

# OPINIONS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Purdue community continues conversation over race

"Michael Brown got what he deserved," were some of the most disgusting words I could have opened up in "The Exponent" on Dec. 11, 2014 from an ignorant, redneck Donn Brown who probably assumes all black men are uneducated thugs who are "lucky" if they "get out of the hood." Well, Mr. Brown, and anyone who agrees with his barbaric statement, you're sadly mistaken from what judgements you got from TV.

African American men have been dealt unjustified killings since they were brought to America. People like you are trying to rationalize why a man, petty thief or not, should be used as target practice when Cody Cousins was carried out in handcuffs like a human being. Let that marinate because I'm still trying to figure out how people on this campus can look me in my eyes and

tell me they aren't racist and then attempt to make sense of the luxuries Cody Cousins experienced compared to butchery African Americans have dealt with unjustifiably just this year. Think about all of the killings that haven't been reported. Purdue needs a wake-up call. Educate yourselves on Howard Zinn's "The People's History of the United States." After that, get on google and see Mitch Daniels' opinions towards such a renowned author like Howard Zinn, and you tell me we don't perpetuate an institutionalized racism here at Purdue to the core. We're giving our campus a reason to branch out and learn about one another. I don't see how that could be selfish.

- Ryesha Jackson, a junior in the College of Health and Human Sciences

In response to the Opinions Column written for December 11, 2014, entitled "Michael Brown got what he deserved," I would like to address the author, Donn Brown. As a resident of Lafayette, I applaud you for having the audacity to submit an article you knew was going to be read by college students. You're a grown man, and this was obviously your attempt at getting us upset, knowing we, as students, could not effectively retaliate. Secondly, how dare you state that you would have "continued pulling the trigger until all the bullets were gone, and then reloaded", and proceed to say you have four sons?! What kind of example are you setting for them? How would you feel if your sons succumbed to peer pressure, stole (or the police thought they did), and were injured? You don't know what Michael Brown's fam-

ily, community, and city are going through because you're here in Lafayette. Let me clue you in. Every day, minorities such as myself are having to hear what people like you think about us. We didn't ask. We earned our place here, just like you did. I am tired of hearing the stereotypical comments about how black people steal. Newsflash: white people stole black people. You don't know what position Michael Brown was put into when he did whatever it was when the policeman looked his way in the first place. All you know is his size and race. I am praying for you and your family. Whether you are white, black, Asian, or whatever ... this is a race issue, and it needs to stop.

- Gabrielle White, a student in the College of Liberal Arts

Let me just say that it's sad that there was any loss of life in these media exploitations. I start with this because not nary a thing was said about the Serbian immigrant who was beaten to death by two black teens with a hammer late last month in St. Louis. There were no torchings, demonstrations or violence. I haven't heard a single black voice say anything about it.

Brown was caught on tape committing a felony. He then decided, after a cop asked him to move out of the street, to ignore the simple command after committing strong armed robbery. Why? I mean, I'm praying the cop doesn't know yet, and moves over. But he ended up ignoring all commands, and got his arms into the cop car.

Garner should never have been bothered, as there are so many other priorities in NYC. But like Brown, he ignored a simple com-

mand. Excessive use of force, I must say. The cop should be penalized.

Rice, in Cleveland, the 12 year old, was murdered. The cop shot him within two seconds of pulling up to him. Look for a murder charge forthcoming.

The cops I know would react the same way in the first two samples if the suspects were white, period.

I'm not so sure about Rice's case. There weren't any commands, nor any efforts to disarm. Most cops I know would never had ended up shooting the child.

If you're going to make race an issue right out of the box, then you should at least address the black on black violence that's killing thousands annually.

- Todd Myers, a Purdue alumnus

Donn, I would like to know what evidence you have that shows Mike Brown was a bully. I also would like to address your statement about blacks in prison. It is quite unfortunate that this statement is true, but I would beg to differ about blacks committing more crimes than whites. Blacks are the minority in this country; purely from a statistical point of view, it would be highly improbable that blacks commit more crime unless it was due some innate nature of blacks or their environments. I would hope that we would both agree that IF blacks do commit more crime, it would be due to their environments and not their genetic codes.

Thus, why not make a change to better the environment? Have you ever immersed yourself in an African American's shoes? I highly doubt it! And if you have, you would know the struggles associated with having skin that you didn't choose. I will also address the fact that you ASSUMED that 70% of black children are illegitimate. Please state your source! My parents weren't married, but that has in no way hindered my success. There are plenty of people that have children that aren't married. My advice to you is to NEVER ASSUME! Assumptions will lead to a paragraph in response in The Exponent disproving all of them.

