Racist flier ‘deported’

Alessa Ribbens
Guest Writer

Jan. 26 started out as a typical Wednesday morning for sophomore Nick Rodriguez ('13), an RA in Kollen Hall. After waking up early to attend a lifting class required for the football team at 7 a.m., he walked through his dorm around 6:45 to make it to class on time. On his way out he noticed a new flier posted among the Greek Life fliers advertising the spring semester rush events. After stopping to read it, Rodriguez ripped it down, along with the others that he saw on his way out the door.

The fliers were advertising the Kappa Kappa Gamma fraternal organization. According to Rodriguez, it was bizarre because “there is no Kappa Kappa on Hope’s campus.” Both the fake fraternity’s acronym and the fictitious rush events referenced the Klu Klux Klan – an organization infamously known for its acts of discrimination and racist behavior.

Upon returning to Kollen after the conclusion of his class, Rodriguez noted that the fliers were hanging all over the dorm. “I took about 15 minutes to go through every floor, basement and study room,” he recalled. “I tried to take them all down before the residents could see them.” Rodriguez estimated that he removed between 75 and 100 fliers.

After removing as many fliers as he could find, Rodriguez sent out an email to the rest of the RA’s in Kollen, notifying them of the events of his morning. From there, sophomore Fe-Fe Marshall ('13) took action and ensured that Hope administration was aware of the incident.

The flier reached the hands of President James Bultman around 1 p.m. that day. “My initial reaction when I first looked at it was, this is racist, this is intentional and this is deplorable,” Bultman said.

According to Bultman, the offices of Public Relations, the Provost, the Dean of the Chapel, The Dean for International and Multicultural Affairs and the Dean of Students all worked together to confront this issue.

Most importantly, Bultman said, they wanted to “emphasize that now is the time to stand against racial discrimination and to say that this is not acceptable and we’re not going to stand for it.”

This desire led to the creation of Stand Up – Students across campus have vowed to stand up to discrimination of all kinds as over 800 “Stand Up” shirts have been passed out over the past week.

‘What I did was asinine and stupid’

S: I talked to people about it beforehand and everyone says, “I didn’t think you’d do it.” And it’s true. I’m too impulsive and too prideful. I was too arrogant to think that I couldn’t not think that my way of refining it would offend. I was certain that people would get it as a parody of Greek Life poster, not an attack on race.

KP: So you intended it as a parody of Greek Life?
S: Yes.
KP: Do you have anything against Greek Life?
S: No.
KP: We’re you on your own or were you with friends?
S: No. I apologized to those I’m regretful to have hurt. I did it.

In response to the posting of a racist flier in Kollen Hall last Wednesday, Chaplain Paul Boersma challenged students in chapel Friday to have an “active obedient faith in Christ Jesus” if we are going to stand against the prevailing powers of the empire of our day.

Drawing from the apostle Paul’s letters to the Colossians, Boersma talked about having a deep, respectful love toward each other.

“It’s a love that construes the best in the other to do them no harm,” Boersma said. He said we are called to love one another no matter what our skin color, cultural background, political views or sexual orientation are.

“When we insult, when we mistreat, when we demean, when we stereotype another person we not only harm that person, but we insult God, the creator who made them... when you tell racist jokes, acts of ignorance or act of insecurity you not only do harm to your fellow human being, you insult the God who made them.”

“Even though [the flier] was directed at people of color, it should be and is offensive to all of us. Therefore as an entire campus community we need to own it, we need to repent of it and we need to stand in unity actively against it,” said Boersma.

This week students have been presented with the opportunity to join in the campus wide initiative “Stand Up.” According to pamphlets circulating around campus, “The purpose of Stand Up is to visibly show student solidarity in supporting our neighbors and to not tolerate ignorant, racist, hateful and discriminatory actions and attitudes on our campus.”

Student Congress President Katie Sawyer started Stand Up in October of 2010. According to Sawyer, “The flier hasn’t been the first incident of some type of discrimination on campus, whether racial or faith or for sexual orientation.”

She created Stand Up as a response from both students and the administration to say that discrimination of any kind is not acceptable and will not stand.

