

October 2005

# Diskord

the journal of progressive thought



## In This Issue:

- German Elections Explained.....10**
- America's Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia....15**
- An Interview with Srikanth Reddy.....19**
- Race, Ignorance and Student Conduct.....21**

## In this Issue

### Features

<b>World News in Brief</b> .....3 <i>News Briefs by Charles Umeano</i>
<b>Letter to the Editor</b> .....4 <i>by Kelly Kelleher Richter</i>
<b>Myth</b> .....7 <i>Poetry by Charles Umeano</i>
<b>Blue Blanket, Fragile and Eurydice</b> .....18 <i>Poetry by Amanda Machin</i>
<b>Poet to Poet: Srikanth Reddy</b> .....19 <i>Interview by Charles Umeano</i>
<b>Apocalypse in a Flicker of Light</b> .....20 <i>Poetry by Charles Umeano</i>
<b>Winter Coat</b> .....22 <i>Poetry by Charles Umeano</i>
<b>Letter to the Editor</b> .....22 <i>by Maren Christensen and Nick Juravich</i>

### Domestic Issues

<b>The GOP's Moment of Truth</b> .....5 <i>Domestic Issues by Jason Dawsey</i>
<b>National Insecurity</b> .....6 <i>Domestic Issues by Julie Fry</i>
<b>God vs. God</b> .....7 <i>Domestic Issues by Sam Boyd</i>

### International Issues

<b>The Fine Line of Refuge Status</b> .....8 <i>International Issues by Rachel Lindner</i>
<b>Making Sense of German Elections</b> .....10 <i>International Issues by Sarah Eldridge</i>

### Political Commentary

<b>Brown's Lasting Legacy</b> .....14 <i>Political Commentary by Tim Michaels</i>
<b>Militarism in Southeast Asia</b> .....15 <i>Political Commentary by Andrew Stecker</i>
<b>Marketing Politics</b> .....16 <i>Political Commentary by Liz Egan</i>

### Culture

<b>"Beyond Green" Review</b> .....17 <i>Cultural Commentary by Adam Brunk</i>
<b>Race, Ignorance and Student Conduct</b> .....21 <i>Campus Commentary by Fithawee Tzeggai</i>

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## Mission Statement

With our bi-quarterly publication, Diskord, we intend to fill the void that exists between the student community, progressive causes, and the outside world at the University of Chicago.

Our publication will provide a centralized hub for progressives to voice their causes and activities to the greater student body.

We furthermore seek to underscore the relevance of campus student issues to real world current events through an accessible print publication.

Because of our bi-quarterly format we will provide in depth coverage and analysis of international, domestic, and cultural issues.

Also, we will provide a much needed progressive voice currently lacking in student media.

Inquiries, concerns and letters should be directed towards Julie Fry (juliquah@gmail.com) and Ali Winston (ali.winston@gmail.com)

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# World News in Brief

## Europe

**Spain-** Spain's announcement of its plans to build a third fence that would separate the Ceuta and Melilla from Morocco has undergone criticisms from both NGOs as well as the EU executive arm. The purpose of the barrier would be to keep out sub-Saharan Africans who are attempting to enter Europe in order to escape poverty in their home country. However, neither of Spain's other two barriers have proved effective, instead they have killed 13 people and injured several others in the past month. Furthermore, Spain expulsion of yet another migrant group from Melilla has led to 11 more deaths.

**England-** Responding to the decision of the European Court of Human Rights, which granted ex-convict John Hirst, who had pleaded guilty to manslaughter, from his right to free election, Lord Falconer announced in a BBC radio 4 show that "the result of this is not that every convicted prisoner is in the future going to get the right to vote." He was supported by Shadow attorney general Dominic Grieve who stated that giving prisoners the right to vote would be a mockery of justice.



**Italy-** Sicily is undergoing its own Abu Ghraib-esque scandal following the publication of Fabrizio Gatti's article in the centre-left news magazine L'Espresso that exposed the physical and verbal mistreatments of detainees at the hands of paramilitary carabinieri officers.

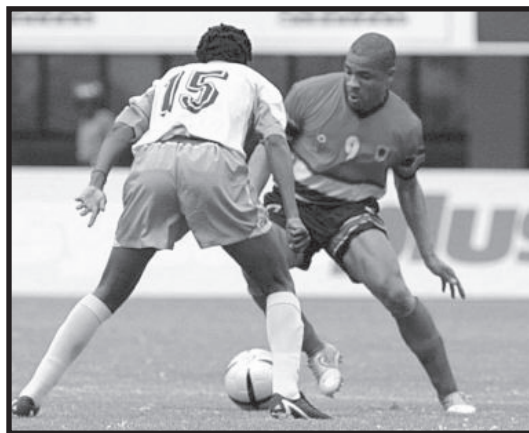
**Germany-** Two and a half weeks following the inconclusive parliamentary election, incumbent Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and his conservative challenger, Angela Merkel stated that talks regarding

the implementation of a left-right government had been positive. However, critics remain suspicious of Schröder and wonder if he is playing a political poker game intended to secure the best coalition deal for his party. Moreover, conservatives have been pressuring Schröder to step down and that Merkel, as leader of the largest party in parliament, should hold office.

**Ireland-** Canadian officials have verified the Irish Republican's Army (IRA) decision to destroy its arsenal. This marks what could be a historic step towards the goal of a lasting peace in Ireland. However, members of the Democratic Protestant Union remain skeptical given the lack of photo documentation of the disarmament, which they had originally demanded.

## Africa

**Côte d'Ivoire-** In response to the Ivorian rebels call for a post-October transitional government, current president Laurent Gbagbo stated in a national address given on September 27 that he would remain in office until a duly-appointed successor was appointed. He also mentioned that article 38 of the Ivorian constitution allows for the incumbent head of state to stay in power "in case of grave events or circumstances, notably attacks against the territorial integrity or natural disasters that render the normal course of elections impossible."



**World Cup Qualifying-** Angola was the first African team to qualify for the FIFA World Cup Finals. Angola leads the pack of the three historic,

*by Charles Umeano*

first-time qualifiers from Africa that includes Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo. The country of Tunisia became the fifth African country to qualify following their 2-2 draw with Morocco.

## Americas

**Guatemala-** A landslide triggered by Hurricane Stan has killed 1,400 people in the highland village of Panabaj. The effects of the storm has also killed 67 people in El Salvador, 24 in Mexico and 11 in Nicaragua, and leaving tens of thousands homeless across the region, according to authorities in those countries said. Fire-brigade spokesperson Mario Cruz issued this statement: "There are no survivors here. It happened more than 48 hours ago. They are dead."

**Nicaragua-** The White House has warned Nicaraguan politicians that any attempts to oust current president Enrique Bolaños would result in millions of dollars of aid to be withheld from the country. This statement resulted from news of the attempt of the return of Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega. The Nicaraguan Assembly is presently debating to impeach Bolaños for alleged campaign finance violations.

## Australasia

**Australia-** Australia's Prime Minister John Howard and Foreign Prime Minister Alexander Downer are increasing pressure on the Indonesian government to stridently monitor the activities of Jemaah Islamiah, the organization connected to those who orchestrated the Bali bombings that killed 22 people including the 3 suicide bombers. For his part, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has requested the involvement of the Indonesian military in preventing future attacks. **D**

# Letter to the Editor

## Women and Careers: The Reactionary Amnesia of our *Times*

**D**

ear Editor,

Last month when I picked up my daily New York Times, I was shocked to face the prominent front page headline “Many Women at Elite College Set Career Path to Motherhood.” The September 20<sup>th</sup> article, by recent Yale graduate and former Times intern Louise Story, details the career hopes and ambitions of a select group of young women at Yale, Harvard, Penn, and like institutions. According to Story, a significant social transformation is taking shape in this country: today’s well-educated young women are increasingly, moreover enthusiastically, willing to abandon hard-earned professional careers to pursue traditional full-time childrearing and homemaking roles.

While the Times frequently indulges in light-hearted, anecdotal, or human-story driven front page news pieces – “fluff” pieces as the journalism buffs call them – such as last weekend’s shocker about the popularity of high school-style drinking games in the college frat scene, Louise Story’s article presents a much more serious specter than your average harmless Times “fluff” or just any explicit case of bad, unprofessional journalism. More unfortunately, Story’s article underlines the waning integrity of “news” even within today’s liberal elite media, in a status quo where reactionary and historically ill-informed arguments are garnering increasing airtime and popular acceptance.

Almost immediately after publication, Story’s September article ignited a fervor in journalism and women’s studies circles. The Times was bombarded with public inquires and letters and the article won a top spot on the Times’ website “most e-mailed” list. In response to the intense scrutiny, the Times offered Story’s clarification of her methodologies online and nothing more. Story apparently conceived her article as a Columbia journalism school project; unable to find any academic research on “the aspirations of young women at elite schools,” she launched a series of voluntary written surveys of selected cohorts of Yale women, yielding 138 responses to provide an information base alongside selected interviews with students, faculty, and administrators.

From this limited, amateur project, Story was afforded an opportunity to proclaim on the Times’ front news page: “At Yale and other top colleges, women are being groomed to take their place in an ever more diverse professional elite. It is almost taken for granted that, just as they make up half the students at these institutions, they will move into leadership roles on an equal basis with their male classmates. There is just one problem with this scenario: many of these women say this is not what they want. Many women at the nation’s most elite colleges say they have already decided that they will put

aside their careers in favor of raising children.”

Slate Editor Jack Shafer and many other critics have lambasted the article on professional journalistic grounds for good reason. Amongst other flaws, Story’s article relies excessively upon ambiguous terms like “seems” and “many” to extrapolate otherwise unsubstantiated trends. What’s more, Story quotes so selectively that several of her key sources, including Yale faculty, have publicly declared their statements misrepresented and her report one-sided. More analytically, Story’s Yale surveys were rife with leading questions,<sup>1</sup> her survey sample was initially skewed and further distorted its voluntary nature, and perhaps most importantly, her sample itself was not even statistically relevant to claim any broad trend.

Despite the many obvious disqualifiers, Story manipulates her survey data to enhance her case. As one Times editorial page letter comments in stark contrast to Story’s own interpretations, specifically her exclusion of part time work as viable employment in opposition to standard Department of Labor practice, “Do the math, and you have 70 percent [of Yale women surveyed] planning to continue working through motherhood.” In 2004 fact, about 71%

**More troubling than sheer bad journalism  
are the reactionary social ideas Story’s article  
propagates under a rubric of news.**

of all women with children under 18 were working, according to the Department of Labor.<sup>2</sup> It seems clear thus, that even if Story’s surveys were valid for analysis, they would contradict her case. Slate’s Shafer duly summarizes, “While bogus, [Story’s article] isn’t false: It can’t be false because it never says anything sturdy enough to be tested.” Shafer in turn questions, “So, how did it get to Page One?” Who the hell knows.

Much more troubling than sheer bad journalism on the front page of our national “paper of record,” are the reactionary social ideas Story’s article propagates under a rubric of news. Story promotes an idea that college women today believe they possess, and hence, can “take for granted,” equal opportunities to pursue professional leadership roles; opportunities which they can then relinquish for the love of raising children. While progress in gender equality over the past several decades has been remarkable, the glass ceiling, sexism, and unfair pay in the professional world remain undeniable realities for women with and without children. To posture that well-educated young women are unconscious of this ever-present if media-muted status quo is ludicrous. Perhaps Story has failed to notice for example, that only 2 out of the 9 high-profile News editors on the Times masthead are women; maybe she believes such gross under-representation exists simply because all otherwise smart, qualified women for the job are off raising children instead.

*by Kelly Kelleher Richter*

When Story claims that “many young women at the nation’s top schools are [“unbothered”] by the strictures of traditional roles,” she promotes an idea that America’s brightest young women passively accept the failure of society to adapt itself to legalized gender equality. While a select minority of young college women may be “unbothered” by the prospect of their husbands saddling them with the majority of family responsibilities as they simultaneously attempt to pursue careers (or as Story posits, reject such careers), I doubt the majority of college women today would not, in the least, demand that their partner share in childrearing. It is 2005 after all.

Story’s article highlights one of the worst components of today’s hypocritical “family values” discourse by promoting an idea that working women are inherently insufficient caregivers. Story’s article is rich in extreme commentary from young college women and their stay-at-home moms declaring how they have witnessed firsthand that working women cheat their children. Only one young woman in the article is given a chance to counter the charge. Not one mention is made to the parental deficiencies of working fathers, and most interestingly, no space is afforded to the commentary of the indicted class of working mothers themselves.

One supporter of Story’s “return to the home” thesis, Times’ editorialist Nicholas Kulish, has misguidedly attempted to extrapolate a larger social phenomenon behind Story’s “evidence,” citing Bureau of Labor statistics that there has been 2% drop in workforce participation for women with children under 18 since 2000. Declaring this proof that significant number of American women are “planning a U-turn” and “want to be Harriets again,” Kulish unfortunately fails to comprehend, like Story, basic social science; one cannot make inferences about motives from sheer statistical data. Perhaps Kulish would be educated by so-called “macroeconomic employment trends;” since 2000, male employment rates have also dipped in this country.

While it is easy to manipulate statistics, it is much harder to rewrite popular history. One must wonder though if Story honestly believes she is enlightening the Times readership in declaring: “There is, of course, nothing new about women being more likely than men to stay home and rear children.” Perhaps Story believes we now live in a post-modern vacuum where no one even remembers that a long and very difficult struggle for basic women’s rights recently took place. It appears that not just Story but the Times editorial board itself suffers from a peculiar historical “amnesia.” Slate’s Shafer has dug up a ripe 1980 front page Times article, entitled “Many Young Women Now Say They’d

Pick Family Over Career," to argue the point. This 1980 article, blatantly biased, incorrect, and reflective of the views of a society much less open to professional women than ours, resembles Story's 2005 article in near exact structure and content. Why is Story's article, 25 years on, any more acceptable?