- Venecia Wilson, a graduate student in the College of Pharmacy

Can someone please explain to why all the opinions in Wednesday's edition seemed to bash and dehumanize the Mike Brown and Eric Garner situations and the protest on Monday afternoon? To Donn Brown specifically, how did you know Mike Brown was a bully and a thug? How can you immediately categorize him based off his actions? And when did the punishment for stealing and arguing become execution? If this the new punishment, someone didn't make me aware of said change. I consider Brown's decisions extremely wrong, and yes, he did break the law, but does that mean he doesn't get a fair trial? Did Officer Wilson not know how to use his taser? If these petty crimes deserve execution, then what do school shooters or mass murders deserve? Oh, that is right, they can be ruled legally insane or confused and get a fair trial. You are the reason that injustice lives and breathes in the Purdue area, and I do apologize for your children's sakes. To Ryan Fletcher specifically, do you not know what the first amendment says? Freedom of speech, freedom to assemble and freedom to petition, if you didn't know, are just three rights stated in this amendment. So after knowing this, what laws did the march break? Exactly zero. Anyone can gather and march, anyone can address Mitch Daniels and anyone can stand up for what they believe in.

- Michael Nave, a junior in the College of Technology

Black students are not the only ones upset by the administration's handling of the recent events that have taken place on campus and in the nation. I am a white student who has agreed with every point the black students at Purdue have made. I completely disagree with the opinion articles posted in The Exponent last week and felt the articles were racially insensitive and uneducated. When you challenged the oppression of minorities on campus, the word minorities was still used. The definition of minorities is in fact a culturally, ethnically or racially distinct group that coexists with but is subordinate to a more dominant group. We as a student body need to work together to foster all cultures and ethnic backgrounds, from our backyards to communities around the world. Racism does exist. Denying rac-

ism will not make it disappear, but we can fight it. We have to work towards equality of all and foster a community of positive change and inclusion of all. When a race is challenged on any scale (locally or globally), we as a community have to step up and take our stand, whether it be through protests, die-ins or public statements. When a race other than one's own is challenged in any way, we must respect and listen to the thoughts and creative ideas towards equality and justice of all no matter the outlet of expression. When we can do this, we can change the world. One brick at a time.

- Jake Liggett, a junior in the College of Health and Human Sciences

Dear Exponent,

You have an ethical obligation, whether you like it or not, to not allow opinions that are harmful to the student body, and more importantly blatantly racist, to be published. By publishing these opinions, you validate them. The opinions you published about the Mike Brown case and the Eric Garner case are completely ridiculous and invalid and to even imply otherwise is irresponsible. This is the 21st century. The time for bigots to be given a voice is over. There is no room for that nonsense in modern society. I don't care if you publish opinions from both sides, but don't publish racist, uninformed trash and call it a valid opinion. This paper needs some sort of ethics because it clearly feels it has no responsibility to serve the student body in a constructive manner right now.

- Warren Hadley Jr., a student in the College of Engineering

Bless the Purdue Exponent for magnifying the voices of the oppressed and unheard by publishing the letters of irate and willfully ignorant, obviously white racists — with the sole exception of the one at the very bottom of Wednesday's edition of the paper that debunked an insipid, racist defense of the Confederate flag. No amount of words can adequately describe my disgust. Why was this filth published? All four of the letters reek of willful ignorance and racism. Hate speech is not an opinion, and The Exponent is not illustrating journalistic integrity and objectivity by publishing "both sides of the story," if that was its intention. Rather, it calls into question the personal views of the editors and, unfortunately, serves as a reminder of the nature of our Purdue community. The people who wrote

these letters are the very same breed of people who defaced the portrait of an esteemed professor, argue hotly in defense of "reverse racism" during class discussions, create Purdue Asian accounts on Twitter, post racist jokes and memes on other forms of social media, etc. etc. and thus assist in creating a hostile environment for minority students. I would use swear words to express my feelings in a blunter manner, but I have a feeling that my letter wouldn't be accepted for publication if I did — so instead, I will politely say that I am very ashamed of, and disappointed in, both the paper and the University.

- Momo Yamauchi, a senior in the College of Liberal Arts

## To clear some things up

I feel that I must respond to the number of negative letters that appeared in Thursday's edition of the Exponent to counteract ignorance, misinformation and snap judgments.