While the flier incident and the launch of Stand Up had no intended consequence, it’s a time when it can be said that...
something up so that you wouldn’t only have to read about Rush events, so that you’d have something to laugh at. Now I understand, this was not something that should be laughed at, it’s brought fear to people of color, anger to those in the Greek community.

KP: How did you go about setting up the KKK? I feel that when parodying Greek Life, there are a lot of different options.

S: Right. Well, the original idea was for IRA which would have been Iota, something, Alpha.

KP: Iota, Rho...?

S: Well, you see Rho doesn’t come out as a capital R when I’d done IRA, this circumstance I’d done with the apology and I feel that if I’d done IRA, this circumstance may have only involved the people of color, anger to those in the Greek community. Because of this I need to do continue doing it, came across KKK. I told quite a few people about it, which is why there were allegations about me before I could come to the Administration. I also told quite a few people, “If they tear these down, I may put up one about Kappa Gamma Beta.” What I did was asinine and stupid beyond belief. What God showed me was “Your pride has always been something that you’ve held and because of it I’m going to break you right now.”

KP: Back up a little bit. So you turned yourself in? Or the REAL IRA came to you?

S: Well I texted a lot of people who I knew telling them that I didn’t expect it to get out of hand like this, but I would go talk to [Dean John] Johnson about it in the morning. So I got back, had a long talk with some very good friends, and I wrote the apology that night. The apology is very simply an acknowledgment that what I’ve done has hurt a lot of people. As a Christian brother, I should never ever desire to harm any of my brothers and sisters. So, at five in the morning I was done with the apology and emailed Johnson saying, “I’m going to be in your office by 9 a.m. to admit guilt to putting up these posters and we need to start reconciling relationships right now.”

S: Now this is in no way a critique of Hope College’s policy or their handling this event, but they’re still being Iota and admitting guilt because you’re going to have a judicial review.

KP: They said that you cannot admit guilt because apparently it’s going to affect their judgment of me. However, with the letters that got put out, I feel like it’s pretty clear that even after talking to them, they’re still being called being an attack.

KP: Do you feel like you’re being treated fairly?

S: It’s very upsetting to me. This point it doesn’t matter. What I did was wrong. They want to call for my expulsion and some extreme punishment. I got to say that I don’t deserve it, because I do. Where I will go is that I cannot put up posters with racial harassment. The word harassment implies that I was doing it on purpose and excessively to a racial group.

KP: Was there any point when you were making the flier that you thought, “This is too much, maybe I’m going too far?”

S: Well, yes. My arrogance said to me, “You’ve taken traces of punishment.” I mean I did outline every degree of racism that I perceived to be taken out. KP: Has there been a campus reaction surprised you?

S: To be completely honest, it did surprise me. I went to work this morning and I found this point I’d hurt my [Christian] brothers and sisters. And you know, nine hours of God sort of pounding in my head and saying “The reason you were upset for even a moment when you found out it was posted and I told someone to tell me to wake, because you thought you were so clever that no one would get upset.” I will own up to the fact that my original group, I will own up to the fact that I was prideful enough to think that I wouldn’t insult anyone.

• Stand Up, from page 1

Stand Up is needed the most. On Monday and Tuesday, student volunteers distributed posters, window clings and buttons around campus promoting Stand Up. Today, students and faculty can be seen all over campus wearing Stand Up T-shirts promoting the initiative.

Throughout the afternoon, there will be conversations held in Cook Hall (11:30-12:30), the Multicultural Lounge located in Phelps Hall (11:30-12:30) and in the Cup and Chaucer (4-5). Also, in an event today, run by sophomores Katy Carlson and Fe-Fe Marshall, students are invited to stop by the DeVitt lobby between 5 and 8 p.m. to have their pictures taken and write statements of what they stand up for.

The initiative will close tonight in Graves Hall at 7 p.m. when students are encouraged to join together for a time of spiritual reflection and student response.

Sawyer said she is “very grateful and appreciative of the support I have gotten from a lot of students with [Stand Up].”

[Sasen] I’ll be here until 9 p.m. On Tuesday, Feb. 2 or when I leave Hope. I’m not the only proponent of this. It needs to continue, and hopefully it will spark a fire in other people around campus.

