

With fraternity racism, it takes courage to object: A letter to the editor

- Letters to the Editor, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune
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Re: "[When brotherhood is mixed up with bad behavior](#), who steps forward to talk" Opinions, March 12. Jarvis DeBerry in his finely reasoned commentary on why no one had the courage to step forward to talk to authorities after witnessing racist acts , ranging from heinous crimes by police officers in post-Katrina New Orleans to ignorantly insensitive chants by privileged fraternity brothers in Oklahoma, cites Mark Twain's treatment of the same phenomenon in his essay, "[The United States of Lyncherdom](#)" (1901).

Ironically Twain's own actions give us the answer. Twain decided not to publish his "scathing indictment" of public lynchings and his equally harsh criticism of American militarism during the Spanish-American War, "The War Prayer" (1904-05), because he needed the revenues from his writing to support his family. He

did not want to risk lowering book sales by offending the readers who bought his books.

Some never see what is wrong. Others who do see, like Twain, lack the courage to face the consequences of doing what is right. That is what makes human beings like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Muhammed Ali and the late U.S. Sen. Wayne Morse of Oregon so rare and special. They see and act no matter what the personal consequences.

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