**To Ryan Fletcher:**

What is ironic is that you claim that we should all "move on" past some of the racial issues that are still prevalent and pertinent, yet you yourself cannot seem to get past the tired, worn argument that minorities on campus—and I assume in society as well—have certain "advantages" here at Purdue to the detriment of, I assume, white students. This is a myth, and if all of these so-called advantages did exist, I would suppose that the minority population at Purdue would be much higher. And I am so sorry that people were inconvenienced with the protest, but I guess traffic being held up for less than an hour certainly takes precedence over instances of people losing their lives to police, particularly when Black men are 21 times more likely to be killed in encounters with law enforcement as opposed to white men like Cody Cousins, the White House invader, and the rampage killer at the Aurora, Colorado

movie theater. And as to your claim that departments do not have room for a racial awareness class, how do you know, are you in administration? And how would you know that such a class would be polarizing if you have never taken one?

As to your assertion that racism on campus boils down simply to name-calling, you are truly ignorant of the climate on this campus and this tells me that A) either you do not have any friends of color and/or B) if you do, they have chosen not to divulge to you the full extent of the micro-aggressive or blatant bigotry and prejudice they have been subjected to, which, judging by your attitude in this letter, is completely understandable.

**To Benjamin Robinson:**

I guess Mr. Robinson, and Mr. Walker, would seem to be waiting for a "respectable Negro" to die in order for people, especially African Americans, to legitimately protest the issue of police brutality that occurs frequently in neighborhoods of people of color and the poor. Unfortunately, in light of the number of instances that have been occur-

ring lately — again, Black men are 21 times more likely to be killed by confrontations with law enforcement — every Black man is already a target, no matter his education, socioeconomic status, conduct or age. The deaths and the decisions not to indict their killings is just the tipping point of a number of other police killings of Black and Brown men, such as Tamir Rice, John Crawford and Ezell Ford, but I would not expect you to dig deeper to understand that. And let's also get some facts straight, Mr. Robinson. First, Mr. Garner was accused of selling untaxed cigarettes, though no such cigarettes were found on his person after his death. An accusation does not automatically equal guilt. However, it seems as if he was already guilty in your estimation. Secondly, the coroner clearly states that Mr. Garner's death was a homicide and that his poor health contributed to his death, but again, it was the chokehold, a hold that even you acknowledge was illegal, that was the primary cause of his death. You may want to do a little more thorough research before you comment.

**To Donn Brown:**

You, who spews such vile and despicable thoughts, also need to get your facts straight. At the time Wilson shot Brown, he was not getting pummeled. And to add insult to injury, you claim to sympathize with his parents and then demand the outrageous. I wonder if you hold yourself accountable when your four boys commit any transgressions? And in your efforts to discuss society's challenges, I do not hear you talk about the fact that a high percentage of whites murder other whites, as is the case with all races. Or is the white community somehow devoid of crime? In fact, at this very moment, a white shooter has tragically killed six people in a rampage in Pennsylvania — I wonder if you would consider him a thug and bully as well? Society will definitely improve once we lessen the number of people who shoot to kill and do so excessively, like Mr. Brown, leaving no questions to be asked whatsoever.

- Dr. Tony Gass, program manager of the Black Cultural Center



Of these American Top 40 hits, which best describes campus at Purdue during Dead Week and Finals Week?

Go online to [purdueexponent.org](http://purdueexponent.org) to cast your vote. You can catch the results in a future opinions page.

- A.) Habits (Stay High) by Tove Lo
- B.) Shake It Off by Taylor Swift
- C.) Bang Bang by Jessie J, Ariana Grande
- D.) Animals by Maroon 5

### TWITTER



Use Twitter to voice your opinions about issues that affect Purdue, campus and your daily life as a college student or member of the community. Tag us @purdueexponent and #exponentopinions. Relevant tweets will be published on a weekly basis on the Opinions Page.

### CONTACT US

[opinions@purdueexponent.org](mailto:opinions@purdueexponent.org)  
765-743-1111 x. 255  
[www.purdueexponent.org](http://www.purdueexponent.org)

### EDITORIAL BOARD

Saran Mishra, Editor-in-chief  
Taylor Vincent, Managing Editor  
Lucia Vaughan, Editorial Cartoonist  
Logan Judy, Columnist

Editorials reflect the opinion of the majority of the editorial board. The opinions expressed by the editorial board may not represent the opinions of The Exponent.

### LETTER SUBMISSION

Include your name, classification, school, local address and phone number and e-mail to [opinions@purdueexponent.org](mailto:opinions@purdueexponent.org) or mail to The Exponent, 460 Northwestern Ave., P.O. Box 2506, West Lafayette, IN., 47906. Letters must be no longer than 300 words. No more than 10 letters will be printed on any single specific topic. No anonymous letters will be printed. The Exponent strives to provide an open forum for all opinions. However, we reserve the right to reject letters. The Exponent will also edit letters for grammar and spelling.