• Racism, from page 1

distribution of a campus-wide email, notifying the student body of what happened and asking them to join together to stand up against racism.

While the student who posted the fliers said he intended them as a parody of Greek Life rush posters, not as a racist attack, Bultman says it was taken too far. “Whenever you do satire you run the risk of whether people catch the satire or not.”

If it was done with the apology and the public discussion, it was done with the apology and the public discussion. As the Hope community moves forward there is an amount of healing that will be necessary to make progress. While the person to couple of students don’t necessarily represent the student body as a whole, Bultman said, “We’re a community, we’re in this together, what happens in one place reflects on all of us...we can’t all be naive about how we treat each other with dignity and respect, to think that people do have feelings, that they do get hurt, if it’s something that was intended in jest.”

As a Hope community we’ve got to move forward and support one another by standing up against racism and by standing up for what is right.

Greek councils: "Student body should stand up" Multicultural Lounge located in Phelps Hall (11:30-12:30) and in the Cup and Chaucer (4-5). Also, in an event today, run by sophomores Katy Carlson and Fe-Fe Marshall, students are invited to stop by the DeVitt lobby between 5 and 8 p.m. to have their pictures taken and write statements of what they stand up for.

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Not only did it hurt and offend people of color, according to Dean of Students Richard Frost, it hurt the students who participate in Greek Life. “The Greek system is very upset and very determined not to let this define who we are,” Frost said in an interview Friday.

Due to student rights and protection, Frost could not discuss who created and distributed the fliers.

However, in a follow-up campus-wide email sent last Wednesday, “The Greek system leadership” acknowledged that “steps have been taken to resolve this situation.”

He wrote that, “the one shining moment through all of this is the manner in which the community have stood up, allowing us to make significant progress relative to this incident.”

As the Hope community moves forward there is an amount of healing that will be necessary to make progress. While the person to couple of students don’t necessarily represent the student body as a whole, Bultman said, “We’re a community, we’re in this together, what happens in one place reflects on all of us...we can’t all be naive about how we treat each other with dignity and respect, to think that people do have feelings, that they do get hurt, if it’s something that was intended in jest.”

As a Hope community we’ve got to move forward and there is an amount of healing that will be necessary to make progress. While the person to couple of students don’t necessarily represent the student body as a whole, Bultman said, “We’re a community, we’re in this together, what happens in one place reflects on all of us...we can’t all be naive about how we treat each other with dignity and respect, to think that people do have feelings, that they do get hurt, if it’s something that was intended in jest.”

As a Hope community we’ve got to move forward and support one another by standing up against racism and by standing up for what is right.
We therefore commit ourselves

Thank you for providing the Hope College community with a special issue discussing discrimination on campus. We also applaud Stand Up shirts which make no exclusions in calling for an end to discrimination, ignorance, hatred, prejudice and harassment against all our neighbors. Of the flier in Kollen Hall, "you want as long as you don't... says President Bultman remarked, “This incident has struck a nerve in all of us. The character of Hope College, its students, teachers, staff and administration was attacked by this act.”

Our new position statement regarding human sexuality states that “the College recognizes that there are serious and legitimate differences regarding human sexuality, and thus, the College seeks to understand the biblical witness to these differences and to oppose any kind of discrimination, ignorance, hatred, prejudice and harassment against all our neighbors. Of the flier in Kollen Hall, ‘you want as long as you don’t speak up about it.’”

We would like to add to the paper’s story about discrimination. Racism is a big problem on this campus, and I am sure that anyone feels that they are in a position to judge someone. But it’s not only racism that bugs me. Have you read the school’s new title VI policy on campus? We also applaud the College for putting into place a special position statement regarding human sexuality. I find that it’s very odd that Hope College will stand up for discrimination against race and force acceptance, but when it comes to being gay, bisexual, or transgender, it’s not accepted.

Not only are you discriminating when you talk about people of other races, but discrimination also involves you withholding respect from people of a different sexual identity. I think that it’s very odd that Hope College will stand up for discrimination against race and force acceptance, but when it comes to being gay, bisexual, or transgender, it’s not accepted.

