



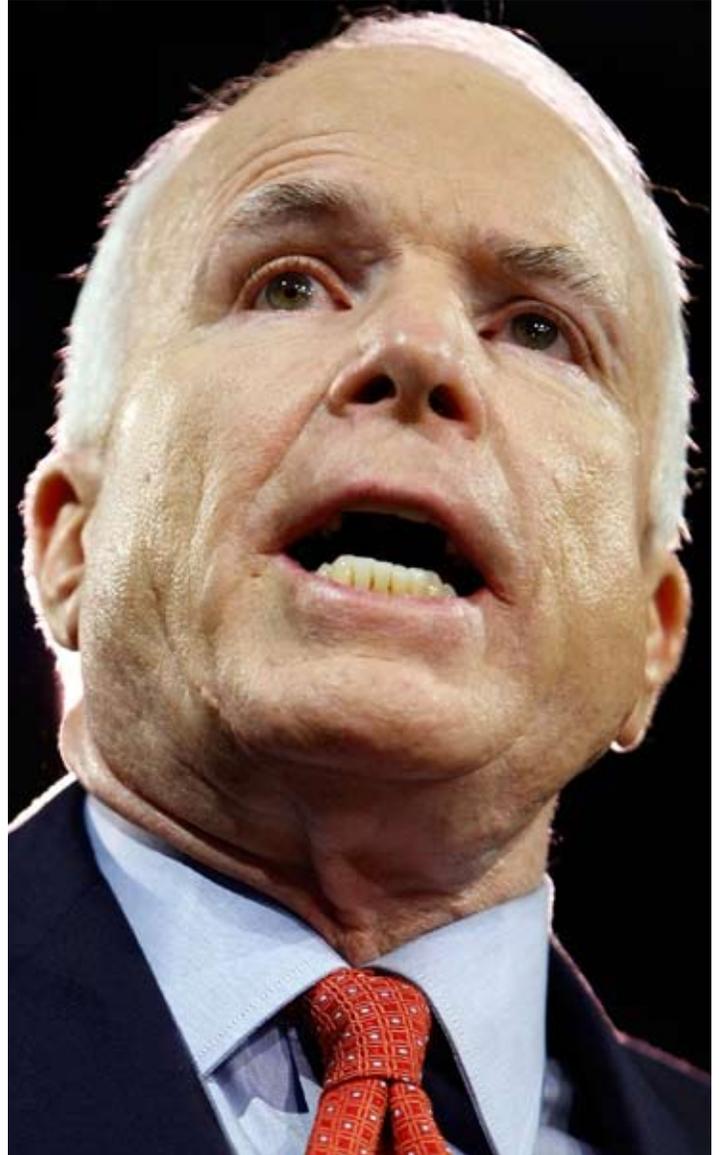
Vital Signs



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ELECTION '08

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Losing Our Edge

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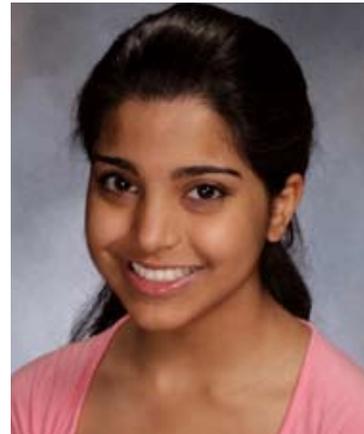
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BY NEHA SRIVASTAVA

Can you feel the Earth trembling? The world’s center of gravity is slowly shifting from America to the East, as other nations are rising to become influential world powers and threaten American hegemony. The unilateral policies of the Bush Administration in the political, diplomatic, military, and economic spheres has brought us into the current economic calamity and weakens both our global economic status and reputation as



assets rapidly decline in value. All the while, the U.S. tenuously clutches its reputation as a beacon of democracy and struggles with whether to remain in Iraq. All evidence points to one conclusion: America is losing its edge.

These past few months, several nations have asserted newfound power. This issue of Vital Signs explores the position of these new powers that have emerged: China, rapidly growing in industrial power, claimed an important position in the international arena as it hosted the Olympics. Russia demanded worldwide recognition as a formidable power by belligerently warring with Georgia, which seeks to become a Western-style democracy.

This issue also discusses the upcoming election. Of the candidates, whose energy

plan is best likely to succeed? Is a brief stint as governor of Alaska sufficient experience to be “one heartbeat away from the Presidency”? Whom can we trust? And most importantly, which candidate is best prepared to lead the United States in this critical period of history? Whether it is Barack Obama or John McCain, the next president has an arduous road ahead of him. He needs to redirect the economy, make crucial diplomatic and political decisions, and reclaim the pinnacle that America has occupied. America’s international reputation and status are seriously deteriorating, and that must be stopped.

