

## Mix It Up Day combats stereotypes

**Chat Sue**  
Guest Commentary

*Editor's note: Academic advisor/instructor Chat Sue's SLS 1990 Introduction to Diversity class is sponsoring the annual Mix It Up event at lunchtime on Tuesday, Nov. 18, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Commons cafeteria.*

My students, all 20 of them, along with volunteer teaching assistants Madeha Mir and Shawn Reed, are busily preparing to make the Mix It Up At Lunch Day event a memorable one, with the hard work of the students in the class. Simultaneously, more than 200,000 other colleges and high schools are hosting similar events all over the country. Befittingly, the main sponsor of this event is the Southern Poverty Center in Montgomery, Ala., led by attorney Morris Dees, legendary for taking on the Klu Klux Klan in various federal court cases and single-handedly bringing about the demise of this hate group.

Since this is the first year that all incoming University of West Florida freshmen are required to take a multicultural course as part of their graduation requirement, our Mix It Up Planning group is especially hoping that students, staff, and faculty will get

into the spirit of the event to make it a rousing success! We especially invite CLOVE volunteers to call 474-3177, or email me at chat-sue@postmark.net to find out how you can help. We also ask for assistance from the faculty who are currently teaching the almost 35 other fall classes that are designated as meeting the multicultural requirement.

Anyone visiting our cafeteria on a typical weekday will find a buzz of activity. Too often students sit with friends, classmates, Greek brothers and sisters, roommates or with their fellow commuters. Even faculty and staff members tend to do the same thing, more so out of habit and familiarity than by design. Granted, UWF has a reputation for friendliness and informality, and it is easy for members from different groups to mingle freely and



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spontaneously outside their inner circle.

Many freshmen remark about how much less cliquish our student body seems, even in the cafeteria, than their high schools were. Already, those like myself who work with student organizations this fall have remarked on their vibrancy and vitality, whether they be the Student Government Association, the Greeks, the International Students Association, the Muslim Student Association, the Hispanic Students Association or a new group such as the Hip-Hop group, East Asian "Desi's" club or the Jewish students group now being formed by Professor Ross Goodman, to name just a few.

So then, why is our Mix It Up group still doing this? As the country approaches the year 2050, demographers predict America's population will become a mosaic of many colors. Thus, it is imperative that we understand each other, whether we be white, brown, yellow or black, regardless of our political, sexual or religious preferences. Further, as my class has vividly seen in recent days, if we don't individually and collectively dispel some of the vicious stereotypes that we perpetuate about ourselves and each other, aided and abetted by a noisome media, our future is looking dim as "one nation, indivisible."

Some on campus even question the

very need for multicultural courses, decrying the "disuniting of America."

Finally, in a few weeks our class is sponsoring a next step for our campus. We'll be organizing several Mix It Up dialogue groups to invite diverse students to foster honest discussion about social, ethnic, racial boundaries and the rigors of "fitting in" in the new America. But we can't do it alone. So, whether you are in a fraternity or a sorority, a Jew, a Muslim, a Hapa, an American Indian, a Desi, a commuter or just plain interested, come and join us - faculty and staff too.

We'd like to use the very successful "study circles" concept that was so effective last year with the community-wide discussions on race relations in Pensacola.

Study circles provide tools to help any community organize productive dialogue, recruit diverse participants, find solutions and work for positive action and change. To learn more, check out [www.studyircles.org](http://www.studyircles.org)

What else can we do, individually and collectively? The Mix It Up group is not sure, but we do know that new ideas and approaches need to be tried in transforming UWF into the campus we all want — one that doesn't just give lip service to these subjects, but truly values diversity and celebrates our differences.

## Seville tones down image, loses luster

**Kris Thoma**  
News Editor

Been to Seville on college night lately? I went last week and was the designated driver for several of my friends. It had been two weeks since I had been to Seville, so I hadn't heard of any of the recent "problems" they've been having with the rowdy college crowd. Maybe you have. If not, read on and find out why Seville sucked last week and why I should learn that it's OK to be rude to sketchy guys.

My friends and I got there around 11:30 p.m. They were playing techno when we walked in, so we grabbed a spot by the bar and just hung out.

