bring life to its computers, mainframes and servers.

Wind generators and solar panels on the top of every building will make a statement that is far more powerful than charters and words. Encouraging students to ride bikes to school by providing a low-cost bike with tuition will also be a believable and practical statement. Encouraging students not to drive to school by offering some creative tuition reduction will give me reason to believe an officially declared stance.

If the response to these ideas is "It's not cost effective," or "It'll cost too much," then our officially declared statement is nothing more than words.

Tom Adams is a junior in the music department.

### Letter to the editor

#### Moral beliefs don't imply authoritarianism

In "Keep absolute statements to yourself" (ODE, Feb. 21), Scott Austin claims "democracy (is) inherently evil," but then goes on to question the very existence of "absolute right and wrong." If I'm not mistaken, his earlier use of the word "evil" denotes the very existence of such. Either Austin must accept that absolute morality exists, but should not be coerced upon a citizenry by the government, or else that there is no such thing as right, wrong or any ethical litmus test for a given action.

As his claims stand, I feel inclined to turn his own words against him: "Beware the dangers of such a stance, sir, for it would readily place you in the same court and arena as the Christian right, a place I am confident you would not like to find yourself."

Yet the fallacy of Austin's argument lies in the assumption that those who believe in absolute morality also believe in government policies that force it upon other people. As a Christian, I freely concede the existence of absolute right and absolute wrong. However, as a fallible human, I have no authority to impose my guesses as to what absolute morals are upon other people. This is why I am a card-carrying libertarian.

My being a libertarian and Christian immediately defeats Austin's logic. Through the absolute moral of "Do not coerce others unless in defense" do I justify my politics. How, Austin, do you justify yours?

Brandon Rhodes  
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ASHCROFT'S "OPERATION PIPE DREAMS": RIDDING AMERICA OF DANGEROUS GLASS.

Peter Utsey Emerald

## What happened to gay black history?

Guest commentary

*Editor's note: Earlier in the month, students at Wayne State University in Detroit organized a showcase on black gay historical figures in the student center. The display caused a stir on that campus, and this column is a response examining the issue.*

Langston Hughes, Benjamin Banneker, George Washington Carver, Harriet Tubman — gay? The LGBT Student Union, and the LGBT Student Union of Color's "Historically Black, Historically Gay" showcase in the student union has been getting quite a bit of attention.

I'm the secretary of the LGBT Student Union of Color, and the co-designer of the showcase. As I was walking through the Student Center today, I noticed a small crowd around our display, so I stopped to see what was going on. I was there for a half hour answering questions.

People just couldn't believe that so many of their historic black heroes were gay. I think that it is important that people know that throughout history, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people have made huge contributions to the world.

Angela Davis, activist; Howard Rollins,

actor in the film "Ragtime" and TV show "In the Heat of the Night"; Alice Walker, novelist; Billy Strayhorn, wrote "Take the 'A' Train" with Duke Ellington; Max Robinson, first Black anchor on a national news program; Barbara Jordan, congresswoman; Benjamin Banneker, designer of Washington, D.C. — all are among the many who have made contributions to Black History Month.

It's the part of black history that tends to get lost in the celebration. Martin Luther King Jr. cemented his place in history with the "I Have A Dream" speech, but if not for the handling of the logistics and pulling together of the million details it required to conduct the March on Washington by his colleague, Bayard Rustin, it never would have happened. Rustin was a gay man and his homosexuality was hardly a secret.

For black lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender, Black History Month must be somewhat bittersweet. They're invited to join in the celebration of black achievement and accomplishment, but only if they keep a discreet silence of their role in it.

Strange, isn't it, how this is a month where every library pushes its authors of color to the front window exhibits, but works by James Baldwin or Audre

Lorde go missing. It's a good month to read Terry McMillan and Toni Morrison, but not so for Sapphire, E. Lynn Harris or Essex Hemphill.

Black History Month is kind of funny in the way it seems to self-censor what parts of our history should be told and what should be glossed over. There are gay black people in this so-called "community" and the longer it takes those of us who know it and refuse to face the truth, the harder it becomes for us to truly know ourselves and accept ourselves for the diverse group of individuals that make up our race.

Are the awesome oratorical powers of Barbara Jordan diminished by discovering she was a lesbian? Do the sweet melodies of "Take the 'A' Train" suddenly become harsh and displeasing to the ear knowing that Duke Ellington's collaborator was a gay man?

If we start with merely being more tolerant of the differences between others and ourselves, then later we can move on to bigger issues like acceptance. Maybe then, Black History Month can truly become a celebration where all the voices of its participants ring equally loud and clear.

Michael Fifueroa is a student at Wayne State University. This column originally ran in The South End, Wayne State's student newspaper.

### CORRECTIONS

Wednesday's article about Joshua Williams ("Student alleges police brutality," ODE, Feb. 26) should have said that Williams said he was convicted in 2001 of resisting arrest — not disorderly conduct.

Wednesday's article about the alcohol ban in fraternities ("Substance-free fraternity life," ODE, Feb. 26) misidentified Delta Sigma Phi President John Hannam. Jonah Lee is the Interfraternity

Council president.

The article should have said that Faryl Kagan said members now have conversations with recruits instead of just throwing parties involving alcohol.

Also, Kagan did not mean that pre-alcohol-ban partying at fraternity houses was mindless.

The Emerald regrets the errors.