Sanitation Sanity
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Considering everything that is on a college student’s mind, most students don’t worry too much about the cleanliness of campus facilities. The bulky cleaning cart laden with an array of cleaning supplies is a common and somewhat comforting sight. Few would suspect that they have a false sense of security, but should students be concerned if the cleaners doubt the sanitation of the areas they clean?

Pam Gilg is a restroom specialist in the Merritt Athletic Center. In the ladies room, leaning against a sink that she had just sprayed down, Pam discussed her concerns about the products used to clean and sanitize the restrooms. “I would prefer to use bleach,” she explained, “Then you know it’s clean.”

Instead of using bleach, cleaners are supposed to use an alternative cleaner, Spic & Span. “I’ve been here 14 years,” she said, “this is the sixth product we have changed to.” She explained that previously they were using a gel scrub that she had confidence in, but it was replaced because Spic & Span was cheaper.

Still, there is a consensus among campus cleaners that they would rather use bleach for the sake of sanitation, but to do so is strictly forbidden. Punishments for using bleach start at verbal warnings and may escalate to dismissal.

Assistant Director of Facilities, Kirk Spangler, explained that bleach is forbidden for health and safety purposes. “Bleach can be highly volatile as well as fatal if mistakenly mixed with other cleaning products.” Spangler also discussed the eco-friendly side of the alternative cleaning supplies. “The current push in the industry is to go "GREEN" with environmentally friendly products,” he said, “this has been instrumental in developing alternative products with satisfactory results.”
This does not keep cleaners from risking punishment for the sake of sanitation. Recently several cleaners from the residential buildings in the Central Quad were punished after being turned in for using bleach. A Suffolk Hall cleaner commented on the need for bleach, “It would kill the mold. This stuff keeps it down, but doesn't kill it.” She continued, “They want to go green, well considering the mold, I guess they are.”

Gilg does not try to use bleach for the sake of her job, but she does share the sentiment of her colleagues. “They're trying to save money,” she said, “but they're not because we're using more of the cleaner to get things clean.”