It is dismaying that the much of the discourse responding to Story's article on the Times letters page entertains Story's skewed portrait of the opinions of a select few women as de facto representative of the opinions of "many" women in America's top-tier colleges today; the article leaves the ambitions of the vast majority unrepresented and unheard. It must be reinforced in turn, that regardless how distasteful and disturbing Story's interview subjects are (if their accounts are even accurate), their opinions are of no arguable relevance to college women as a class. That a limited number of young women at Yale and elsewhere don't want to seize the full potential of their education and hope to spend lives living off someone else's money is not national news; many bright young men also enjoy squandering the life opportunities their parents buy them. If anything, Story's article underlines the danger of a staple liberal American institution transgressing bounds of journalistic integrity to catch a snappy headline and in the process offer a boon to ill-informed, reactionary causes. The Times here unfortunately follows in hot pursuit of popular mainstream news media increasingly riddled with misinformation and scandal.

It is worthwhile, for clarity, to emphasize that questionably sexist material is not new to our contemporary Times; such features have recently graced the paper's op-ed pages and even weekly magazine (see Lisa Belkin's "The Opt-Out Revolution," October 26, 2003). What is strikingly different about Story's September article from its many predecessors is that the sexist editorialized ideas have been so explicitly categorized as news materials in of themselves. It is painfully obvious to any critical observer that when our leading liberal media institution is allowed shamelessly off the hook for printing borderline sexist "fluff" as front page news, and meanwhile, "intelligent design theory" wins extensive airtime on national policy debate programs, local TV excessively fixates on a life-support dilemma of an arbitrary brain dead woman in Florida, and major, serious issues such as America's increasing race and class inequalities are muted for being just too unpalatable to warrant coverage, American media is in need of some deep reflection and re-evaluation.

One might think some thoughtful analysis on the sorry state of American news media would be perfectly fitting right about now.

*Kelly Richter, BA in History '05, was a founder and former Managing Editor of Diskord.*

<sup>1</sup> To see Story's surveys visit: [http://www.gelfmagazine.com/archives/media.html#surveying\\_ivy\\_league\\_motherhood](http://www.gelfmagazine.com/archives/media.html#surveying_ivy_league_motherhood)

<sup>2</sup> For historical perspective, in 1975, only 47% of women with children under 18 worked.

# The GOP's Moment of Truth



he mask has been torn away from the public façade of the Republican Party. What lies underneath is ugly, but in no way surprising. Since President Bush's narrow victory in last year's election, a long list of investigations, indictments, and arrests of Republican politicians in the highest circles of power has tainted the GOP's triumph. These much-publicized events only hint, however, at the extent of corruption and hubris within the Republican leadership.

The recent indictment of Tom DeLay and two of his associates in Texas on criminal conspiracy and money laundering charges places the House majority leader among some impressive company: Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist is under investigation for his stock dealings. Jack Abramoff (a longtime DeLay associate and powerful Republican lobbyist) has been indicted for wire fraud and conspiracy after a lengthy probe by the IRS and the Justice Department. David Safavian, former budget official in the Bush White House, was recently arrested and charged with lying to investigators and obstruction of a federal inquiry. Even more familiar is the ongoing investigation as to whether someone in the Bush Administration leaked the name of a CIA operative, Valerie Wilson, to conservative columnist Robert Novak. Karl Rove, the "architect" of President Bush's successful reelection bid and current White House Deputy Chief of Staff, as well as I. Lewis Libby, Vice-President Cheney's Chief of Staff, have been compelled to testify before a grand jury in the case. This litany of indictments and inquiries ought to be considered bad news indeed for GOP enthusiasts.

Inevitably, we will enjoy the spectacle of a massive damage-control operation: in Congress, by the GOP leadership; in the White House, by the press secretary, as well as from the Bush Administration's unofficial propaganda outlets, Fox News and right-wing talk radio. Again, no surprises. What may stun political observers is a growing, if belated, trend among American voters to see a pattern here – one of systematic corruption, incompetence, ideological extremism, and sheer contempt for the public's intelligence. Americans are just now starting to grasp the idea that these rapidly accumulating cases expose something deeper: the mixture of fanaticism and deceit that characterize this administration and the Republican leaders in Congress.

Case in point - the eagerness of President Bush, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and both the House and Senate leadership to ask Americans

Domestic Issues  
by Jason Dawsey

in the armed forces, National Guard and reserves (most from working-class or lower middle-class backgrounds), to serve in Iraq under false pretenses, with inadequate armor or other protective equipment, for extended periods of duty. Despite this, tax cuts for the top income bracket as well as corporations are pushed through Congress, an unprecedented move in wartime. Obviously, in the GOP's radical worldview, some will sacrifice much more than others.

Yet President Bush, Vice-President Cheney, and Secretary Rumsfeld continue to insist that the United States is in a global struggle to bring democracy and respect for human rights to the world's oppressed. At the same time, they flaunt the Geneva Conventions by setting up a detention facility at Guantanamo Bay with no legal oversight, and authorizing or tacitly endorsing methods of interrogation in Iraq and Afghanistan that are tantamount to torture. As a result, our advocacy for democratic principles and human rights looks like a sham to the very people in the Muslim world we want to win over.

After noting such discrepancies, is it still necessary to point out the hollow, paper-thin character of "compassionate conservatism"? The abject failure of this administration to plan for and respond to a disaster like Hurricane Katrina was not simply a matter of ineptitude. Gross incompetence was a huge factor, but it was not the only one. The Republican leadership's blind hatred for the federal government led to administrative changes at FEMA that proved disastrous for relief efforts on the Gulf Coast and in New Orleans. An extreme, anti-government ideology has won out over moderation and civic responsibility within the Republican Party. The GOP's combination of recklessness, infectivity, and fanaticism is now on public display. The right wing will have much to answer for in next year's elections.

Hopefully, a coalition of progressives, centrists, and moderate Republicans can come together to confront the country's dire problems: the health insurance catastrophe, an increasingly segregated public school system, a bloated military-industrial complex, the deepening quagmire in Iraq, the resurgent activity of Al-Qaeda and its allies, and the menace of nuclear proliferation. New politics of progressive reform, spurred by citizen activism, must emerge to clear the wreckage and heal the wounds of the last five years. The radical right has done enough damage. **D**

# National Insecurity



he senators who voted for the \$82 billion dollar bill funding the Iraq war last spring are getting quite the package deal.

Attached to the bill to fund the war in Iraq was a measure entitled the "REAL ID Act" which pushes the nation further towards a national ID card system, ostensibly to thwart terrorists and ensure national security.

But will a national ID card really make us safer? Critics are stepping forward to challenge the assumptions made by government officials who tout ID cards as the solution to the uncertainties of a post-9/11 world. Despite these bold claims, reality dictates that a national ID will be largely ineffective, pose greater problems than it will solve, and will only serve to lull Americans into a false sense of security that is simply not warranted by the many shortcomings of a national ID card system.

Getting such a project off the ground would be a logistical nightmare in and of itself. In the first place, issuing such cards would be a massive undertaking – requiring several billion dollars of taxpayer money and several



billion hours of labor merely to set up the system. The Social Security Administration recently estimated that it would cost about \$4 billion to issue counterfeit-resistant Social Security cards. A national ID card would be even more sophisticated, at least including a picture and (perhaps) biometric technology, both of which would drive costs much higher.

With this kind of investment, the system must be effective. Yet consider this: all 19 of the September 11 hijackers had social security numbers, (though not all were legitimately obtained), and two of the 9/11 terrorists had valid Virginia state driver's licenses under fake names. Identity for a national ID card would be established through documents that are already easy to forge, leaving gaping holes in the "security" that is supposedly provided by this system.

What about the thousands of citizens who will lose their ID cards? Currently about 20 percent of all identity documents are lost each year. Reissuing ID cards could provide the perfect opportunity to fraudulently obtain a national ID card without going through the hassle of forging official government documents.

Next, there is the problem of what data

would be contained in a national ID card. Will it have the citizen's address, Social Security Number, or criminal record electronically coded into the card? If so, this necessitates a national database in which to store this information. Recent hacking of databases such as Lexis-Nexis (in which information such as the Social Security numbers and driver's license numbers of thousands of people was fraudulently acquired) raises security issues of great concern.

Bruce Schneier, a national security expert, estimates that a national ID card system would necessitate a massive database, with information on over 300 million people. Furthermore, this database would require easy accessibility by police, airports, government officials, and the like. This kind of quick access might lull our society into a dangerous dependency on the ID card system. Yet this ease of access also opens up the danger for system hacking, or virus infection, which could potentially shut down air traffic, baseball games, and even commerce, until citizens could once again be properly identified.

Finally, there are the logistics of ID checking itself, which is a mundane task prone to human error. Under-age teens are able to purchase alcohol or get into bars with grainy, photocopied IDs simply because checking IDs is a repetitive, mind-numbing task. Depending on national ID cards to keep our nation safe requires that we entrust our national security to employees who often earn minimum wage to do the same action over and over, leaving great propensity for error.

Even using biometrics (technology such as retinal scanning or face-recognition) in a national ID card, there is still no guarantee of accuracy. Professor David J. Farber, a technology expert at the University of Pennsylvania, acknowledges that biometrics is fallible. He notes that scanners which use facial recognition or whole-hand scanning are prone to error and only the most expensive scanners consistently identify retinal and fingerprint scans correctly. Installing such scanners at every tollbooth, every government building, or every airport would be unjustifiably expensive.

Furthermore, to what end are these costs – the ability to identify someone? An identification card simply confirms that you are who you say you are. It does not establish your motive or intent to commit a terrorist act. According to Katie Corrigan of the ACLU, "One of the [September 11<sup>th</sup>] hijackers was listed in the San Diego phone book – both name and address. Other 9/11 culprits rented automobiles with their debit cards and lived in suburban Florida neighborhoods. But only a few of the hijackers were on FBI watch lists. An ID card would simply have reaffirmed the hijackers' real or assumed identities. It would have done nothing to establish their criminal motives for renting cars and going to flight school."

## Domestic Issues

by Julie Fry

Aside from these logistical concerns, it is important to also consider the social ramifications of a national ID card. The distinctly Orwellian possibility of a "surveillance society" looms large. Imagine that every time the national terror alert reached a certain level, police could randomly ask for ID on the street or when entering a building. With the technology required to identify citizens at government checkpoints and maintain a database of information, a national ID card also has the capacity to document the comings and goings of individual citizens, and closely monitor internal movement within the country.

Think this sounds implausible? History reminds us that government misuse of information about its citizens is nothing new. There is no guarantee that information collected will be used solely for national security purposes. During World War II, data from the Census (which is collected on the condition of confidentiality) was used to identify and round up Japanese-Americans for internment camps. The Vietnam War saw the usage of the National Crime Information Center by the government to track and monitor citizens who were involved in anti-war activities.

Privacy and security are most often violated using the justification of national security in wartime. The "war" on Terror is uniquely suited to government manipulation: with no clearly identifiable enemy, and thus no easily-defined terms of victory, "war" could drag on interminably, justifying thousands of invasions of citizens' privacy.

Many proponents of a national security card (such as Alan Dershowitz), claim that their system would be voluntary, and only for those who consider minor invasions of privacy a small sacrifice for the ability to bypass routine security checks. However, the ACLU points out that "as adoption of the card spreads, those who decide not to "volunteer" for such a card will increasingly find themselves subject to intrusive, humiliating, and time-consuming searches, even denied access to certain services and buildings – in short, treated like second-class citizens."

The REAL ID act is fleecing the American people. National ID cards will be costly, ineffective, and could carry great potential for abuse. There is an increased possibility for identity theft, misuse of information, and greater probability of a surveillance state. A measure that is supposed to keep us safer cannot even guarantee that (when it works), it will substantially reduce the likelihood of an identified individual committing a terrorist act. The movement to create a national ID is a reprehensible government power grab, and it's happening at the expense of the security and safety of the American people. D

# God vs. God

## Domestic Issues by Sam Boyd

**S**omewhere in Alabama, the future of religion in the Republican Party is being decided. Roy Moore, a man who has built a career out of publicly attacking the separation of church and state, is challenging incumbent GOP Governor Bob Riley in the 2006 primary. And there is much more at stake in this race than many Alabama conservatives may now realize.

Moore first rose to national prominence in 1995 when, as a state circuit-court judge, he was sued by the ACLU for hanging the Ten Commandments in his courtroom. In 2000, he used the attention enjoyed from that case to win election as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama, even beating out a candidate whose campaign was managed by Karl Rove. Flushed with success, he installed a granite block engraved with the Ten Commandments in the Supreme Court rotunda, prompting yet another suit in 2001 from the ACLU and others.

As he had no doubt expected, Moore lost the suit and was then removed from his post by the other eight justices in 2003, after he refused to allow the removal of the monument. Despite

speculation that he might challenge President Bush on a third party ticket in the 2004 election, Moore instead decided to run for Governor of Alabama in 2006. In the meantime however, he turned to poetry, penning a doom-laden version of America the Beautiful. According to a journalist who heard him recite the poem it reads, in part, as follows:

“We’ve voted in a government/that’s rotting to the core /Appointing Godless Judges/who throw reason out the door./Too soft to place a killer/in a well deserved tomb/But brave enough to kill a baby/before he leaves the womb./You think that God’s not angry/that our land’s a moral slum?/How long will he wait/before his judgment comes?”