About 45 minutes later, they were still playing techno. One of my friends and I went off to check out the rest of the club and this guy stopped me. He was pretty good-looking, very nice, talkative and extremely drunk. Not drunk like slurred speech, spilling his drink on me kind of drunk, but just goofy, a little too confident kind of drunk. Stupidly, I started talking to him anyway. I should have known things had taken a turn for the worst when I discovered:

- He's in the Navy (not that that's bad, I've just had some bad experiences)
- He apparently enjoys pointing out people who he thinks are gay and
- He started touching me as if he had been dating me for years.

It seemed like he would be devastated if I tried to get out of the conversation, so I just kept being nice to him. A little while later, we wound up braving the dance floor, and I discovered that the combination of bad music and his goofy attitude just weren't doing it for me. We left the dance floor about 20 minutes later, and as we were walking up some steps he grabbed me by the waist and tried to pull me back on to the floor. He told me he "had to get his dance on," or something like that. Whatever. I was glad to get rid of him. I found my friends, (who were at the bar wondering why the heck anyone would turn "Baby Boy" into a techno song) and they told me they were ready to leave whenever I was, but I wasn't ready to give up yet. I leaned over and asked the female bartender why they had been playing techno all night. She told me that the club had been having problems, fighting and such lately, and they were trying to tone down a little. I was so mad, I mean I didn't come to the club to stand next to a bar, not be able to order a drink, and not even be able to dance to at least some good music! I wanted my \$8 back.

A few minutes later, the guy came back to me and started hugging on me like I was his girlfriend. I think he could tell I was not having the greatest time, and he told me "it's hard to hit on someone who is sober and not having a good time."

He asked me if I wanted a drink and I said no. I was wearing a red halter top, and at this point, he grabs the front of my shirt and pulls it towards him and just walks away. I was so glad to get rid of him, and I figured that he would not come back. We stood around a little longer while my friends finished their drinks. It was almost 2 a.m. by this time.

The crazy guy came back once more, but at this point I just told him that we were leaving and that maybe I would see him around. Please no.

As my friends and I finally left the club, I felt the urge to say something to a manager or something about how much the night sucked. I really felt cheated! The night was pretty much a complete waste. All I know is it will be a long while before I ever go back to Seville. Hey, I never really thought it was that great anyway.



**Kris Thoma**  
News Editor  
[voyagernews@hotmail.com](mailto:voyagernews@hotmail.com)

## Freethinkers provide outlet for discussions

**Liz Peterson**  
Staff Writer

In spite of the fact that a university campus should be fertile ground for challenging assumptions, our student body at the University of West Florida seems somewhat robotic. There are scores of brilliant minds being wasted on the drive to merely scrape by in hopes of attaining some occupational dream.

While not implying that financial success is a palsy-by-product of any education, it would be gratifying to see that the majority of students were also motivated by some desire to think creatively and critically about the issues that impact our lives.

Luckily, pockets of resistance to this overwhelming apathy are developing with some groups of students. For example, the UWF Freethinkers have been exchanging ideas in the virtual domain of a group e-mail for several years. They hope to provide that fertile ground for critical and rational thinking that is needed at this University.

The Freethinkers held their first sponsored event last month, a presentation by Sally Ferguson, a UWF

professor with a doctorate in philosophy, titled "Evolution: the Big Picture." This event was organized partly to generate discussion about an important philosophical issue of our time, and partly to generate interest in the group and application of free thought in general. As a result of Ferguson's discussion, seven new members were added to the Freethinkers' member list.

So just what are these freethinkers licensing themselves to ponder? The question is best answered by their motto that free thought is the "application of critical thinking and logic to all areas of human experience without dependence on supernatural or authoritarian beliefs."

What frightens and excites many is the notion of finding compassion, tolerance and even morality without referring to religious or governmental rules.

This is certainly not meant to imply that no good comes of religion, or that the freethinker members are themselves atheist or agnostic. In fact, several different faiths are represented in the current membership of the group. But given the fact that there are so many types of beliefs and that these beliefs are often in conflict, the freethinkers hope to find a secular and ration-

al basis of morality while also being open-minded and tolerant of all beliefs.

To unflinchingly face the flaws in reasoning that exist in the status quo has always been the most difficult and dangerous task. This is why Darwin didn't publish his works in his lifetime, why Galileo was ostracized, and why Martin Luther King and Gandhi were assassinated.

