

Smokers becoming a minority

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Staff Writer

The discrimination against smokers is mounting not only in America, but in European and Asian countries as well. Without a doubt, smokers are finding it more difficult to light up whenever the urge strikes them.

The ban on smoking is spreading like a prairie wildfire from boardrooms to bistros. In November 1992, France became the first European country to impose a ban on smoking in all enclosed public places. Other European countries were quick to follow suit, although not to the same extent.

The countries of Great Britain, Germany and Italy settled on a more passive approach to the anti-smoking bans. Tax increases and advertising bans account for the declining sales of tobacco in Asian countries.

Nonsmokers are gaining ground in their attempts to stop smoking in public places. If the current trend continues at the same rapid pace, there will be relatively few places left for the smokers to enjoy their nicotine habit.

This social outcry has created an unprecedented minority... the smoker. They're not wanted in restaurants, airplanes or the workplace, especially if there is a cigarette dangling from their lips. They can forget riding the bus, they won't even be allowed in the back seat.

Not since the struggle for

Civil Rights during the 1960s has our nation seen such a battle over equal rights. The controversial anti-smoking campaign is gaining momentum despite reports that there has been no substantial proof connecting cigarettes with any type of illness.

Without a doubt, nonsmokers and persons suffering from respiratory illnesses have the right to protect their health by choosing not to be exposed to tobacco smoke. On the other hand, smokers are no longer being afforded the right to choose where they can smoke.

As it stands, many restaurants are becoming smoke free environments. Employers in an attempt to appease nonsmoking workers are either banning smoking altogether or establishing designated smoking areas.

Occasionally, restrictions have been imposed on hiring people who smoke because such a policy establishes nonsmoking as the company norm, reduces the added costs of increased ventilation and also reduces the cost of employee health insurance premiums, which are lower for nonsmokers. Many contend such a policy is flagrantly discriminatory. Smoking is also being phased out on domestic and international flights.

We were made aware of the devastating effects of smoking and tobacco use with the issuance of the Surgeon General's Report in 1964. The report provided us with

documentation that smoking was (and still remains) the leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S.

Several people, trying to adopt a healthier lifestyle, gave up smoking. Meanwhile, an increasing concern for the environment, coupled with the trend toward fitness, helped cultivate the crusade against smoking.

Nonsmokers, demanding their right to clean air, were joined by allies from the American Can-

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cer Society, the American Lung Association, the American Medical Association, the U.S. Department of Education, legislators and big and small businesses. As advocates increased in numbers, the number of smokers soon became a minority.

Let us, for a minute, explore the meaning of what is a minority. For instance, if the person next to you lights up a cigarette, do you feel that they are less of a person or inferior because of this habit? Do you feel slighted or do you

consider their smoking habit insignificant, small, trivial or unimportant to you? Would you rate this citizen as second class because of their addiction or merely less than average as a human being?

Identifying the rights of smokers and nonsmokers is not the underlying issue in this battle. Nonsmokers claim the right to breathe clean air while smokers claim the right to smoke. Is legislative banning of smoking in public places a violation of smokers' rights, guaranteed by the Constitution?

By placing bans on smoking, have we in effect created an environment that places tobacco addicted people in the role of a minority? When we teach our children that smoking is bad, are we also teaching them that smokers are bad people?

Suppose we can't agree on who is more right, the smoker or the nonsmoker? Let's agree that our main objective in life is our search for happiness. Our ancestors felt so adequately zealous about this pursuit that they found it necessary to guarantee it in our Constitution.

In the pursuit of happiness, if a person chooses to live a healthy lifestyle, then by all means let that be their choice. If this person chooses to treat their body like a machine, then that too is their choice.

Perhaps a person's body would make a better machine if they didn't smoke. But, not ev-

eryone chooses to be a machine.

If a person, after being warned about the hazards of cigarette smoking, still chooses to smoke, then by all means let them do so. It's their constitutional right to pursue happiness, and the tobacco addicted person should be afforded the opportunity to relax in peace and in a method of their own choosing.