Current Governor Bob Riley is no less religious. However, the two men express their faiths in very different ways. Most famously, Riley used Christian principles to justify a referendum to raise and reform the state income tax to pay for much needed social services. Unfortunately, the referendum was overwhelmingly defeated and many predicted that Riley’s political career was over. Instead, a booming state economy and an effective response to hurricane Katrina have recently boosted his approval ratings.

Moore is known almost everywhere in Alabama, as is Riley. Yet, while voters can usually decide easily between two people they know well, the most recent poll of

Republicans showed Riley with 45 percent of the vote, Moore with only 25 percent, and a whopping 30 percent undecided.

What does that ambivalence represent? Could voters perhaps be choosing between the religious strictness represented by Moore and the financial success represented by Riley? Or could there be two different kinds of religious conservatives in Alabama? Regardless, the current divide between Moore and Riley hints at the possibility of a schism in the Republican party of Alabama.

If Moore wins, it will reflect poorly on the religious right. They will have chosen empty gestures over helping people. They will have supported a man who has “ridden the rock” to power, as Alabama politicians put it. They will have affirmed that modern Republicans care far more about saving souls than saving lives.

However, if Riley wins, we may have reason to be hopeful for the future. If Republicans can reject a man whose only qualification is being unanimously condemned by 34 federal judges, they will show an admirable respect for the rule of law. If they can reject Moore’s hollow demagoguery, even those who disagree with them will have to accept the sincerity of their desire for better government. A vote for Riley is a vote for good governance, and a vote against theocracy in Alabama. It is, most importantly, a vote for a sane Republican Party. **D**

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of the loop?

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issues past  
and present

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## Myth

1.

She stares away; is there still time  
to believe in miracles?  
Youth lies within  
that bronze canyon formed by frown lines.  
Like de Leon, my eyes seek  
fabled fountains in the back of her head,

her serpent neck-  
as well paved as the road to Gollum.  
There is no Pieta at the back of her head,  
only gray where there once was  
black-as those vultures that waited for  
death outside  
our desert home.

She told me that their claws, red-tinged and  
as comfortably brown as the earth  
craved my numinous skin as flies do  
the forgotten feast.  
I was afraid to leave my bed at night.

How could I have known that such coined  
fancies-  
little silver soldiers with their gladiator  
helmets, spears, and armored skirts  
marching  
in uniform out of the mind’s mint-  
never amount to much.

2.

There is another one.  
I watch him from atop  
my cross; it’s familiar brown mass now  
comfortably imposed upon me-  
rustured nails search through my skin,  
dividing  
my bones. My flesh is hindered, lacerated;

it is continents at war, the shudder  
of earthquakes and the push of flowing  
volcanoes;  
it is the sun descending, set, and nightfall.  
A geyser erupts at my side, betraying the  
desert  
thirst that I have known all my life.

The crown on my head, too forcefully  
placed,  
causes blood to ooze like honey down my  
temple.  
But she is blind to all suffering.

He will escape all this.  
He lounges at her side like a newborn  
craving milk from her breast.

—Charles Umearo

# The Fine Line of Refugee Status



he border separating Togo and Ghana is an unruly stretch of African bush, an unkempt expanse thick with exotically grand vegetation. Aside from a handful of official checkpoints, this divide, internationally recognized, is traced only by a red clay footpath and the thin stream of villagers who pass along it. The definition of the border is so lightly forged that in the north, residents of either nationality have been crossing between the two countries, unhindered and on foot, for decades.

In April of this year, controversial elections in Togo sent 15,000 asylum seekers across this border and into nearby Ghanaian villages. Togo has since begun to make public promises of security and stability, but for many, the memories of riots and violence are too fresh: thousands of Togolese, still wary of a regime that so recently threatened their lives, have chosen not to return just yet. Now, entangled in an international limbo of indistinct state lines and status, they are challenging the hospitality and resources of Ghana's border villages as well as the very definition of the term refugee.

## Tradition of Asylum

Currently host to over 43,000 refugees of various origins, Ghana has an extended history of receiving refugees across this particular border: Togo's former president Gnassingbé Eyadéma remained in power for 38 years through military rule followed by a series of internationally condemned elections, each of which sent opposition members fleeing.

In the decades it retained power over Togo, the Eyadéma regime was notorious for a number of human rights violations, from the complete lack of elections until 1992 to a 1994 military rampage in Togo's capitol, Lomé, that sent nearly 300,000 fleeing. Eyadéma's party, the Rally of Togolese People (RPT), is closely aligned with the military, which in turn is continually accused of intimidating, brutalizing, and even torturing members of opposition parties.

When Eyadéma died in February of this year, his son Guare Gnassingbé seized power with support of Togo's military, and it seemed that the RTP party's grip on the country would continue for another undesignedly lengthy period. Yet three weeks later, international pressure, combined with sanctions from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU), forced Gnassingbé to step down and hold official elections, and the oppositional hangers on, those who weathered the Eyadéma regime for so long, an alliance of six previously existing parties allied called the Union of Forces for Change (UFC), placed one last bid to regain control of Togo.

Encouraged by the possibility of a change of power in Togo and wary of the complications that an election of such magnitude could present ECOWAS sent three officials to Togo to oversee and advise preparations. ECOWAS also sent another 150 representatives to observe the elections themselves, which took place at a total of 5,375 official polling stations made available to Togo's population of five million.

## Elections Contested

Although ballot casting itself occurred uneventfully, as votes were tallied in the days that followed, it became clear that the RPT would remain in power, and accusations of fraud led to rioting and violence across Togo.

Kudjo Asorgba was both an election official and a member of the UFC in his village. According to him, it was a politician from the RPT, a former minister himself, who incited the violence that caused Asorgba, his family, and the UFC party members of his village to flee their homes on April 25<sup>th</sup>.

Asorgba claims that his village elected the UFC, yet when he and his fellow election officials presented the minister with the results, violence erupted. "When he came, we saluted him. He carried some soldiers, who were not in uniform, so they jumped out from the car and started beating the population. When we could see the shooting incidents too, we tried the bush to come here," he remembers. Asorgba fled that night with his eldest child, and waited in the bush

**In the decades it retained power over Togo, the Eyadéma regime was notorious for a number of human rights violations.**

for his wife to meet him the next day. Once reunited, they walked a matter of hours along traditional village paths until they reached Ghana.

The story Asorgba tells is strikingly consistent with the stories of Togolese refugees across the region. Christopher, who did not disclose his last name, was also in charge of elections in his village, Agoenyive, in Togo. When votes were cast, he claims, representatives from the RPT arrived and attempted to steal ballot boxes from the village. Christopher and his fellow election officials resisted, but they were beaten. Christopher fled for three days on foot to cross into Ghana.

## Togo's Aftermath in Ghana

Despite these stories, ECOWAS' team of observers declared Togo's elections fair, although it did admit to some violent incidents and irregularities. Soon after, Togo's constitutional court rejected claims

International Issues  
by Rachel Lindner

that polls had been rigged. Still, refugees continued trickling across the border. In early August, the UNHCR estimated their numbers to be just more than 15,000 --- too few to necessitate major humanitarian mobilization, yet too many to ignore.

Many of those who fled to Ghana arrived via local footpaths through the dense bush rather than standard crossing points. Uncounted and undirected by officials, they sought informal asylum and shelter in border villages. Even those who crossed at officially recognized areas are living with families nearby. To date, the government has not designated a specific center of residence for Togolese fleeing the current conflict. "Refugees reach the border and there is no place for them," said Cyprien Atchognon, community service officer for the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR). "The government is not paying for a camp."

Chief Togbui Amenya Fiti IV is well aware of the fluidity of the Togo/Ghana border. Although he lives in the Ghanaian village Aflao, his traditional kingdom dates back to the pre-WWI Volta region, when the area was still part of German-colonized Togoland, so his subjects are drawn from both nationalities. When the stream of Togolese refugees reached his own door, he opened his home and the entirety of Aflao to host them. "We received them as our own brothers, not as people from a different area. We received everybody warmly, not just subjects," he said. "Togo is not the concern of Togo alone."

The village of Aflao, population 51,000 and currently host to 6,000 registered refugees, is not unique in its hospitality. When Asorgba crossed into Ghana through unofficial means, the 163,000-person village of Obuasi welcomed the crowd of 300 he arrived with. "Ghanaians are very good - they just adopted us," he said. "When we came, we ran to the chief's house, but he couldn't accommodate us because we were too many for him. He brought us to the school compound and accommodated us the day after. Then he called to his elders and shared us among them so they could accommodate us small, small."

Although Christopher now resides along with an estimated 151 others in an area that only a decade earlier served as refugee camp for his Togolese predecessors, the camp itself, which has been closed since 1998, is not officially recognized.

## Welcome Wearing Thin

Now, four months after the election, a situation once intended to be temporary

shows few signs of change, and the communities hosting so many strangers are beginning to feel strained. Although Togo has begun to publicly promise the safety of returning political opposition members, a recent UN poll found only one Togolese refugee in Ghana willing to return at this point.

Many asylum seekers are not yet receiving aid, and as result are becoming a drain on resources in communities already struggling for subsistence. "This hospitality has limits," said Volta regional minister Kofi Dzamesi. "If a family is not capable of taking care of the refugee, then problems crop up."

Meanwhile, the UNHCR is still trying to count and register each of the refugees remaining in Ghana, a process that is necessary before full-scale distribution and relief programs can run. Because the Togolese asylum seekers are staying by hundreds in small communities scattered along the border rather than concentrated in a single refugee camp, they have become a challenge to register and are therefore especially difficult to assist.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has sent delegations on door-to-door missions to seek out and register the newcomers, but it is a painstaking, time-consuming process, achingly slow to those whose livelihood depends upon it. "Refugees need to understand that registration is so important," Needa Jehu-Hoyah, Media Officer for the Ghana office of the UNHCR said. "You cannot do everything; you have to see who needs it most and give it to those people....if you don't do registration, the most vulnerable people will fall through the cracks."

As the registration process inches along, the UNHCR has begun to develop less traditional methods of aid distribution --- methods designed to assist the communities where the refugees reside as well as the refugees themselves. "We don't mind infrastructure work," Jehu-Hoyah said, pointing to home- and well- construction projects already underway in some villages. "The local people will benefit when the refugees leave."

Jehu-Hoyah insists that the refugees, too, are more likely to profit from current circumstances than from a more centralized camp-based system. "Any refugee situation in an artificial situation. It's not a normal town. There is a natural support system built into society that isn't there in the refugee community," she explained. "This situation is ultimately more beneficial for the refugees because there is more of an opportunity to integrate."

Basic food distribution efforts have also begun and are available to those who are registered. Using a 2,000 calorie diet as the model for rations, the World Food Programme (WFP) provides an allotment of 15 kg maize, 1.5 kg beans, .9kg vegetable oil, and .15 kg salt per person each month. Lactating mothers and children under 5 years also receive 1.5 kg of a wheat soy blend. While it may be mathematically sufficient, the food each family receives for monthly sustenance



does not even fill the plastic gunnysack they bring to distributions, and many refugees complain it is not enough.

Yet the fact that refugees receive any aid, however small the portions, often creates tensions in the communities that host them, communities that often do not have enough food even before strangers arrive seeking refuge, communities that are in need of aid themselves.

Standing just outside a clamoring knot of registered recipients at a July 27 food distribution, Joseph Kouami Dabla looked on in frustration. A veteran refugee, he arrived with his family as a child in 1992. Although he hasn't received assistance since 1995, he can't help but feel that the new refugees are competition. "Now, many more people have come because of the political situation," he mourned. "In terms of assistance, it is very difficult to attend to both."

Yet Dabla is not ready to return to Togo: his father, the reason Dabla's family fled, was a soldier, and would still not be safe in the current political climate. "If the government sees him, it will kill him,"

Dabla explained. "Because of that we came to Ghana."

#### What is a Refugee?

Cases like Dabla's, those refugees who have been in Ghana for such an extended period, cast doubt on the likelihood that members of this new influx will return anytime soon. However, officials in the region are beginning to prompt the refugees to leave. "We believe that there must be a gradual process of letting these refugees go back to Togo," Said the Volta Regional Minister, Kofi Dzamesi. "There is peace in Togo. If these people are only coming out of Togo to Ghana because they do not agree with the party, we are not doing Togo justice...we want to promote democracy across Africa."

Asorgba feels safe in Ghana, and says that after his experiences in Togo, he cannot trust

the promises of the RPT. "The majority party is a liar. We know they will never say the truth so they can deceive us. If you go, you will fall in danger," he explained. "We will stay here until we have a nice and neat change of this government. If the opposition party comes to power, we will go."

Another refugee, who preferred to remain anonymous, agreed that Togo is not yet the peaceful environment it promises to be. "When you return, the people in power now will call the army when you are sleeping and they will take you," he said. "We will stay [in Ghana] a long time."

Christopher, too, believes he would be in severe danger if he returned to Togo at this point. "I will not go home --- not until there is peace in Togo. It is time for peace to prevail."

Dzamesi is concerned with the effect that so many strangers will have on his community, specifically its security. He believes it is naïve to host so many refugees without studying their history first. "Let's ask ourselves, who are these people who are still here --- Were they chiefs? Were they armed robbers?" He said. "Those who do not want to go back, it is necessary for us to dig a little deeper into their lifestyles when they were in Togo."

But Chief Togbui Amenya Fiti V believes that the fact that refugees claim to feel unsafe in Togo should alone justify their stay in Ghana, however lengthy that may be. "I am not interested to know of their political backgrounds; we are keeping them because they are refugees from Togo. The problems of the refugees, they are here in Aflao. They are problems we already have in West Africa. I challenge you to help solve the problem, not help fuel it."