Will the U.S. be outstripped by other nations? Last year, our GDP was the greatest in the world and exceeded that of the second-place European Union by 1.63 billion dollars according to the World Bank. Our economic ties around the world are extensive. But China’s economy has expanded by two-thirds since 1990 and may overtake the U.S. in 2010. And the energy needs of both China and India have enormous worldwide political, economic, and environmental impact. The U.S. has to make crucial decisions, and fast. All of this awaits the new president on Inauguration Day.

We need to rebuild the economy, to invest once again in education and NASA, and to regain our position of dominance on the forefront of research and trade. We have to reinvest, restructure, and adapt to maximize the benefits of the bailout. We are, in short, in for changes and sacrifice these next four years. It is imperative to reclaim our leadership position in the world.

In each issue of Vital Signs, students grapple with the forces that shape our world. As this year has been filled with strife and shakiness, the momentousness of today is perhaps unsurpassed. We encourage you to continue to be vociferous and contribute to our magazine. By exercising our voices today, we can change tomorrow. Let’s hope that today’s hardships and the next president will only make us a stronger and wiser nation.

Vital Signs

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Senators John McCain and Barack Obama in their first presidential debate.

Obama Is the One

BY NED ADRIANCE

I'VE always considered Abraham Lincoln to be our greatest President. He saved the Union, advanced a morally righteous cause, and, with striking eloquence, inspired a great faith in his people. Yet, Lincoln is the farthest cry from what our common standards define as an effective politician. He was lanky and clumsy and wore an inelegant, wrinkled face. From all reports, it's clear that in addition to a painful awkwardness, Lincoln was pretty depressed from his adolescence through his death.

It is evident, though, that our 16th president possessed both a liberating and crippling self-awareness. He questioned himself, sought the best answers through a nuanced understanding of the issues, and surrounded himself with advisers who disagreed with his very understanding of the role of government. If Lincoln were to run for office today, we probably wouldn't elect him. Or, if we would, it would be in a time of great distress where his party was on the right side of the issue according to the electorate. His detractors would likely call him boring, unflappable, and unable to connect with the common man (despite his modest upbringings). And, in all truthfulness, he probably wouldn't connect with that average person. The reason? He's too brilliant.

Ever since Barack Obama announced he was running for president, the pundits have constantly equated him with our first Catholic President, JFK, and his brother Bobby. Don't get me wrong, I'm a great admirer of the Kennedys. But, to me, their importance lies more

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McCain Is the Man

BY MATTHEW R. ZUBROW

WHEN examining John McCain, the Republican senator from Arizona, and his long history of dedication to America—from his 23 years of valiant service in the Navy to 26 as a politician in Washington—it is clear that this patriot has devoted his life to the country he loves. On the CNN news program "The Situation Room," even his former adversary Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton lauded McCain's service, saying, "I know Senator McCain has a lifetime of experience he will bring to the White House." But is John McCain ready to lead this country as the Commander-In-Chief?

The answer is emphatically yes. Beyond his far-reaching administrative, legislative, military, and diplomatic experience, Senator McCain possesses a wealth of personal qualities and a comprehensive agenda that will both renew and strengthen the U.S. at home and abroad.

First, McCain will reach out to allies to revitalize and strengthen our international relationships. McCain emphasizes that "The U.S. cannot lead [...] alone" and believes the U.S. must coordinate her efforts with our partners to promote peace and prosperity throughout the world. To achieve this, as reported by the International Herald Tribune, McCain proposes to create "a new global compact of more than 100 democratic countries to advance shared values and defend shared interests, [because] the U.S. must set an example for other democracies."

Today, the Bush administration is viewed quite negatively on for-

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Obama Is the One

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in what they stood for as symbols than their great intellectual capacity. I don't believe Senator Obama is the next JFK, because I think that comparison has the potential to sell the Junior Senator from Illinois short. After all, Obama wrote the indelible account of his life, *Dreams from my Father*, entirely on his own, whereas Kennedy's ghostwriter has been largely credited for the President's Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Profiles in Courage*. And, while the best speechwriters in the nation assembled President Kennedy's famous speech on his Catholicism, it was Barack Obama who, along with Abraham Lincoln at Cooper Union, solely wrote his profound, adult discussion of race in response to the Jeremiah Wright controversy.

Senator Obama, to me, is much more Lincoln than he is Kennedy. The main criticism he hears from both his supporters and his opponents is that he is too "professorial," or in other words, too smart. And despite being raised by a single mother and working his way through college, Obama has consistently had trouble closing the deal with those voters who seek a President who is like them. I'm of the opinion, though, that these trying times call for a leader who outpaces us, who understands more, knows more, and speaks to more. We don't need another President who seems like a nice guy to be around; we need a President who, in short, is our intellectual and moral superior.