All of these people contributed eons to the advancement of science or humanity, but had to face major obstacles in their lifetimes. Thus, any group or activity that welcomes the possibility of free thought does a great service for all people by providing an open forum for difficult philosophical and moral questions.

William Mikulas of the UWF Psychology department will be the next speaker hosted by the Freethinkers at 6 p.m. Nov. 12 in Building 58A, Room 101. Mikulas, who has a doctorate in psychology, will talk about "The Politics of Knowledge." Those who are leery of thinking too much lest they spontaneously combust should not attend.

But this presentation and those that follow should be a relief for those who need an outlet for critical thinking.

## A Nobel Prize, finding freedom through literature

**Megan Youngblood**  
Staff Writer

Before apartheid ended in South Africa, J. M. Coetzee questioned how he could be honored with an award for freedom while also living in an unfree country.

In 1987, his "Life & Times of Michael K" was awarded the Jerusalem Prize for the Freedom of the Individual in Society. Sixteen years later after Coetzee delivered his Jerusalem Prize acceptance speech, he has once again been awarded a freedom prize, the Nobel Prize in literature.

The Swedish Academy chose the South African novelist, highlighting his invention of the alienated character, which "at the decisive moment Coetzee's characters stand behind themselves, motionless, incapable of taking part in their own actions. But passivity is not merely the dark haze that devours personality. It is also the last resort open to human beings as they defy an oppressive order by rendering themselves inaccessible to its intentions."

Born in 1940, the son of an Afrikaner father and an English mother, Coetzee embodies the split personality of South Africa.

Although reared in an Afrikaans-speaking family in Cape Town, his parents sent him to an English-speaking school. He was something of an outsider at school because he acted more English than Afrikaner and remained fluent in Afrikaans, a language with its origins in Dutch settlers.

Alan Riding wrote in The New York Times that

the South African reaction to Coetzee being honored while also being a legitimate representative of the South African portrayal underscores a long debate over Coetzee's career.

"Admirers there view him as unflinchingly honest in his portrayal of the nation's racial and political conflicts before and after apartheid," Riding said. "His critics say he made a name for himself by sensationalizing South Africa's violence and then abandoned the country."

Unavoidably, the trauma of apartheid haunts his novels, even when they appear to be set in a country other than South Africa. "Dusklands" explores Western imperialism by juxtaposing the Vietnam War with a fictional account, which describes the exploitation of native Africans by one of the country's Boer settlers.

Likewise, Coetzee's "Waiting for the Barbarians" takes place at an unspecified time in a town on the frontier of a nameless empire. This novel suggests the chilling emphasis on methods of interrogation and torture as a response to the death of the South African dissident Steve Biko.



**J.M. Coetzee**

When Nelson Mandela was released and South Africa embarked on its extraordinary and turbulent transformation, Coetzee's assault on apartheid had been lost.

"Disgrace" was the turning point, a novel that took its inspiration from social and political conflict, but somehow also transcended its time and place.

Powerfully, in 1987, Coetzee ended his speech referring back to Nietzsche who said we have art so that we shall not die of the truth. But Coetzee also said, "In South Africa there is now too much truth for art to hold — truth by the bucketful — truth that overwhelms and swamps every act of the imagination."

The future direction of Coetzee's work, as with South African literature as a whole, will depend entirely on the nature and the extent of the change that South African society undergoes.

His unshackled homeland can offer a therapeutic means, by which the power of the physical world his body lives in cannot impose itself on his imagination.

Since Coetzee has argued that such freedom is a precondition for the writing of novels that are truly great, maybe now Coetzee can deliver a message, which releases the exhausting truth of his past.

## Correction

**Elizabeth Faist was incorrectly identified as a University of West Florida student. She is a University of Florida student.**

## Letters to the Editor

### Fire Inspections

Great job on the Fire Safety article in The Voyager. I appreciate the way you presented your questions to EH&S and researched your materials that resulted in a story that portrays factual materials to your readers. Your advisor and department chair should be proud of you. That's the kind of journalism I like to see!

Thanks again,

Ron Hambrick, director  
Environmental Health and Safety  
University of West Florida

# VOYAGER

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