Dzamesi, however, was insistent. "If somebody doesn't like his government, does that mean he leaves his country and becomes a refugee? He only becomes a refugee if he is threatened. Let us redefine the refugee status properly." **D**

# Making Sense of German Elections

International Issues  
by Sarah Eldridge

**G**ermany is not often mentioned in *The New York Times*, unless it's the anniversary of an important date from World War II. But over the past month, articles on German politics have appeared at least 20 times. Although these articles provide brief background summaries of Germany's political parties, it's difficult to understand what exactly is at stake from headlines such as "German Election Is Inconclusive; No Majority But 2 Claim Mandate" (Sept. 19<sup>th</sup>), "An Unlikely German Coalition Now Seems to Be More Likely" (Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>), and finally "Merkel to Succeed Schröder as Chancellor of Germany" (Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>). In fact, it's difficult and confusing to figure out what's going on no matter what news source one consults—especially for Americans, whose understanding of political parties tends to be "Republican, Democrat, and whatever-independent-might-steal-a-few-votes-from-one-of-the-other-two." The terms of engagement are different in Germany, and before Americans can react to the new German government, we must understand the appropriate political context.

Germany's political system is a multi-party parliamentary system, as it has been since the Reunification of East and West Germany in 1990 (after the Berlin Wall fell in November of 1989). Before the most recent election, the far-left Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) were essentially regarded as one party, the "SPD/PDS," which governed in a coalition along with the Green Party, which controls a small but significant fraction of the Bundestag, or German Parliament. On the more conservative side, the Freie Demokratische Partei ("free democrats," or FDP) support fewer market restrictions, and the Christian Democratic Union, or CDU (called the Christian Social Union, or CSU, in the state of Bavaria, where it has its greatest support), which advocates free market economic policy, but with a social welfare system. In recent years, nationalist parties have also gained some support in a few states (though not on a national level), to the horror of the other 98% of Germans, who have referred to them as "Neo-Nazis" and refused to acknowledge them as a political force.

To make up the Bundestag, citizens vote for candidates who represent their districts, but also for a particular party: the national Chancellor is then chosen from the party that received the most votes in the Parliamentary elections. Given the number of parties, it is not surprising that every German government since 1957 has had to form a coalition with at least one other party in order to govern.

The boundaries and alliances between parties have been shifting, however. Former PDS (far-left) members broke with Schröder and the SPD and formed a new Linke Partei (Left Party), to represent their more radical program. The Free Democrats, who had aligned themselves almost indiscriminately with whichever party happens to be in power, have recently moved towards the CDU because of similar positions on economic policy. During the past summer, Chancellor Schröder, plagued by divisions within the SPD/PDS and hampered by increasing support for the CDU/CSU, requested that Parliament issue him a vote of no confidence, enabling the country to hold elections a year early.

This raised an interesting constitutional issue in its own right: if a Chancellor instructs his own party to issue him a vote of no confidence, or are they in fact affirming their confidence in his political program? Eventually, Schröder was permitted to call elections. For much of the campaign, it seemed that Merkel and the CDU would make a strong showing, but her lack of charisma and a scandal within her party involving a potential finance minister caused her lead to slip in the last weeks before the vote.

Bringing to mind the Bush-Gore debacle of 2000, the outcome of the election left the country in turmoil: not only did no party gain a majority, but no party gained a sufficient plurality to form a majority coalition with its most likely allies. Angela Merkel and the CDU received 35.1% of the national vote, and Gerhard Schröder received 34.2%. Even with the FDP, the CDU did not have a majority, and the Greens did not add enough to the SPD vote to give Schröder a majority, either (the Left Party absolutely ruled out a coalition with the SPD, making a Left-SPD-Green coalition impossible). The Green Party could have tipped the CDU/CSU and FDP to a majority, but given their conflicting political programs, this was ruled out as well.

In short, the only coalition that could muster a sufficient percentage of Parliament to have a majority was a so-called "Grand Coalition" of the two main rivals, the CDU and the SPD. In the face of this confusion, both Merkel and Schröder claimed a mandate to govern—imagine two American candidates winning equal numbers of electoral votes, which is a slim but real possibility. Weeks of negotiation



ensued; only recently has it emerged that Schröder will step down as Chancellor and that the "Grand Coalition" will indeed govern Parliament. Merkel will be the new Chancellor, but the SPD will control 8 out of 14 cabinet positions. Other terms of the arrangement have yet to be determined.

What, then, does this election mean? Is Germany, now led by a "Christian Democrat," moving towards a more American-like "moral majority"? Definitely not. The CDU, though it does cite "Christian values" as one of its inspirations, is not pursuing anything like the American right's agenda of restricting abortion and teaching evolution in schools. Rather, Merkel ran on a platform of economic reform and labor flexibility. Nor does the coalition signal the end of Germany as a social welfare state: the SPD is absolutely committed to Germany's social programs, even while it hopes to reduce unemployment, which is without a doubt Germany's biggest problem both socially and economically. The Free Democrats will probably support many of the CDU's initiatives, while the SPD can count on support from the Greens, and even the Left Party, in many of its goals.

Of course, it is possible that the coalition will end up with its hands tied by the conflicting objectives of its factions. But it is also possible that the cooperation between the members of the "Grand Coalition" will accomplish what each party individually could not in the way of economic reforms while still protecting Germany's social welfare programs. In the end, Germany's multiple parties add a layer of political complexity that America's two perpetually opposed parties often lack. Although partisan squabbling in Germany has been plentiful in the past three weeks, it is to be hoped that the compromise that the two parties have reached today will be indicative of a productive "Zusammenarbeit," or co-operation, that will enable Germany to retain its social programs while it bolstering the economic stability and vitality necessary to participate in modern Europe. **D**

# Spinning Muktada: Sectarian Violence in Basra and the Western Media

International Issues

by *Ali Winston*

**F**ollowing a series of clashes between Coalition troops and Shi'ite militiamen of firebrand cleric Muktada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army, the headlines from Iraq this September and early October seem to have taken on an air of déjà vu. The ceasefire of August 25<sup>th</sup> 2004 led to the American withdrawal from Najaf (whose void was to be filled by the Iraqi police), and the end of fighting between Madhi militiamen and occupation forces in Baghdad's Sadr City in October 2004. al-Sadr agreed to participate in the election process for January, 2005. From then until the outbreak of violence this September, the Madhi Army and its leader had been overshadowed by Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia's campaign of violence.

Not that violence was a stranger to South Iraq while battles raged in Falluja and Ramadi in the central provinces; but since

**The practice of presenting crises as they affect Coalition forces parallels the narrow, short-sighted approach to planning the overthrow of Saddam Hussein taken by the Pentagon and White House.**

the mayhem was directed at Iraqis and not, until recently, at Coalition troops, the mainstream Western press downplayed or ignored it entirely. Not until the casualties were their fellow journalists (Steven Vincent and Fakher Haider) and British troops did the Western press decry the "violence" in the South. This practice of presenting crises as they affect Coalition forces, rather than as events that affect the balance of power that will remain in Iraq after the former have departed, parallels the narrow, short-sighted approach to planning the overthrow of Saddam Hussein taken by the Pentagon and White House. This article will focus on how the Western press's fixation on what Iraq means to the Coalition forces is itself a factor in prolonging the occupation.

To recap, on September 20<sup>th</sup>, British troops in Basra laid siege to an Iraqi police station to free two British soldiers, captured by policemen while "disguised in local dress". The two men, identified by the BBC as "members of the SAS elite special forces", were accused of "shooting at Iraqi forces," "plant[ing] explosives" near an Iraqi police station, and working for the Mossad (Israeli

equivalent of the CIA). When British tanks and mechanized infantry forcibly brushed aside the police (their supposed allies) and battered down the walls of the station in their search for their comrades, hundreds of Iraqis descended on the would-be rescuers, hurling rocks and Molotov cocktails at the troops. Though no soldiers were seriously injured during the attack, the image of a British corpsman scrambling out of the hatch of his tank engulfed in flames demonstrated the gravity of the situation.

The hostages, not to be found at the police station, were later recovered from a house in Basra under the control of Madhi militiamen, to whom the Basra police had turned over the captives. According to the Sunday Times, the order for the seizure of British hostages had been issued by Moqtada al-Sadr in response to the arrest of three members of the Madhi Army on September 18<sup>th</sup>. The SAS men were to be used as bargaining chips to secure the release of the Mahdi officials arrested by the British for sectarian attacks. With overt hostilities raging between the two

groups intended by Washington, London, and Baghdad to cooperate within the government of Basra, the province's long-term future as part of a greater Iraq falls into question.

For Westerners, al-Sadr first rose to prominence in April 2004, when he led an

armed uprising in Najaf, Baghdad's Sadr City, and Basra following the shutdown of his Al Hawza newspaper by Coalition authorities on charges of inciting violence. Next came a broader, unconnected series of rebellions by Sunnis in Baghdad, Samarra, Ramadi, and Falluja. A truce was reached between al-Sadr and the occupation forces on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Since then, Al-Sadr's popularity amongst restless, impoverished Shi'ites grew rapidly, following his very public resistance to the resented Anglo-American occupiers and his decision to form a political party to contest a place in the 2005 elections.

After al-Sadr abruptly decided to boycott the political process and stated that the electoral process was "a sad joke" and "a trick on the Iraqi people" due to the "undemocratic" selection of party delegates, his home in Najaf was surrounded by Iraqi policemen and American Marines on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004. The intent of the operation was to arrest al-Sadr and do away with his militia and political movement. Al-Sadr escaped, and the situation deteriorated into gruesome, full-

fledged urban combat between the Madhis and 3,800 heavily armed American and Iraqi troops that centered around the Imam Ali shrine and its attached cemetery. After fierce fighting, Moktada al-Sadr agreed to a ceasefire mentioned at the beginning of the article.

In light of the January 2005 elections and the ensuing political haggling between Sunnis, Shi'ites, and Kurds over revising and ratifying successive versions of the Iraqi constitution, the Madhi Army and the Basra police's outright opposition to UK occupation troops indicates the lack of cohesion between Baghdad and its provinces.

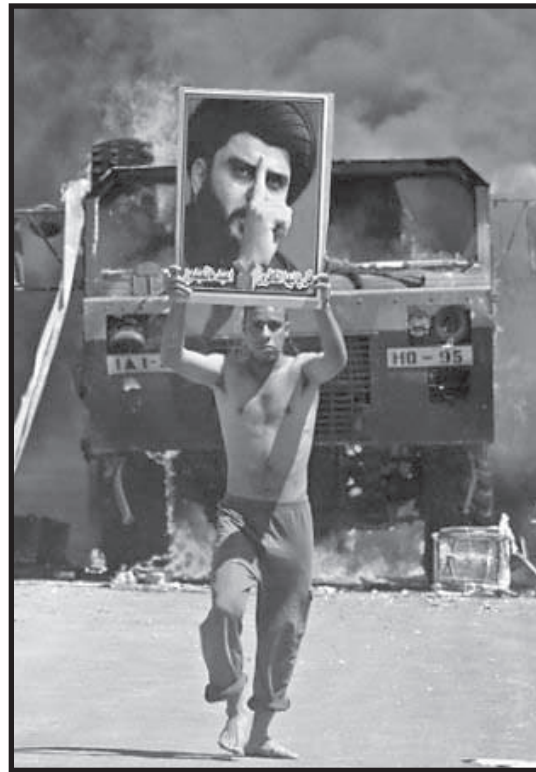
Key organizations in Basra and the predominantly Shi'ite south have gravitated towards a compartmentalized, sectarian society and further away from the idea of a united, multi-cultural Iraq.

Now that their attention is focused on the south, Western media continues to filter events in Iraq through a world-view heavily colored by its enemies list. Following the

confrontation with the British, Timothy Phelps of *Newsday* commented on the extent of Iranian influence within Basra's circles of influence: "Agents of Iran...have thoroughly infiltrated both the local security police in Basra and the elite paramilitary brigades sent in by the Interior Ministry in Baghdad, according to sources with access to U.S. intelligence". Phelps' willingness to see an Iranian behind every Iraqi Shi'ite overlooks the fierce fighting that raged for several years between Iraq and Iran, with Shi'ite fighting on both sides (not to mention recent gaps in U.S. intelligence on Iraq). By failing to look at Iraqi regional militia as an Iraqi phenomenon (i.e. as a reaction to repression by Saddam's regime), he himself contributes to the undermining of Iraqi national identity.

A more fine-tuned analysis could be found in Richard O'Connell's piece in the *New York Times*, where he delves deeper into the dynamics of Basra's shadow elite, identifying a group of 200-300 police officers (known as the Jameat) as the link between Basra's government and "sectarian militias". The Jameat's official responsibility is internal affairs, as well as investigating terrorism and murder, a repertoire that ostensibly affords them freedom of action and movement without fear of repercussions from above. As it turns out, the headquarters sacked by UK troops was that of the Jameat, and the ensuing attacks on British units by Iraqi civilians were not entirely spontaneous: "Iraqi men standing on cars ordered the mob to attack..." This was not a spontaneous public action, said Maj. Andy Hadfield... "It was closely organized and closely coordinated by a series of agitators."

The fear and lawlessness that is now widespread in Basra result from the disproportionate influence exerted by Shi'ite militias and the impunity afforded



to their actions by the police (there are approximately 2,500-3,000 policemen in Basra, as compared to an estimated 13,000 militiamen). The still-unsolved murders of Steven Vincent and Fakhre Haider, both journalists covering Shi'ite sectarianism in Basra during the summer, brought the spotlight of the international media to bear on the splintering of authority and sectarian violence in Basra. Uniform-wearing police officers "regularly abduct and kill Sunni Arabs," according to Sunni politician Sheikh Abdul Karim al-Dosari. Basra's chief of police told the *Guardian* (UK) that he trusted only 25 percent of his entire force. Since the beginning of September, eight British soldiers and contractors have been killed by roadside bombs. These attacks were conducted with infra-red "trip wires," a trademark of Lebanon's Hezbollah, a militant jihadist movement widely suspected of being trained and equipped by Iran.