Even still, Obama's symbolical relevance is undeniable: his victory would be seen as a great step forward for race relations in a country where, up until four decades ago, blacks and whites couldn't drink from the same water-fountains. Due to his youth and the heights of his oratory, an Obama presidency would feel a whole lot like the "new generation of leadership" that President Kennedy spoke about in his nomination acceptance speech in 1960.

But Obama also has the mind to be an effective president. He has demonstrated throughout the last 20 months that he is a cautious, tempered leader who makes not erratic but educated decisions. He has the self-understanding and self-identity that enabled Lincoln to steer this nation through the greatest crisis in its short history. We need Barack Obama, now more than ever, because he is neither Lincoln nor Kennedy; he is a man with a unique story and a unique understanding of this world. We need Barack Obama to stand at the helm and face down the many threats this great union faces. Barack Obama, more than any other candidate in recent history, has the potential to reconcile a profound symbolism with an intellectual and personal brilliance. And that is precisely what his campaign has accomplished. It has melded together flawlessly soaring rhetoric and wonk-ish policy know-how; it has brought together in harmony style and substance.

Despite my admiration for Senator Obama, I tend to shy away from identity politics. First and foremost, a candidate must be on the right side of the issues. Thus, even if I didn't consider Obama to be a man of great wisdom, empathy, and relevance to the course of our

nation, I would be an adamant supporter of the candidate. After eight long years of a scathing verdict on modern-day Republicanism, it is clear that the Democratic Party, led by Obama, has become the party of fiscal responsibility, respect for civil liberties, and foreign policy understanding. Throughout the Bush years, the Republican Party has compromised its core values and transformed itself into a neoconservative, big-government remnant of the Whigs. The party that once espoused fiscal conservatism has run up the largest national debt in history and driven this country into an economic recession. The party that decried foreign interventionism has taken us to war with a country that never attacked us or posed a serious threat to our security. And, the party of personal liberty has gotten itself into the business of regulating and legislating our values and private lives.

Trickle-down economics don't work. Or, at least the economics promoted by this administration and endorsed by Senator McCain certainly don't. The Republican Party has empowered the richest of the rich, and, in doing so, has not only widened the gap between classes in our society but squandered the surplus President Clinton left his successor. That's why it won't be surprising when the poll conducted by the Pingry Record shows that a disproportionate number of young people in this school are McCain supporters: the last eight years have been good to many in the Pingry community, but they have not been good to the nation as a whole. And as a result, all of our money—from the poorest to the wealthiest—will be lost. We need an economic policy that promotes middle-class success, that encourages not the rich to save more but the rest to spend more, because that's what will drive this economy out of the rut we find ourselves in.

Don't call Senator Obama a socialist and don't call the Democratic Party socialist. Certainly, we have our leftist nuts, but I wouldn't be a supporter of this candidate if I didn't think he had faith in the virtues of the free market. Certainly, if you're still a supporter of this President and are a member of the neoconservative wing of his party, you don't have a leg to stand on when it comes to "socialism." This administration has increased national spending by the hundreds of billions, and is currently bailing out private enterprises.

To the more libertarian wing of the party, which at least has not lost its sense of self, I say this: the hardest workers simply do not necessarily earn the most in this society, as you would like to believe. Senator Obama understands that there is a vast inequality of opportunity in this country, and that the government has a responsibility to ensure that those who work can earn a living wage. The government certainly should not be in the business of redistributing wealth—which history has proven ineffective—but it should be in the business of empowering its citizens.

The number of issues facing the next president will be staggering, and are most definitely not limited to economics. Our next commander-in-chief must end this war, he must fight for energy independence, and he must uphold the constitution and restore a sense of reverence for individual liberty. But he will also have to confront the unexpected. It is precisely because of this unknown that we need a leader who not only endorses a coherent policy agenda but who has a level-headed temperament, an intellectual genius, and a self-questioning persona. We know too well the pitfalls of stubborn leadership. We must elect a president who is capable of transforming this country: without some substantial reversal, the American Dream could forever be lost to the depths of a stock market crash or an unending war. We must elect Barack Obama.

