



Photo by Jordan May

The Great Debate

Does Martin Hall need to rename its parties? By Greer Veon

In the past year, the names of Martin Hall parties have created much controversy among students. “You’re not inclusive,” some claim. “You’re not supporting equality,” others say. But many on campus ask, “What exactly is going on?”

“It’s an issue that’s been a topic of discussion for years at Hendrix, but there are certain party names that include very sexist, bigoted, misogynistic language,” senior Marissa Lee, chair of the Committee on Gender and Sexuality (COGS), said. “I think that perhaps as Hendrix students have become more impassioned about the issue, they’ve become more vocal about it as well. So even though this has been a real problem for years before any of us were students at Hendrix, the discussion about it has sort of been rejuvenated lately.”

As a campus that recently made the pledge to move forward toward a more inclusive community, many students find that a party culture based on degrading terms towards others in our community blocks such growth. With such a wide range of views, the campus is encouraging a conversation. Sophomore Mari Thomeczek, president of Veasey Hall Council, explained the dorm’s decision for holding an open meeting over the issue.

“We invited all Veasey residents to express their opinions about the party names so that we could gauge the level of people’s concern,” Thomeczek said. “A lot came up during the discussion and there were definitely both positive and negative comments about the party names. We talked about how there is a wide range of reactions to Martin party themes; what offends one person might empower another. We also talked about how we as a dorm can foster a safer and more inclusive environment on campus by looking out for each other and offering alternative events on the nights that Martin Hall has parties.”

The conversation shows that students on campus want to make changes. Solutions are not only coming from those who feel degraded by the names for these parties, but also from the Martin Hall men.

“It’s incredibly important to note that Martin Hall has made and continues to make very real efforts to deal with these issues,” Lee said. “Robots is now officially ‘Robots and Aliens.’ Members of Martin Hall Council work on rounds on party nights to make sure that non-Hendrix students aren’t there without a Hendrix friend. Last year, an incredibly misogynistic com-

ment was made at a Martin party, and Hall Council made the decision to shut the party down immediately.”

The recognition of Martin Hall’s efforts have also been noted by other students and most recently in the Veasey Hall meeting.

“Some girls noted that they were glad that Martin Hall Council has deliberately shortened party names from what they were in previous years,” Thomeczek said. “They felt that this was a clear effort to phase out party names that might be offensive.”

As a campus that strives to think about community in its entirety, though, students should remember that this is not strictly a Martin Hall issue. Lee agrees.

“There’s a real issue with only condemning Martin Hall for party names,” Lee said. “By no means is this behavior limited to Martin. Party culture at Hendrix as a whole needs to change. There have been problematic party names in recent years that were in no way associated with Martin. To place the blame for the party culture at Hendrix solely on Martin in no way addresses the root of the problem: that we as a student body have created a culture that prioritizes ‘fun’ over the respect, dignity and equality of our fellow students.”

The facts are there: “Playboy” and “Bae Watch” also degrade women but are not thrown in Martin Hall. Even “White Trash Bash,” a party making fun of individuals with low socioeconomic statuses, also happens outside room 101.

So are we moving forward? If so, how does the Hendrix community work together to move past this problem within our party culture?

“No one entity on campus can solve this problem,” Lee said. “Not COGS or Senate or Martin Hall. But the reason this is such a prevalent topic of discussion on campus right now is that students, no matter what opinion they hold on the subject, care. The hope is that student leaders can respectfully approach the issue from either side to reach a resolution that is satisfactory for all students - that we can still keep the wild, fun spirit of Hendrix parties that everyone loves while also refraining from the use of discriminatory language.”