American and British inability to come to terms with Moktada al-Sadr's sectarian politics precipitate the current antagonisms between occupation troops and Shi'ite militias. To his credit, al-Sadr is a master of brinkmanship: he has agreed to renounce his violent ways and enter into the formal political process. However, at this juncture it appears he is bent on consolidating his base of power in the Shi'ite-dominated south. Regardless of how much influence Iran exerts over al-Sadr, the Mahdi Army he has molded into a formidable force wields enough political and military clout to pose a serious challenge to Iraqi nationhood.

In a sense, for Shi'ites the Mahdis fulfill the same role as the Pesh Merga militia of the Kurdish north. After refusing to disband their force following the fall of Saddam Hussein, the Kurdish militia is the force in control in Northern Iraq. Taking into account the widespread support given to Sunni

insurgents such as al-Zarqawi's Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia in the Western reaches of Iraq, the nation appears to be on the verge of breaking into three. The territories of the three main ethnic groups eerily parallel the self-governing Ottoman provinces out of which Iraq was fashioned by the British (independence was granted to the new "nation" in 1932). Iraq's North was once the province of Mosul, its West the province of Baghdad, and the South was that of Basra.

Ignoring even the limited success of other societies in achieving a working relationship between different religions and cultures, ignoring the history of Iraqi efforts to achieve unity and reject foreign control under the British, portions of the mainstream Western press despairs of efforts to achieve common ground and agrees to throw the baby out with the bath. As far back as November, 2003, Leslie Gelb suggested in the *New York Times* that a tripartite split of Iraq would "allow America to put most of its money and troops where they would do the most good - with the Kurds and Shi'ites".<sup>14</sup> The future fates of such unruly provinces are linked again to the demonic designs of "foreign" (ie. not us) powers. Gelb acknowledges the possibility of an Iran-backed theocracy in the south and brands Sunnis as the group that is a) most invested in a whole nation to due the lack of oil in Central Iraq, and b) the ethnic group that is most likely to "ignite insurgencies in the Kurdish and Shi'ite regions". Both a) and b) are actually astute observations, but the b) side wants to be a put-down without acknowledging that igniting insurgencies is at least partially for the purpose of defending the nation from occupying forces.

It is such America-centric thinking that elides the intricacies of Iraq's pre and post-colonial history in Anglo-American circles of power that has deepened the Iraqi quagmire and indirectly encouraged outright sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shi'ites, all under the pretense of a U.S. war of national defense. However, the attitudes of the Western press don't by themselves encourage sectarian conflict. It is the lack of planning by the Pentagon and State Dept. that led to the destruction of the secular basis of Iraqi politics and society after overthrowing Saddam. By disbanding the Iraqi army, it removed a powerful force for secular power where all groups served, albeit with Sunnis in control under Saddam. Sunnis and Shi'ites fought side by side against Shi'ite Iran for several years in the '80's. The press continues to avoid one of the main de-stabilizing forces in Iraq today: the Coalition forces. The news on the BBC, the day after the voting on the new constitution, that U.S. Air Force bombs had killed 70 people in Sunni Ramadi, including several women and small children, only serves to cancel out the effect of any "election turnout". Pandora's Box is now wide open. D

# Brown's Lasting Legacy



An article in the *Chicago Defender* on May 22, 1954 triumphantly declared that “Neither the atom bomb nor the hydrogen bomb will ever be as meaningful to our democracy as the unanimous declaration of the Supreme Court that racial segregation violates the spirit and the letter of our Constitution.” Yet just a few short months after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision struck down state-sponsored segregation in public schools, the Court declared in *Brown II* that integration should occur “with all deliberate speed”. The process of desegregating public schools has been slow, and has met serious political and legal opposition. When most think of desegregation today, they conjure up memories of school busing, or the presence of the National Guard in Little Rock, Arkansas. The issue, it would seem, is one of the past—a civil rights battle that has more or less left the public forum.

However, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the decision, scholars have begun to reexamine the historical role and present application of what *Brown* promised. In the University of Chicago’s 2004 convocation address, Professor Cathy Cohen remarked that *Brown v. Board of Education* was a “public marker that Jim Crow segregation, the legal system of racial segregation entrenched in the South and practiced in the North, could and would be successfully challenged.” As efforts to desegregate public schools met several challenges, it became clear that as a matter of policy, resolving the issue would be an ongoing struggle. So were these efforts all in vain? What can we still learn from those who fought for desegregation? Was the issue merely a launching pad for addressing other inequalities? An investigation into desegregation’s history reveals an important lesson about the delicate balance between how courts, policymakers, and local leaders interpret and enforce one of the country’s most famous legal rulings.

Though the *Brown* ruling was a statement from the country’s highest court, the battle over school desegregation has had little success in the legal arena. Many of the attempts to integrate schools in the rural South, for example, were met with fierce opposition from conservative politicians. In his book, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, law professor Michael Klarman argues that one of the ruling’s largest influences was the mobilization of southern white opposition (i.e. the Southern Manifesto) to radical change. The Warren court did not reflect the sentiments of the American people: rather, it issued a decision deeply influenced by the Justices’ personal values.

Therefore, it is no surprise that Southern courts were unable to enforce an ideal that contradicted the beliefs of those in political power. Even in the North, legal battles over how to integrate schools and how much money was needed to do so overshadow any real discourse on meaningful desegregation. Chicago offers a telling example. In 1980, the Chicago Board of Education and the United States Department of Justice settled a consent decree that provided funds (from the federal government) and a plan (from the local Board of Education) on how to desegregate Chicago public schools. Sadly, little was accomplished, as the two departments fought bitterly over exactly how much federal money was needed. Press coverage of Chicago’s desegregation plan consisted merely of reporting the latest judicial decision on whether either litigant had violated the consent decree. In more recent years, some have argued that courts have



worked against desegregation altogether. The Court’s decisions in the 1990’s, such as *Freeman v. Pitts* and *Missouri v. Jenkins*, dismantled desegregation plans, characterizing those efforts as failed policy. It would seem that the courts, originally the leaders of the desegregation movement, could not hope to implement such policies alone.

The first genuine response from Congress on issues of equal opportunities came a decade after the *Brown* ruling, with the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The legislation called for an evaluation of opportunities for minorities in public schools, and required that the federal government provide funding for desegregation across the country. Title VI of that Act went even further, by granting the Justice Department the ability to bring litigation against school boards that did not follow federal orders to desegregate. In many ways it was the Civil Rights Act, and not *Brown* itself, that brought issues of educational opportunity into the political arena. The Chicago example above certainly attests to that fact.

Still, it is important to recognize that political support for civil rights was a strong reflection of how much America had

## Political Commentary by Tim Michaels

changed in the years between 1954 and 1964. Certainly, the *Brown* decision had a role in changing public opinion. However, the Montgomery Bus Boycotts, the work of the Freedom Riders, and Martin Luther King’s statement of nonviolent resistance must also be credited for bringing about legislative reform in 1964. Even with the advancement of national and local civil rights legislation, school desegregation proved difficult. For example, in Norfolk, Virginia, Charlotte, North Carolina, and Montgomery County, Maryland, desegregation policies and the politics behind them gradually moved away from their original goal. As policy makers attempt to address other concerns of educational equality, racial segregation has taken a less prominent role in federal and state legislation.

In the end, efforts to desegregate public schools have revealed the limitation of legal decisions, federal legislation, and public policies. Perhaps this is a partial explanation for why the issue of racial segregation in public schools seems absent in contemporary American political consciousness. Lessons learned from years of desegregation policy have frustrated those attempting to implement the promise of providing equal educational opportunities. Fifty years after the *Brown* decision, Prof. Cohen expresses concern that in the modern context, many feel that “we no longer need design nor continue policies meant to address the history of legal discrimination endured by blacks and other marginalized groups for more than four centuries.”

While it may appear that the letter of the law has not been (and continues not to be) upheld by courts and policymakers, the history of desegregation speaks otherwise. Those who continue to fight against legal discrimination in the United States can learn a great deal about from those who fought (and still fight) tirelessly to implement school desegregation. The battle over desegregation is filled with the same actors—the courts, legislators, and local leadership—that will influence the depth, pace, and quality of future efforts to achieve social equality. Each one is intimately involved in acting and responding to the work of the others. How these actors further or undermine each other’s work will greatly affect this nation’s progress. It is my hope that in another 50 years, we will interpret the promise and impact of the *Brown* decision with the same optimism that it was greeted with in 1954. **D**

# Under the Radar: Militarism in South-East Asia



Political Commentary  
by Andrew Stecker

**O**ver the past four years, the War on Terror and the war in Iraq have dominated international news in the U.S. Other dramatic events have since occurred in the world, but managed to draw attention only when tangentially related to the War on Terror. Consequently, significant changes in Asian politics have been ignored. While the Bush administration has employed force against Iraq and a hard stance against North Korea, its dealings with other Asian countries have been more subtle, and its rhetoric less clear. There exists a contradiction in America's foreign policy: while the administration has pursued the disarmament of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea, it has condoned the militarization of the rest of Asia.

The federal government has doled out military aid to foreign countries throughout the Cold War, so transactions involving conventional weapons now seem routine. Increased aid to Gen. Pervez Musharraf's Pakistan has been attributed to that nation's "positive" role in the War on Terror, but this explanation ignores Pakistan's important role as a potential ally of China. The world's most populous nation has tried to build strong economic and political ties with Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, forming a pro-China circle around the second most populous nation, India. The rise of China as an economic and military power has caused understandable anxiety in Washington, and the U.S. may want to balance China's power. Such an approach would require keeping countries like Pakistan from becoming military satellites of China, and strengthening India's

position as China's main rival in Asia. Indo-American relations have become more cordial in the past year, as the U.S. agreed to assist that country in the development of its civil nuclear program, and made tentative plans to sell India Patriot missiles, F-16s, and F-18s.

However, the U.S. gave only passive support to India's recent bid to join the U.N. Security Council as a permanent member, while it actively campaigned for Japan's accession to that position. In fact, in the last five years, Japan has taken serious strides towards re-militarization. While its Security

**While the Bush administration has employed force against Iraq and a hard stance against North Korea, its dealings with other Asian countries have been more subtle, and its rhetoric less clear.**

Council bid failed due to opposition from China and South Korea, efforts to increase Japanese power from within the country have progressed. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party seeks to amend limits on the size and deployment of troops outlined in the Japanese constitution. The amended constitution would allow the Prime Minister to send troops abroad and act preemptively in an "anticipated military attack situation". These dramatic changes have been justified by the threat from a nuclear-capable North Korea, as well as a need to participate in the global War on Terror. Still, some security analysts see China as the unspoken threat, and

predict that fears of China's rise within Japan, combined with strong U.S. support for Japan's remilitarization, could lead to a nuclear weapons program in that country.

Amidst this charged environment, the U.S. has disregarded multilateral international institutions. The most widely noted examples have been the Bush administration's hostility towards the U.N., and its abstention from participating in either the International Criminal Court or the Kyoto Accord. More importantly, there have been other actions specific to Asia; Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice offended the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) last summer when she declined to attend their annual forum. While the U.S. ignores the development of such regional economic groups, regional security organizations are emerging to check American influence in Asia. Most notable is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, comprising Russia, China, and several central Asian nations, which began joint military drills last August. China's recent ascension to coalition-building status within Asia is even more remarkable, considering its status as an international pariah on the heels of Tiananmen Square 15 years previous.

The formation of such groups emphasizes how other nations and actors in Asia might react unexpectedly to U.S. foreign policy. Latent nationalism does flare up at an alarming rate, and has been displayed recently in the growing animosity between China and Japan over historical differences unrelated to those nations' considerable trade partnership. The Kashmir situation keeps relations tense between India and Pakistan, and Southeast Asia, relatively peaceful in recent years, is full of ethnic, linguistic, and religious hostilities (Indonesia's

conflict with the Free Aceh Movement rebels, separatist rebels in Thailand's south, to name a few examples). In short, most Asian nations, regardless of internal politics, are seeking greater military capabilities, so as to avoid being left behind in the new arms race. The White House might stress the danger of rogue states developing nuclear weapons, but democracies and trading nations are increasingly anxious to obtain the ultimate deterrent. In light of this new trend, Newsweek reporter Eleanor Clift recently made the bold but insightful prediction that in five years time, as a result of perceived threats from Iran, Israel, and Pakistan, the recently liberated Iraq will restart its nuclear program. **D**

# Marketing Politics

Political Commentary  
by Liz Egan

**W**

ith the 2006 midterm elections and the 2008 presidential election hovering on the horizon, Democrats and Republicans alike have their political machines running in high gear. The strongest weapon in either party's arsenal is not any platform promise or set of ideas, but the language that is used to convey the superiority of one party's ideas, and the context in which the issue's argument is situated. A feature by Matt Bai that ran in the *New York Times Magazine* this summer ("The Framing Wars," 7/15/05) refers to this strategic tactic as "framing." Bai recounts the developing trend of relying on private-sector style marketing strategies like focus groups to formulate strong messages and use them to propel. Indeed, it seems that marketing and politics have become synonymous.

To understand this analogy, consider that there is good marketing and bad marketing, good politics and bad politics, and that the two are correlated. Dissecting the successful political strategies of the Democrats and the Republicans will reveal what is simply good marketing. Bai's feature on framing seeks to explore why Bush won the 2004 election and stumbles upon the interesting answer that the Republicans simply had a better marketing strategy.

