

March 31, 2016

To the St. Mary's Community:

The Department of English condemns the aggression and incivility evinced by recent events on campus, particularly the "Natty Boh Hunt" in which beer cans were embellished with Confederate flags and racist, sexist, and anti-Semitic jokes. We are deeply disappointed to see these expressions of bigotry and provocation, and we are particularly alarmed by the lack of respect and lack of caring for members of our community that these actions show. These incidents violate the St. Mary's Way. They do not respect our community. They do not reflect our community. They treat our community as if it is the comments section of a webpage, and we will not tolerate such a devaluing of the College and its educational mission.

We believe that words matter. In our critical and creative work, we study the impact of words on our experiences and on our understanding of the world. Our courses are about discourse: the discussion of language, and the use of language to engage with each other in meaningful dialogues, often about difficult subjects. The words and images that appeared on beer cans this weekend are not intended to further such dialogues; they are meant to harm and to provoke, to undercut the seriousness with which we take diversity and inclusion on our campus. They try to tell us that caring about how others feel and treating each other with civility are outdated, silly, weak. In the guise of a joke, they jeer.

The words on the cans say that the St. Mary's Way doesn't matter.

We reject this message.

Karen Anderson  
Robin Bates  
Kate Chandler  
Beth Charlebois  
Ben Click  
Jennifer Cognard-Black  
Jeff Coleman  
Ruth Feingold  
Jerry Gabriel  
Jeff Hammond  
Colby Nelson  
Brian O'Sullivan  
Bruce Wilson  
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