

To the Editor,

The media throughout the Ku Klux Klan controversy at Fort Lewis has reported that the Political Science Club as a whole invited Shawn Slater of the KKK to speak on campus. That is not the case. It was done by only eight members of the club. There are more than 15 members. While the concept of majority is understood, the sensitivity of the issue should have required the eight members, and specifically our advisor, to see that a more thorough discussion take place. I will make known to all some of the things that have been kept under the table during this chaos caused by a few students and an advisor.

I did not attend the meeting where Shawn Slater was invited because of an emergency, nor was I aware that the issue of inviting Shawn Slater was on the agenda. If I would have known that the issue of Shawn Slater was to be discussed, I would have still not attended (because of the nature of emergency). I would have directed the Club to wait on a decision. Upon reviewing the minutes of the meeting where Shawn Slater was invited (the meeting took place on 11-13-91), it shows that the Vice-President Karlene Van Pelt presided. There are no problems with that since the constitution of the Poli Sci Club states that, "in the absence of the President, the Vice President can preside." However, the problem is when the presiding officer makes a motion to bring the KKK to FLC. The motion is then seconded and there is no discussion. The presiding officer then moves again to call for the vote. The vote is then unanimous. That is clearly an act of dictatorship. To me, these are grounds for the meeting to be declared null and void.

Who decides on the validity of a club meeting? If it is to be the Student Court it will not work because Antonio Acello is the Chief Justice and also one of the eight who supported bringing Shawn Slater. I believe the Constitution committee of the Senate and/or the Senate as a whole can decide the validity of a meeting. It will be rough because the advisor to the Senate is the same advisor to the Poli Sci Club. Nevertheless, the action of the presiding officer during the Poli Sci club meeting where Shawn Slater was invited needs to be studied to determine the validity of the meeting. It has to be done by the Senate.

It is obvious that upon that vote there was a tremendous uproar. When pressured by the uproar, the advisor called meetings which she termed advisory meetings, and stated that it was a concern of only those that voted to bring Shawn Slater. It was to be closed to the public. The eight members would then bring in minority members and concerned individuals secretly to state their opinion. Upon the input of concerned individuals, clubs, and organizations, the eight members would then vote again. This action illustrates an advisor who is advising college students to do things backward. The advisor would have from the start advised that input from minorities and concerned individuals be heard first before the vote. Furthermore, if a discussion were to

# The balance weighs against the Klan

The decision's been made. ~~Nothing says~~ at FLC. This piece of news would be a paydirt issue right now if it hadn't been overshadowed by another piece of news—The Klan's coming to the Fort. That statement alone brings a certain amount of fear and hesitancy on the part of the student body. How much is hesitancy, but certainly more than any



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By Saturday, the Political Science Club accepted the invitation to invite Shawn Slater to Fort Lewis College as one of several speakers in a "academic forum" during Racial Awareness Month. Yes, it's possible the title could be "Racial Awareness," but that depends on the other speakers the Political Science Club invites.

To my knowledge, the club has not decided on who those other speakers might be, and I wonder if their original plans included other speakers. Just the same, whether Slater or any of a speaker shows or not, the communication this issue has caused is enough to make any "I-wish-it-was-the-sixties-and-we-had-something-to-do" type of student wake up from a nostalgic coma and shout a business slogan.

It seems a number of business have profited from the "Klan on campus" issue, but I doubt any minority groups have. The Political Science Club, making such a big splash, must certainly be happy. Considering all of the free and unselected publicity he and his organization has received, I don't think Slater and his fellow Klansmen could be happier. And the Media has squeezed a good bit of mileage out of it as well. All in all, no one could be happier.

That is, except for minority and FLC students in general. Something about this entire issue, how it came about, how it grew has bothered me. It seems to be a case where the needs of many have been sacrificed for the desires of a few. I can't help but feel the entire campus is being pulled into something by a few people—maybe for better, maybe for worse.

I suppose the motivation for asking Slater to speak at FLC could be in an effort to raise the question of racism in America. If this is the case, the effort may be worthwhile. Racism is a disease that has fed off of our nation for the

eventually eliminate racism in our society, then this forum has a place on this campus. Does Slater fit into this? Or will he only help to sustain the polarization between races and cultures?

For the past few weeks, I've heard and read countless opinions about Slater and the Klan. In every case, the opinion has been predicated with a statement about the right to free speech. In each case, the speaker or writer made it clear that they did not believe in the Klan's views, but felt the Klan, like anybody else, has a right to express its view. Besides that and some stickers, I don't think I've seen any support for Klan activities on campus.

Slater, like anybody, has certain rights that include the freedom to express his beliefs. The question is not whether he has a right to deliver his message. The question is if his message is of any relevance to the FLC student body. Does he have anything to say that is of value to the student body?

I understand the Klan has changed over the years. Supposedly, it's a "kinder, gentler" Klan. The days of lynching and cross-burning have given way to political activism (except in Debouque). The rhetoric of hate has been replaced by a carefully planned, carefully worded ideology. But the message remains the same. Although the Klan may pursue its goals in ways different from the past, their motives and their goals have not changed. While the organization may appear different than in years past, make no doubt about it, it is still the Klan.

If there is a message that should come out of this affair, I think it will be aimed at the White students and will be this: Racism is a festering wound deeply entrenched in American society. While minorities absorb the pain and injustice of this disease, ultimately it is White America that possesses it. If we learn anything from Shawn Slater, it will be because we see a little of ourselves in him. While racism exists, our ideals of freedom, justice and democracy will never be fully realized.

It is time to eradicate this sore from ourselves, our communities, and eventually from our society. The time has come to not just open this wound, but tear it apart. Expose it so that the lies, fear, hatred and ignorance can drain away.

Can Shawn Slater help in this regard? I have my doubts. Is the FLC campus ready to accept such a challenge? I have my doubts.

While I question the motivation of the Political Science Club, I commend them for their courage. I hope they know what they're doing.

[PAGE 2]