In a nutshell, good and bad marketing are determined by when the brunt of the consumer-based research is done. Good marketing finds out what people want, then makes it; therefore much of the hard work and research is done on the front end and the creation of the final product doesn't begin until there is a defined audience with a defined set of wants and needs. Consequently, designs for the product meet the aforementioned wants and needs. Bad marketing created a product, then attempts to push it on a market. A product is designed to meet its producer's wants and needs: the hard work is figuring out how to get people to buy it, even if there is no desire or demand for the item. Repetition is paramount to success; word on the street is it takes seven repetitions of a statement or idea for a target audience to catch on.

Marketing to sell ideas is what we refer to as politics. Good politicians have done their homework before they hit the campaign trail; they know who their audience is, what their lives are like, what their wants and needs are, and write their speeches accordingly. Bad politicians can't connect with their audience because they haven't taken the time to find out who their audience is before they formulate their speeches – a good example would be Howard Dean's announcement during the



2003 Democratic primary that he wanted to be the candidate of the white guys with Confederate flags on their pickup trucks. Had he spent a little more time on research and development, he wouldn't have had to spend so much time on disaster control.

Though the terminologies of framing and marketing may be fairly new to the political sphere, they have been winning political victories for years, and not just for candidates, but for issues in general. Both Republicans and Democrats have done their fair share of winning and losing, but the recent trend has been for Republicans to come out on top with stronger marketing strategies and more effectively crafted campaign messages. However, as Bai notes in his feature, the stage is set for the Democrats to catch on.

As far as the 2004 election is concerned, the Republicans won because they understood the technique of developing a strong message and then repeating it constantly. The message that "John Kerry is a flip-flopper" permeated through all the political rhetoric coming out of the Republican campaign and was illustrated at every possible opportunity. Everything—Bush's positions on the war, on Social Security, education, everything—was correlated to and contrasted with the image of Kerry as a flip-flopper. The implication that the voters may not like what Bush will do but at least they'll know where he stands was a powerful one, and the Republicans milked it for all it was worth. The Democrats, on the other hand, had too many messages floating around that seemed to vary from day to day: Bush is a liar, Bush is a warmonger, Bush is just some stupid spoiled rich kid. Moreover, they weren't able to channel anything definitive or consistent to the voter. The Republicans knew how to use marketing strategies like streamlined language and message repetition, and it showed.

In his recent book on political framing, "Don't Think of an Elephant!," George Lakoff observes that much of Republican success has come from popularizing loaded phrases and using them to place their agenda within the 'frames' that exist in voters' minds. For example, Republicans refer to "tax relief," a phrase he claims is designed to put the voter in the frame of mind that taxes are

an oppression from which he needs to be liberated. Republican pollster Frank Luntz advises that one should advocate "exploring for energy," not "drilling for oil"; one should criticize "Washington" and not "the government."

Over the years, the Democrats have had many successes that are attributable to good marketing strategy that don't appear in Bai's work. Consider the sexual and feminist revolutions of the sixties and seventies. The success of the sexual revolution was largely due to repetition, and the message—that having sex is normal and fun—was everywhere, in music, movies, and books. And within a single generation, the societal norm has changed. Today, sex is normal. From free condoms at school to dirty jokes on prime time TV and to nudity in a PG-13 movie, most people who are in their thirties or younger don't even blink at this stuff. That your grandmother might not be on the bandwagon yet is just as much a marketing strategy as everything else. Generation gaps exist not only due to age differences, but are the result of marketing differences as well. Grandmothers generally aren't the target market of condom companies, and college kids generally aren't the target market of the AARP. Good politicians know to incorporate this distinction in their own marketing strategies.

In many political arenas, the battle between marketing strategies is still being fought: the debate over withdrawal from Iraq is a potent example. Another summer article that ran in *USA Today* by Timothy Kane, an economist at The Heritage Foundation ("'Exit Strategy' – A Mere Phrase, Not a Strategy," 6/20/05), discusses the left's criticisms of President Bush's management of the war in Iraq for his lack of an 'exit strategy.' As Kane recounts, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was quick to insist "we don't have an exit strategy, we have a victory strategy," but the loaded phrase wars wage on. The left is trying to use this term to frame Iraq in the context of Vietnam, when America had anything but an 'exit strategy.' However, Kane used the database LexisNexis to discover that the term 'exit strategy' originated in 1980 as a business term, and it wasn't until 1993 that the phrase

# Art for a Change

## The Smart Museum's *Beyond Green*



reating art from trash may seem like an odd concept, but by combining caring for the environment, innovative technological ideas, and a

wealth of creativity, it can be accomplished. *Beyond Green: Toward a Sustainable Art*, the Smart Museum's newest exhibition, has done just that. This intriguing new exhibit has been co-organized by the University of Chicago, the Smart Museum, and independent Curators International (iDI), and curated by the Smart Museum curator, Stephanie Smith. *Beyond Green* opened October 6, and is set to run through January 15, 2006, in the Richard & Mary L. Gray Special Exhibition Gallery.

Upon entering the exhibit, two large posters outline the purpose and details of the exhibit. As one explains, "Sustainable design has the potential to transform our everyday lives through an approach that balances environmental, social, economic, and aesthetic concerns." While innovation and environmental preservation may be important to the artists, this exhibit is undoubtedly about art and awareness. Kristin Greer Love, a student organizer of the exhibit, explains, "One of the explicit goals of the *Beyond Green* exhibition is to provoke a debate about the capacity for artists to integrate sustainability principles into their art and design practices. One of the more implicit goals of the exhibition is to provide a space for individual reflection on the connections that exist between and seemingly discreet consumption choices that we make each day."

The tour begins with a beautiful mock fruit stand, stocked with paper peaches. While appreciated for its artistic qualities, the message here is more about the local food movement. Visitors are encouraged to take an information sheet and read the wall displays, which show the tremendous distances most foods must travel before they get to consumers and ridiculous amount of energy required for this movement. Alternatively, food that is grown in local food systems is from in and around the communities in which it is consumed, making for fresher and more environmentally efficient produce. The display also lauds the efforts of urban farming, explaining that, "The United Nations recently reported that 50% of the world's population will be living in cities by 2007."

Moving on, "the hippo roller" is a new product used for transporting water long distances efficiently in rural, undeveloped areas. The roller is comprised of a large blue plastic barrel with a metal handle used to push or pull it. The design allows for ease of transport for anyone trying using it. It is accompanied by a print showing the advantages of the hippo roller in colorful fashion. The hippo roller helps to show how

Cultural Commentary  
by Adam Brunk

products can be both safe for the environment and cheap and efficient to produce and use.

*Beyond Green* also features a small movie room, which continuously shows two films by Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla. Both films deal with the disputed island of Vieques, which lies near Puerto Rico. The visually dazzling and intellectually stimulating films feature clips from the disputed areas interspersed with shots of a person traveling around the coast of the island by boat, or what would normally be a boat. Sparkling blue water and sandy beaches are outshone by a man riding a table with an outboard motor.

Here one of the exhibit's subtlest, yet most striking features becomes clear: Nearly everything is recycled. Not just the products used in the artwork, but the display itself. The curtains housing the film area are made of recycled polyester. The walls from the previous exhibition give form to this and have used no new paint. Even the furniture, which gives patron a place to rest, is built from leftover materials. From these efforts, the symbiotic relationship between the environmentally conscious and the visually appealing in this exhibit is clear.

Brennan McGaffey's "Audio Relay" is a remarkable piece of functional art. The bright yellow case about the size of a desktop computer houses every piece of this display. By using solar panels and a car battery, McGaffey has created a portable audio archive with the ability to broadcast over a short range. McGaffey's project is ongoing in that new audio CDs are constantly being added, making this self-sustaining guerilla portable cultural experience especially interesting.

JAM, a long-term artistic partnership between Jane Palmer and Marianne Fairbanks, displays a project called "Jump Off." Here, Palmer and Fairbanks have used handbags outfitted with solar panels to power such small items as cell phones and a flat screen television, also built into a handbag. JAM have even created a small business venture from their sustainable art, as they are beginning to market their products, which are all manufactured through means of sustainable production. They hope that this will help to further their ideas on the use of solar power, especially by putting it on display in new contexts.

One portion of the exhibit deals with environmentally safe structures created from trash and cheap everyday goods. The Learning Group, another art cooperative, has constructed a lightweight dwelling from

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was even used in a military context at all.

But if marketing is supposed to be about delivering what people want, at the end of the day, most people just want to belong. Almost two thirds of conservatives and half of liberals choose to publicly identify themselves as "moderates," because most people just want to be as respectful and accepting as they can, and enjoy the company of family and friends with minimal collateral damage. Furthermore, distinctions between 'left' and 'right' are anything but clear cut. For politicians, it is crucial to keep this in mind for their marketing strategies. A keen example is the gay Republican. To explain the psyche of the gay Republican would another article entirely, but the point remains that gay Republicans are out there, and they pose strategic hurdles on both sides of the fence. A Republican campaigning against the gay lifestyle probably isn't going to be well received, but a Democrat campaigning for tax hikes likely won't find much success either. But a politician with a good marketing strategy looks at the gay Republican and says to himself, 'ok...I can work with this,' and does his best to include the gay Republican in his party. A politician lacking such a marketing strategy ignores this group entirely, because he assumes there is nothing he can learn from the gay Republican, and likewise nothing he can offer to the gay Republican.

Conservatives have seen a lot of success in politics because many of them have a very keen understanding of basic marketing principles. Yet there may be another, more definitive reason for the Democrats' lacking marketing strategies, which is what Lakoff refers to as "hypocognition," or the lack of ideas. But which is the bigger battle ground...ideas or the language that packages them? Senator Byron Dorgan, Democrat of North Dakota, told Bai for his feature, "I can describe, and I've always been able to describe, what Republicans stand for in eight words, and the eight words are lower taxes, less government, strong defense and family values...We Democrats, if you ask us about one piece of that, we can meander for 5 or 10 minutes in order to describe who we are and what we stand for. And frankly, it just doesn't compete very well. I'm not talking about the policies. I'm talking about the language." On the other hand, Luntz maintains that loaded phrases like "tax relief" are only successful because the voters have already embraced the ideas behind them to begin with and that framing has very little to do with it, and proves it with polls that show only 14 percent of voters believe they are under-taxed.

Regardless of the outcome of the battle between language and ideas, it remains that good marketing (and therefore effective politics) is about finding that place where everyone can belong in a candidate's party. It's about doing the necessary research to find those needs and wants that very different people have in common, and then running like hell with them to the polling booth. **D**

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cardboard and plastic bottles. As a matter of fact, all the items used to build the hut were collected from the University of Chicago's waste stream.

Next to that structure stands a ParaSITE, the brainchild of Michael Rakowitz. Rakowitz began developing ParaSITE several years ago as a lightweight, portable shelter for the homeless. The prototypes were created from nylon and other prefabricated materials, but these interesting and impressive shelters can now be made from nothing but packing tape and plastic trash bags. Using a tube in the top of the structure, the shelters are inflated and warmed by connecting them to the heating vents of buildings. By using the wasted heat, Rakowitz has given many homeless people a warm and safe place to sleep for the time being. Love says, "The public dialogue about homelessness that ParaSITE provokes might raise consciousness in a way that moves people and policy makers to action." The prototype of display holds an especially interesting story, as it was used by a homeless man until he no longer needed it, at which point he returned it to Rakowitz. The white shelter still shows the dirt and grime stains of a life on the streets.

All the art on display at *Beyond Green* is relatively small-scale, but every work combines elements of art and activism, showing that through reusing products and utilizing less likely resources, one can be both environmentally safe and have a high likelihood of sustainability. Andrea Zittel's art from recycled goods show possible functions of sustainable art in all our daily lives. The pre-packaged compost packets and recycled paints of another artist and inventor show the breadth of possibilities, while space-age tripods filled with the recycled lab equipment of a previous generation give a history to the idea of sustainable art. The last poster to help guide a visitor through the exhibit explains, "Sustainable design utilizes many established green tactics, such as the use of recycled materials and renewable energy, but goes beyond them, positing that a purely green approach that privileges environmental questions over other factors isn't effective." *Beyond Green* is an experience well worth the time, as it gives a glimpse into some of today's most creative minds and a hint towards the changes possibly awaiting all of us in the near future. Love explains, "The show invites us to ask, 'How can we as artists, designers, and consumers reduce, as economists might say, the negative externalities that we impose on others, and, in doing so, improve the lot of others and the environment?'"

*Beyond Green* will be on display at the David and Alfred Smart Museum until January 15, 2006. The Smart Museum (<http://smartmuseum.uchicago.edu>) is located at 5550 Greenwood Avenue, on the University of Chicago campus in Chicago. For hours and more information on the exhibit, please call 773-702-0200. D

## Blue Blanket

Blue blanket—  
soft like memories  
of teddy bear tea parties,  
of good-night-sweet-dreams-child  
(shhh. . . you are safe here)—  
hangs off the bed, suspended  
like an unfinished sentence—

Fingers, worn by time  
(ever-so-slightly)  
reach out  
for the dangling edge  
of a forgotten fantasy.

There is rest somewhere,  
there are places quiet,  
lives that move,  
breathless, through  
blurred forests,  
lives that end  
with a gentle sigh—

Not here.

## Fragile

Blessed are the broken,  
for they shall be made whole.

In red-apple nighttime,  
I am reaching for your harshest  
touch—the most bitter fruits  
of your tangled vine.

Wrap me tightly in snowflakes  
till my skin is a quilt of crumbling  
rose petals. I long even  
for edges of hail,

a loud biting along my arms.  
I want to know pain, wild, unruly  
sorrow, if it unfolds your fingerprints.  
I am finished, weary

with my careful empty.  
If I am too small, break my heart  
against the stained glass windows;  
rebuild me from scratch.