The new policy basically states that “the individual believes whatever they want as long as they don’t speak up about it.”

You may argue that the Bible states it should only be a man and a woman in a relationship, but God also allows tattoos, work on the Sabbath day, have a haircut that is round, play with pigskin (football), use birth control, wear polyester or any other blended fabric, get divorced, or wear gold items. So I’m very confused as to why it’s OK to discriminate against the gay community, but discrimination against race is completely unacceptable.

I believe that this is hypocritical and should be brought to people’s attention. This is a college before it is a church. Yes, the community of this school is very religiously oriented, but it is a center for education, not worship.

Kara Palmer (‘14)
The Anchor

Stand Up

February 2, 2011

Letters to the Editors

Who I am is not who I set out to be,
I did not ask for this,
This erasure,
All to your illusion,
Your image is not what we perceive
Yet it's not what you make it to be,
Me with your power,
And my kind with their lack thereof,
You're sure to keep us in line,
All the while taking our dreams.

Our false sense of reality
The false hope that one day you might change
That these injustices will one day subside.
One day we will be equal,
All the while admiring our difference.
The brown skin that makes you beautiful,
The blue eyes that captivate my soul,
The hair that drives you crazy, but makes his image of you com-

Injustices, we can steal power from
If we can just get the man who delivers that final say to finally see
The people that make this world whole.

President Bultman:
First, I would like to thank you for your time and consideration. It is deeply appreciated and it is great to have a president who is so concerned with our well being and willing to listen to at least one of his stu-
dents.

Certainly you are not unaware of the various student groups that have arisen from your disa-

To the Hope Community:
When I first found out about the poster, it was 7:30 that Wednesday night. I was at work, and two hours later I found myself on the most fearful walk home of my life. I did not know what to do or what to expect. I could only believe the emails that were being sent saying that something was going to be done.

An hour later, I saw the poster at my residen-
tial mandatory meeting, and that's when I became furious. I found myself becoming even more up-
set when I heard students saying, "This is such a waste of time. I could be doing my homework." And laughing at different comments my Resident Director made.

I felt the adrenaline rush through my body to the max. I knew I could not get angry because that's the last stereotype I wanted to prove to any-
one, and I knew another option that was out of the question was leaving. I knew that I couldn't calm down because all they would say was how "It's my fault that I decided to come to a school like this."

I also knew that many of my friends and other students felt the same exact way or worse and that I wasn't exaggerating. I was blessed to come here with one of the greatest friends in the world, who is also my roommate. I knew that we had each other. As for my other friends, I just wanted to do all that I could.

I really feel like this is a big wake up call for Hope College to realize that life has many flaws and obstacles, and that it's nowhere near perfect. As college students, this is part of our learning process. If we are shielded from that, and not told exactly what is going on, then how are we able to grow in not only our education, but our daily experiences?

I love Hope College and the Phelps Scholars program dearly. I was extremely disappointed, but like some people have said, "We can only keep moving forward and only fix what has been done." What I have also taken from this is that as a communication major, American ethnic stud-

Sincerely,
Cecilia Jaime ('11)

To the Hope Community:

Black students do not grace our campus with their presence any more than you. You are all members of the Hope College community, and the place here is intricate and important. Guest speakers, writers, artists, and faculty may grace Hope Col-
lege, but not you and certainly not Hope's stu-
dents. We are all functioning and worthy mem-
bers of the Hope family. Your words polarized the campus by making us feel that we were the "us," including those that belong, and a "them," including those that don't belong but are here anyways. We all belong here.

We are all brothers and sisters of color. Sim-
ply because there are less black than white people here does not mean "they" are not "us." President Bultman, we all have a color. There isn't just black and white, there is also pale, golden-brown, olive, black, really brown, tan, not-so-tan, super black, sun-kissed, and the occasional green. What is your color? It doesn't matter because we are all brothers and sisters.

I understand that being politically correct and using the correct language and terminology can be incredibly difficult, but it is necessary to at least attempt to do so. The students here make up one student body with many different voices and experiences. Please do not use our differ-
ences as a means to polarize; we don't wish to be separated.

Sincerely,
Michael Parmele ('12)

Letters to the Editors