For a nonsmoker to impose their lifestyle on a smoker is too much like what the Prohibitionists attempted with the Eighteenth Amendment (banned alcohol) in 1920. The moral majority perceived danger in the new types of jobs created by the industrial and mechanical age and used this as the basis of their argument against the working man using alcohol.

That ban, like the anti-smoking ban, drew support from the unions, the health field and the churches. For nearly fourteen years, a few people, once considered hardworking Americans, became a minority. Their hard fought battle over this amendment resulted in its repeal in 1933.

Some may say that breathing alcohol never killed nondrinkers. In the same fashion, people smoking and driving cars never killed anyone either.

It remains to be seen if the ban on smoking will reach the same fervent proportions as that of the ban on alcohol. But, if recent legislation is any indicator, not only will smoking become illegal, but smokers will become criminals.

Letter to the Editor Faculty member advocates appreciation, trust

To the editor:

I am disturbed by the petty niggling in the air lately. One of my colleagues was recently accused by students of a remark which neither she nor anyone else made. Our college president is beleaguered by unreasonable demands and complaints from some who exhibit no understanding of nor compassion for the complexities of his job. Faculty are loudly criticized for expecting college-level effort and thinking--by some who apparently want to pay their tuition and take home a degree, unburdened by earned knowledge or thinking skills. When our deans must make difficult decisions about school closures they are censured equally for closing and for staying open. Clearly such decisions--and criticisms--are more easily made after the fact. And faced with our biggest financial and growth challenges in years, our Board must nevertheless give up precious time to some whose sole motive seems to be to call attention to themselves.

How unfortunate that hundreds of hours of professional time must be expended dealing with the irrational and the will-

fully uninformed. Those hours could be put to much better use educating the many wonderful students who are here to learn. And they are by far the majority. I suspect we don't hear as much from

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them because they don't have time; they are busy getting an education.

There is no finer staff at any college in the country than the one right here. We continue to have extremely fine students, as well. I would like to encourage an atmosphere of mutual appreciation and trust between students, faculty, support personnel, and administra-

tion. We are not adversaries. Most of us share common goals of educational excellence.

Can we please give less--much less--of our attention to the whining of the malcontent, the misinformed, and the self-indulgent? Could we hear more about the unsung heroes here? The scholarship winners; the single parents who work all day and go to school all evening; the nursing students who haven't the time to even read about the trivial pursuits of our local lampooners, but who will, every one of them, pass their state boards this summer; the high school dropouts who drop back in and succeed the second time around; the people who spent two days scraping river mud off a neighbor's floor and were back in class the next day; the staff who go the extra mile for any student who is truly trying to learn: this college is full of people like these.

We need mutual acknowledgment that we are, nearly all of us, doing the best we can.

Sincerely,

Jan Anderson
English Instructor

We are all in this together

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to everyone. We should all be able to work together as a team and not as little splinter groups that have nothing better to do than to snipe at each other.

Some may remember an old cartoon years ago called "Pogo." In one of the cartoons, Pogo makes a profound statement. "We have met the enemy, and the enemy is us." It shouldn't be that way. Where we are the good guys and they are the bad guys. We don't need division between the staff and the students. What any college, school, organization or family needs is unity.

To say we have not written articles on student government is inaccurate and contrary to what the Underground Newspaper has implied. ASG President Mike Caudle has stopped by the Print office to voice his opinion and of-

fer suggestions.

There have also been articles on campus safety in which Chief of Public Safety Jim Wiseman, has stressed we all need to watch over each other. Are any of us really listening to what he is saying? Is it their job to follow us around and pick up after us so we won't have anything stolen?

If we would do our part, their job would be a lot easier. Booklets on campus safety are also available at the Public Safety Department at Clairmont Hall. Maybe this is too far for some to drive.

If anyone wants to know what we have or have not written about, they should stop by the Print office and look through our older issues. For somebody who has so many complaints about the Print, these individuals apparently are not bothering reading it.