## Eurydice

Your absence paints itself into the folds of  
an abandoned blanket,  
it sticks to the shadows of your sheets  
and paces with heavy step upon my  
shoulder.  
Your absence is weighty,  
a row of stones sitting on my tongue.

I have twenty-three broken bluebonnets  
to whisper in your ear; I have a prayer—  
it is written on my fingertips in iambic  
pentameter  
with the black ink of memory;  
it wants to curl in your palm,  
but all it can find is an imitation,  
a footprint of your touch.

as a lonely mockingbird rests, silent, on  
my head,  
as my lips part and nothing escapes,

I long to sit on the wooden steps of your  
voice  
(what idyllic street holds you now?)—  
and I would accept the sharp splinters  
with warmth.

Lead me, then,  
from this field of shades.

—Amanda Machin

# \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

The Center for American Progress has chosen to include  
Diskord in its Campus Progress network of student  
publications at universities and colleges across the nation.  
Campus Progress, an effort to strengthen progressive voices  
and counter the growing influence of right-wing student  
groups, will provide Diskord with a grant of \$3,000 for the  
2005-2006 academic year, opportunities to bring speakers and  
film screenings to campus, ties to other publications at schools  
such as Harvard, the University of North Carolina, Dartmouth,  
and the University of Wisconsin. Articles that have appeared  
in Diskord have been published on the Center's website. For  
more information, visit [www.campusprogress.org](http://www.campusprogress.org).

# Poet to Poet: Srikanth Reddy

Interview  
by Charles Umeano

W

hen I joined Diskord last year, I wanted to conduct a series of “talks” with poets in order to achieve a more intimate and less analytical discussion about both the process and goal of writing poetry. I was fortunate enough to have my first interview with University of Chicago Senior Lecturer (Creative Writing) for the Department of English and Assistant Professor of English Srikanth Reddy.

Reddy is working on a Ph.D. from Harvard and has received a M.F.A. from the University of Iowa where he studied under the Pulitzer-prize winning poet, Jorie Graham. His first book, *Facts for Visitors*, was published by the University of California press to wide acclaim. He has been honored with a grant from the Mellon Foundation and an Academy of American Poets Award.

Our discussion focused on what it means for a poem to do “work,” which then led to dialogue on subject matter, the importance of form, and the poet’s role in society. Finally, the conversation got very personal with Reddy responding to my questions on the loss of the poetic gift and his personal evolution as a poet.

Reddy is currently working on a book-length prose poem.

**Diskord:** Where do you draw your inspiration from?

**Reddy:** For a long time it was India, but then I started to feel boxed in by that. Then I started to write about literature, I looked to books to inspire me, and then I began to feel that was closed off in a way. Now I am interested in what one might call ethics. It is such a difficult time right now to be a citizen of the world, and for me that is becoming a very interesting subject. However what is the most interesting thing to me is the way subjects exhaust themselves.

**Diskord:** How did you know that your subjects had exhausted themselves?

**Reddy:** Well, I might have misspoken on that. Subjects themselves are inexhaustible. You can spend your life writing about a leaf if you continue to view it, realize it, and conceptualize it in different ways. It is people who become exhausted with the subject. You have to be aware of the exhaustibility of the imagination, and not repeat yourself excessively in your writing. To me, the openness to change is at the heart of poetry.

**Diskord:** Does poetry work for society?

**Reddy:** I don’t know if poetry can do anything for society, but I do know that poetry exists in society. We are always engaged in dialogue with ourselves, however I think it is important

to think of poetry in a sociological sense. As in what place does one’s poetry hold within the means of cultural production. For example I taught a class last year that focused on bringing poetry into the classroom. When you put poetry into a new context it becomes new and it makes the context appear new.

**Diskord:** When I attended your Advanced Poetry: Service learning class here at the University of Chicago last spring, I remember you continually reiterated to us students that poetry must do work. What exactly did you mean by “work?”

**Reddy:** There are many of ways of thinking about “work.” The first sense of “work” is the kind that actually goes in the making of poems. Oftentimes poetry is considered to be spontaneous and without any labor, but when you consider the language used in talking about poetry such as “craft,” “labor,” and “work,” you see that work is very much involved in making poetry. I think that it is very interesting that poetry is described as “a work.” This is making a verb into a noun, which leads me to the second sense of poetry that is to have an impact in the world. When poetry becomes private the poet tends to ask less from the poem.

**Diskord:** What should the poet ask from the poem?

**Reddy:** To answer that, we can use the example of William Carlos Williams who [saw] the poem as a machine. The poet should then ask what work this machine does in the world. And there are a number of different kinds of work that it could do. It can do political work, it can do aesthetic work, it can do philosophical work, most often it does emotional work, and I think that it is very important that writers should consider what work their poems are actually doing.

**Diskord:** How can a poet know if their “emotional work” can be used to do work outside themselves and in the world?

**Reddy:** That’s a great question, and I also think an incredibly difficult question to answer. For example in the case of someone like Emily Dickinson whose whole life was spent doing this private emotional work locked in her bedroom in Amherst, Massachusetts and who wrote for herself, she never published, and yet, after her death and the work’s discovery and popularization, manages to do enormous work for writers and readers as well. So it’s not a matter of having one’s work be published. It’s more of a matter of finding shape with your language that is not a simple private notation of your own experience as with a diary or a journal, which is a chronicle of your individual emotions. That’s a good thing to do, but it’s not poetry. I think individual feelings begin to do real work in the world when they are put into form. The art of crafting your materials into a shape is what will let your poem do work in the world.

**Diskord:** How do poets go about choosing the right form?

**Reddy:** Alas, I can’t give a formula for that, but there are some conditions that a poet can look to in their own work. The first of these is intelligibility, which is a basic requirement that is surprisingly hard to find in a lot of contemporary poetry. The second condition is a sense of the world created by the poet. Words are almost too easy to work with in that they hollow out quickly. So if the poet remains committed to constructing a sense of their world within the poem through language, then it will find the productive resistance of the actual world. The third condition is for the poet to really attend to the details of literary form, thinking about the way that a thing as simple as the sentence encounters the line, and to put them in a dialogue with each other and with the whole history of verse. Entering into that kind of formal dialogue humanizes the poet’s work and allows it to really do “work.”

**Diskord:** Shelley imagines every poet that has ever lived engages in a dialogue with one another. Do you feel that your work can be characterized as dialogue between you and other poets?

**Reddy:** I think what your referencing is that beautiful aside by Shelley in the “Defense of Poetry,” in which he imagines every poem as contributing to the one long, massive, epic poem of humanity. In a way thinking of this river of poetry is the only way to write, and it is the most humbling and most inspiring way to think about this almost absurd practice that one finds oneself engaged in when writing poetry. If I can further that river, or even add a little tributary to it, then that’s the most ennobling thing about poetry. Unfortunately, it is easy to forget that, and quite often myself, my students, and even my teachers don’t think of that river of poetry, which leads to poetry that is enfeebled, private, and generally not committed to doing the “work” of poetry.

**Diskord:** How would this description of poetry as a dialogue explain the evolution of form?

**Reddy:** That’s an interesting question. In fact last night I was speaking with a statistician here at the college who works on uncertainty. And he was asking me if I thought poetry was cumulative, that is if it made the kind of progress that say a physicist or chemist would hope to be making. I don’t think so. I think that there are a few basic truths that we have to express, but the forms that we can express them in are infinite.

**Diskord:** How so?

**Reddy:** Well you know the sonnet was the governing form for expressing heartbreak for centuries, and it still is in some way. However, we have new ways for formulating the same kind of experience, perhaps in a prose poem,  
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or a highly-fragmented modernist poem, or even an ode. The river metaphor I used earlier is misleading, because in some ways a river moves forward and I don't know if poetry really moves forward. It moves, but not in any particular direction.

**Diskord:** Which poets influenced your evolution as a poet?

**Reddy:** I was very highly-trained formally in my education as a poet. I went to a master's program, and even as an undergraduate I was taught by formal poets such as Seamus Heaney. So from the very beginning I had a reverence for received forms. The sonnet, terza rima, villanelle, sestina, they were all part of how I came into poetry. At the same time, the poetry I write now doesn't use any of those forms. After I published my first book, *Facts for Visitors*, which used a lot of terza rima and the villanelle as well, I begun to turn to prose forms primarily because I found it interesting to create a sense of structure in structure-less pieces of writing. I am very interested in embedding forms within apparently formless kinds of writing in sort of the way [John] Ashbery does. It would be amazing to one day write a villanelle but put it in prose form.

**Diskord:** What advise would you give young poets beginning their own evolution?

**Reddy:** The importance of doubt in developing as a writer, and not just at the beginning, but in the stage that I am at and the stage that someone like Mark Strand is at. One has to learn to trust that uncertainty and doubt. And it is very difficult to do that, but that kind of uncertainty is what makes poetry. Once you certify that doubt, the work stops being poetry. Moreover, form, and I don't necessarily mean traditional literary forms, in shaping one's work is a way of negotiating that doubt. Form is the vessel in which you can steer through the sea of uncertainty. And finally, I always like to remember that "poets are readers who occasionally write a poem."

**Diskord:** Do you ever fear the loss of your poetic gifts, as you get more and more certain of yourself through age?

**Reddy:** That's a terrifying question, and now that I am nearing my mid-thirties that's a question that I do think about a lot. However, there are exceptions that give me hope like [William Butler] Yeats, who wrote his best poetry late in life, Wallace Stevens, who published his first book of poetry in his forties, Walt Whitman, who published *Leaves of Grass* for the first time in his mid-thirties and continued to expand it in amazing ways, and Mark Strand, who to me is right now doing some of his very best work. To me young people write very good poetry because they are uncertain about things, but hopefully they don't have the market cornered on uncertainty. **D**

# Apocalypse in a flicker of light (The Lorax)

## Superego

These woods were not made for  
fairytale.

Though their green pastels bark  
of youth's canvases: the conquering  
knight  
in cardboard armor that  
nevertheless  
still creaked, clanged, and crashed.

It has now been eclipsed from  
memory  
by the sharp switch of blinds  
suddenly shut,  
yet that flicker of light...  
and bitten off by those "dog days"  
of too many summers-

with their carving knife teeth, which  
were  
not at all like those used by the  
Ancients  
that chiseled Love on stone-

but it's easier to love a stone.  
In the raw caress of its permanence,  
or perhaps in the severity of its gray  
that strikes the eye as God's  
right hand descending from the  
clouds;  
suddenly blinding in creation.

So what are they then? Simply  
these woods are-  
like siren-red and satin sheets  
spread out on a bed.

## Id

Worship at this erected altar of  
perennial passion.

It is EVEN easier to love  
a tree:

Lust-sown seed  
penetrating earth holes-  
pine straws piercing,  
opening, like spreading legs, sores  
that bleed  
much (1) too (2) slowly (3) and  
much less than  
twin dancers waltzing in time;

Greed abated by  
seedless fruit now  
reddened brown, black and  
maggot filled. Then  
the odor becomes nauseating;  
It is branded with a crooked heart  
(carved so wildly),  
barely discernable.

## Ego

Beware of what the father has given  
to his son.  
"I am the Lorax, I speak for the  
trees."

A tree-hugging hippie with hairs  
hassled  
by lice-that gorge themselves on  
human skin,  
their sausage-skin casing erupting  
like puss from a festering wound-  
and with yellowed eyes like some  
nightmare beast,  
I wait for you at the heart of trees,  
my fangs bared and imbrued with  
blood.

Like Macbeth (driven to suicide by a  
fortune cookie),  
The Adam in you stands erect, and  
he (has conquered horses, wives,  
and kings)  
is ready to tame me.  
What will he whisper in my ear?

—Charles Umearo

Comments? Questions? Opinions? Submissions?  
E-mail Julie Fry ([juliquah@gmail.com](mailto:juliquah@gmail.com))  
or Ali Winston ([ali.winston@gmail.com](mailto:ali.winston@gmail.com))

# Race, Ignorance and Student Conduct

## Campus Issues by Fithawee Tzeggai



On Friday night, October 14, a few students in the Max Palevsky dorm threw a party with a “ghetto” theme, calling it “Ghetto Party: Straight Thuggin It.” Offended students responded almost automatically by writing emails to university officials and circulating images from the party on the internet. As more students learned about the party, the negative response grew, and meetings about the way to deal with what is considered by the college to be an unacceptable act of racism have been scheduled.

The backlash to this incident came in the form of two arguments, both of which were based on an accusation of racism. On the one hand, people claimed that the coordinators and attendants of this party were expressing the pervasive or systematic racism that plagues this campus in particular. On the other hand, people claimed that those that planned and attended this party are morally reprehensible. The first response is viewed as a liberal approach to dealing with larger social issues while the second response is considered an emotional reaction to a personal offense. Nevertheless, I think the second response is as politically significant as the first, so I will take a moment to consider it.

What makes throwing a “ghetto party” morally wrong? The obvious answer is that this party is insensitive and offensive. The implication is that it ignores the racial sensitivity of most black people, and refusing to respect this racial sensitivity is morally wrong. Actually, this refusal is only wrong if the racial sensitivity that it ignores is reasonable and justified. Many people believe that blacks (and perhaps some others) tend to unjustifiably racialize circumstances; they infer racial motivations in the most benign actions and perceive stereotypes and racial assumptions in color-blind practices. The first response to Friday night’s party, the claim that the party is a symptom of deep racial tensions in our campus culture, might be taken as a good example of this heightened and unwarranted racial sensitivity. For those who adopt this widely accepted attitude, an attitude that is not often expressed due to obvious political and cultural sanctions, the claim that the “ghetto party” was morally reprehensible because it was insensitive is not very persuasive. Their retort is simply that blacks are wrong to be offended; or, in other words, blacks are offended only because of a fundamental misunderstanding of the motivations of the white people involved. Furthermore, if there is no rational account of why black students were offended by the party, then those in

charge of the party could not have known that the party would be offensive. If people go around accusing everything of being racist without any explicit justification, then no one can be reasonably expected to avoid this accusation since no one will understand what counts as racist or offensive. In order to hold people morally accountable for their offensive actions, one must explain why their actions are offensive—that is, what is it about their actions that betrays some attitude or perception about black people in general. The answer to this question touches on the nature of racism.

Racism is different from stereotypes. Stereotypes, like the idea that University of Chicago girls are ugly, are more or less benign. When someone meets an attractive girl from the University of Chicago, the contradicted stereotype does not significantly affect his perception of her. Furthermore, if it so happened that, during one year, the entire female student body at the U of C was physically unattractive, then the stereotype would no longer be a stereotype. It would be a statement of fact. Racial prejudice is, in the U.S., distinctly different from other stereotypes insofar as it is essentialist, meaning that it attributes stereotypical characteristics to the fundamental nature of a kind of person. When someone meets a black person who does not fit the popular image of blackness, he tends to perceive this black person as contradictory, anomalous, and, ultimately, anonymous. Furthermore, if a racial prejudice happens to accurately describe the majority of black people (as they often do) it is none the less unjustified and pre-judicial since it refuses to recognize self-identifying individuals, taking-for-granted their sameness as a force that determines their own choices. Racism takes a set of characteristics and unifies them under one name or type, in this case blackness, and inflicts this type on the racialized individual’s identity, excluding from the beginning the possibility for authenticity, self-expression, or any other modern expression of human freedom and dignity.

Let’s return to the words and images of Friday night’s party. Words like “ghetto” and “thug” were acted out not only with handcuffs, forty-ounce beer bottles, and smacking a suggestively dressed girl on her ass, but also with fitted caps, baggy basketball shorts, and oversized polo shirts. By putting all these images under one blanket theme, the students throwing the party did not have to say “black” for one to understand the theme and recognize the commonality between the words and images. The party’s theme only makes sense because everyone shares the inference that blackness is synonymous with baggy clothes as well as criminality and sexism. Of course, this inference is not unique to this group of students. This notion of blackness obviously pervades our American culture, black culture included. This same

collection of images and words are constantly repeated in the music videos shown on Black Entertainment Television. Indeed, racism is not, in itself, morally reprehensible. We cannot help but be racist. Racism is, however, a problem, and while we cannot expect people to not be racist, we can expect people to acknowledge that racism, in themselves and in others, is a problem. Anyone who does not treat race as a social ill, but instead carelessly and negligently expresses and reinforces it through his or her behavior, can therefore be held morally responsible—responsible not merely for insensitivity to a group of individuals, but insensitivity to the larger problem, America’s problem, of race. In light of the moral imperative to recognize our own problematic and socially destructive attitudes and perceptions, negligence is a crime in itself.

It turns out that the two ways of responding to the “ghetto party”—the idea that the party is symptomatic of a larger social illness and the claim that the party was morally wrong—go hand in hand. The party was wrong because it demonstrates ignorance and neglect towards the larger social illness. Not only did the students at the party ignore the implications of their actions, but the administration allowed the students to go through with the party unhindered (it had the consent of the Resident Heads, though they were unaware of the theme). When certain black students expressed their discomfort and outrage, other black students criticized them of “going about it the wrong way,” white students accused them of character assassination, and the parents of white students presumed that black students would respond with physical violence. The events following the night of the party continue to express a campus-wide, malicious neglect of the racist prejudice that plagues the always diminishing black student population at our school. The only meaningful way the University can respond to these unremorseful racist acts is by finally acknowledging the problem that has hitherto been dismissed, obscured, and ignored. And the only meaningful way for the University to acknowledge the problem is by doing something about it—the administration must do something to encourage racial sensitivity and transform the campus cultural dynamic. Perhaps this task requires recruiting more black students, hiring more black faculty, or even adjusting the core curriculum. I think all these solutions should be strongly considered. Recognizing the problem of racism does not exacerbate small, isolated traces of an ugly past, it is simply the only humane and fair approach to American politics. The University of Chicago has done nothing to respond to the “ghetto party” incident until it acknowledges that its campus atmosphere is hostile and harmful to its black population. **D**

# Letter to the Editor

## “Ghetto Party” Response

**R**

e: Straight Thuggin’ Ghetto Party

As fourth-year students in the college, we were deeply disturbed by the email from Aron W.C. Cobbs detailing, in words and pictures, the “Straight Thuggin’ Ghetto Party” that took place this past Saturday, and we would like to express our solidarity with the Organization of Black Students and all other organizations that seek to address this sort of behavior. Our relation to the incidents is at one level distant, as we neither knew of the party nor are we acquainted with the organizers, participants or the students who attended and reported on the party. That said, Mr. Cobbs is astute in his observation that, sadly, this incident is one of many and indeed indicative of a poverty of racial understanding that leads to casual racism amongst the student body on our campus. Attitudes, speech, and actions that proceed from this racism are of course damaging to the University community at large, as well as to our relationship with the larger community. It is our duty as members of this community to take positive action not merely to ensure a response to those who were caught at the extremes of this behavior but to address the underlying issues in such a way as to prevent anything of this sort in the future.

It is our belief that the actions of those students involved in the party were predicated on ignorance, not deliberate attempts to offend. While their ignorance in no way excuses their actions or

mitigates their harm, it provides perhaps a measure of direction to those of us who hope to address this issue and find long term solutions. Ignorance, however damaging, is not an entrenched opinion. Rather, it is a lack thereof, and we hope that perhaps it can be eradicated if the University’s administration, faculty, staff, and students commit themselves to doing so.

A number of organizations have already committed themselves to the cause of raising awareness of racism on campus and developing opposition to it, including but not limited to the Organization of Black Students, the Organization of Latin American Students, the Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture, the Office of Minority Student Affairs, the Amandla Center, and the University Community Service Center. Many others have doubtless been offended by this party’s theme or at least have begun rethinking racial stereotypes and our casual treatment of them. The time is ripe to build, under existing leadership, an even larger cross-cultural and multi-racial coalition for the purpose of creating new University policies to promote diversity and tolerance on campus. The process will take time, as many students come to Chicago from homogeneous communities where stereotypes take on a faraway exoticism, but as a University, we must confront this issue. To this end, we hope and believe the University administration will take seriously these events and provide forums for discussion and community participation in dealing with them.

*by Maren Christensen and  
Nick Juravich*

As to the students who planned and attended this party in full “ghetto” costumes, their actions have clearly done damage. However, as a large portion of our student body shares their ignorance, to publicly humiliate and punish them may well make martyrs of them and result in a backlash that does not solve the problems of latent racism but merely forces them to operate more subtly. Many students already have voiced the misguided opinion that those in question did “nothing wrong,” and in the face of such ignorance it seems the best course of action is an educative, not a retributive one. Community Service, attendance of cultural happenings, and interaction between students of different racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds should be stressed in this process. It is our belief that such personal interaction with and investment in the whole community, both in our neighborhood and on our campus, is the best way to combat racism born of ignorance.

It is our desire to participate in any way we can to address the events of last weekend and their underlying causes. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Maren Christensen and Nick Juravich  
Fourth-Years in the College

## Winter Coat

Imagine great, warm coats of orange ripened in the sunlight. A glittering halo so bright that you’d think the sun eclipsed.

Outside this train, budding storm clouds come, heavy-laden, bruised and battered blue, bursting with tears, and sunk to the ground, exchanging Eskimo kisses with the green noses of hilltops, plains, and trees. They come seeking to eclipse this orange coat and not the sun. The twin doors

of the train slowly slide open. By squeaking, they trumpet their retreat to caverns too small to be known by human eyes.

What wicked intentions lay within? Perhaps amputated fingers wrapped in pastel gum wrappers; the blood so glaringly red that they clash. As those silver doors return, the wind rushes in wearing coats the colors of wilting flowers. A glimmer of Orange is seen outside; will the sun rise again? Doors slide shut. Case closed.

—Charles Umeano



# Stuff to do

**October 25<sup>th</sup>**

**“Beyond Marbury: The President’s Power To Say What the Law Is.”**

The University of Chicago Law School presents the Fourth Annual Chicago’s Best Ideas series. On Tuesday, October 25, 2005, Cass Sunstein will give a talk followed by a discussion on the president’s power to legislate. The lecture will take place in Classroom II of the University of Chicago Law School at 12:15pm. The lecture is free and open to the public - seating is limited. Lunch will be provided.

**Feminist Lives & Queer Trajectories**

In the Feminist Lives and Queer Trajectories Series, feminist and/or queer academics and activists will describe their life trajectories, how they came to do the work they do, and why it matters to them. There will be two speakers a quarter. Anne Ladky & Evette Cardona will be speaking at this lecture, which will be held at the Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture from 5:00- 7:00 PM.

**October 26<sup>th</sup>**

**University Theater presents The Brute and The Public Eye**

University Theater presents Anton Chekhov’s *The Brute*, directed by Emily Boyd; and *The Public Eye*, by Peter Shaffer and directed by Daniel Sefik. The show will be from 8:00 PM - 10:00 PM in the Reynolds Club First Floor Theater

**October 28<sup>th</sup>**

**Human Rights & Sexuality Panel: HIV and LGBTQ Discrimination Across The Globe**

Gender Studies Brown Bag Lunch: “Human Rights & Sexuality Panel: HIV and LGBTQ Discrimination Across the Globe.” University of Chicago students will discuss their experience interning with non-governmental organizations through the Human Rights Program’s 2005 Summer Internship Program. Having worked on three different continents, the students will discuss the intersections of human rights and sexuality.

**October 31<sup>st</sup>**

**Black Theology and Womanist**

**Theology in Dialogue: Which Way Forward for the Church and the Academy?**

This historic seminar unites black theology and womanist theology in conversation. Representatives of both perspectives will critically engage issues key to the life and success of everyday people in communities, churches and academies. The entire conference sponsors debate: Each male and female participant will speak on topics traditionally associated with the other side of the gender equation, followed by a response from his or her counterpart.

**November 1<sup>st</sup>**

**“Most Fags are Floaters” Lecture**

The Gender & Sexuality Studies Workshop presents: “Most Fags are Floaters: The Problem of ‘Unattached Persons’ During the Early New Deal, 1933-1935” Speaker: Margot Canaday, Univ. of Minnesota, Dept. of History, Post-Doctoral Fellow. Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture, 4:30-6:00pm

**November 10<sup>th</sup>**

**Does Increased Obesity Mean Increased Regulation?**

The University of Chicago Law School presents a panel entitled “Does Increased Obesity Mean Increased Regulation?” on Thursday, November 10, 2005. Panelists will be Saul Levmore, Dean and William B. Graham Professor of Law, and Richard Epstein, James Parker Hall Distinguished Service Professor of Law. The panel will take place on Thursday, November 10, 2005 at 4:00 pm in the Weymouth Kirkland Courtroom of the University of Chicago Law School. A reception will follow the panel.

**November 17<sup>th</sup>**

**Beyond the Politics of Bare Life: AIDS and the Neoliberal Order**

The 2005-06 Gender Studies Distinguished Faculty Lecture: “Beyond the Politics of Life - AIDS and the Neoliberal Order” The speaker will be Jean Comaroff, Bernard E. & Ellen C. Sunny Distinguished Service Professor of Anthropology. Reception to follow. Social Science Building, Room 122 from 5:00-7:00pm

**Ongoing Events and Exhibits:**

**“Beyond Green: Toward a Sustainable Art”**

Sustainable design attempts to meet the needs of the present without compromising those of future generations. This exhibit explores how this design philosophy resonates with an emerging generation of international artists who combine a fresh aesthetic sensibility with a constructively critical approach to the production, dissemination and display of art. The exhibition includes existing works, commissions, and previously presented work that has been “recycled,” spotlighting ways in which artists are building paths to new forms of practice. Smart Museum of Art, through Sunday, January 15, 2006.

**Man of La Mancha**

Court Theatre will present *Man of La Mancha*, the epic story of knight-errant Don Quixote, his servant Sancho and the woman of his dreams, the lovely Aldonza/Dulcinea. Set during the Spanish Inquisition, the tale follows the romantic and noble journey of a knight who sets out to right all wrongs and win a good woman’s heart while dueling with windmills along the way. Based on Cervantes’ *The Adventures of Don Quixote*, *Man of La Mancha* is the classic comic tragedy of a man’s struggle against the impossible. Performances will run through Sunday, Nov. 6 at Court Theatre.

**“Whenever on on on nohow on / Airdrawing”**

German artist Peter Welz collaborated with Frankfurt-based choreographer William Forsythe to create this multi-channel video installation, which takes its name from a text fragment by Samuel Beckett. Forsythe translates “Whenever on on on nohow on” into physical movements, which culminate in a dance recorded by various cameras, including those attached to the dancers’ wrists. Five camera angles, screened simultaneously on separate screens, create the experience of an endless circle. Accompanying the video, “Airdrawing” includes Welz’s gestural drawings that depict the dance’s different hand placements, frame by frame. Brought to you by the Renaissance Society. Running Sunday, Sept. 18 through Sunday, Oct. 30. Hours are: 10:00 am-5:00 pm on Tuesday-Friday and 12:00 pm-5:00 pm on Saturday-Sunday.

Diskord is neither sponsored by nor affiliated with any of the events listed here.

If you have an event you would like listed, please e-mail Charles Umeano ([mercurya@uchicago.edu](mailto:mercurya@uchicago.edu))