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McCain Is the Man

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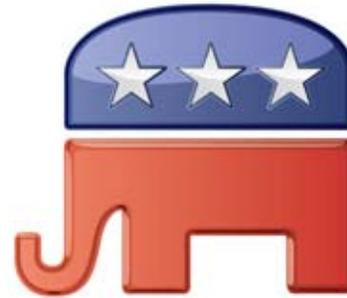
eign policy. Columnist Glenn Kessler of the Washington Post, calls President Bush's diplomatic attitude at best "a hard-edged approach to diplomacy [...]," and at worst a view that is "tone-deaf to other nations' concerns." Though some have tried to paint the same picture of McCain's international agenda as that of Bush, the candidate has adamantly contrasted his proposed policies, saying that "our great power does not mean we can do whatever we want whenever we want, nor should we assume we have all the wisdom and knowledge necessary to succeed." Unlike the Bush administration that has often acted unilaterally, John McCain will improve America's standing in the international community and win back the admiration the world once had for the U.S.

Many on the left see Senator McCain as a hawkish warmonger, but he is fully committed to resolving all conflicts peacefully whenever possible, telling one audience "I hate war, and I know very well and very personally how grievous its wages are." But, the Republican candidate did acknowledge that in certain situations diplomacy could not work, especially concerning the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Iran and other rogue nations. The Senator strongly believes that the U.S. must "confront the transcendent challenge of our time: the threat of radical Islamic terrorism," by working with allies to infiltrate terrorist organizations, sever their illegal funding, and eliminate their recruitment and training operations. His campaign has outlined comprehensive measures to address all of these risks to American security.

Distinguishing himself from the policies of his Democratic opponent Barack Obama, who has not openly addressed the issue of the threat of terrorism, McCain asserts that "Any president who does not regard this threat as transcending all others does not deserve to sit in the White House, for he [...] does not take seriously enough the first and most basic duty a president has — to protect the lives of the American people." The American people consistently view McCain as far more competent on foreign relations than his adversary, according to CNN opinion polls. Even Democratic vice-presidential candidate Joe Biden once called his running mate's diplomacy platform "naïve," which certainly casts doubt on Obama's ability to assume the role of a world leader.

One of Senator McCain's most admired qualities is his strict allegiance to his core values and beliefs as well as a dedication to the country's well being. If he truly believes in something, such as the U.S. troop surge in Iraq, he will always display unwavering support for it, no matter the criticism he receives. Back in 2007, when most politicians were against President Bush's call for more troops, McCain's support for increased U.S. deployment remained strong. Now that America has seen the significant increase in security and stability in Iraq that the surge has produced, it is evident that McCain made the right decision.

Those who know McCain say that going against party lines for the benefit of the American people is nothing new for the Senator. Just ask his close friend Joe Lieberman (I-CT), a former Democrat who now supports the Republican candidate. Lieberman says that John McCain



transcends conventional party lines because he stands for America rather than the agenda of any one party. McCain has promoted this image by sponsoring considerable bipartisan legislation, such as the McCain-Feingold Campaign Reform Act and the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007.

Most Americans believe bipartisanship is beneficial and necessary for government to efficiently and effectively. However, Senator Obama's voting record work has established him as one of the most consistently far-left politicians in his party, according to the American Conservative Union. In a Democratic-controlled Congress with unprecedented low approval ratings, the Illinois Senator is not embodying the "change" he has adopted as his mantra; Obama is actually perpetuating more of the same partisanship that plagues Capitol Hill. McCain is a politician who can produce real bipartisan change.

Given John McCain's widespread support on both sides of the aisle and his history of making decisions according to what is best for America rather than his party's platform, he is truly a man that puts his country first.

Few dispute that Senator McCain is a straightforward and honorable individual. MSNBC news anchor Chris Matthews of the show "Hardball" has applauded McCain's "candor" and

"honest[y]." McCain displays frankness when he admits that much of his personal experience has not been in economy or finance. It is seldom that a politician openly admits to a shortcoming to the public, however, a great leader such as John McCain has the ability to admit his flaws and take responsibility.

In fact, this is still true today. Recent Gallup polling data shows that more than any other characteristic, citizens desire a president who has the utmost integrity—one who is honest with them no matter how dire a situation faces us. We need a president who can surmount the nation's stagnant political quagmire to effect real change, rather than provide only lofty promises that can never translate into legislation. We need a president who can act, reform, defend, strengthen, and ultimately lead the country during the many challenges that the next four years will hold. This is why America truly needs John McCain for President.

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Misplaced Piety

BY BRANDON BRIER

DESPITE Sarah Palin's claims that she "would never support any government effort to stifle freedom of religion, freedom of expression, or freedom of speech," her words and actions blatantly contradict her alleged respect for the First Amendment. How can she defend these rights while she seeks to "make sure God's will" is carried out in Alaska? After working on a "task that is from God" in her home state, how can Palin be expected to govern an America that is based on separation of church and state? As religion is a major element in her decision making, Sarah Palin epitomizes political hypocrisy and constitutional violation of individual rights.

The public education system, upholding the principle that the government "shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion," is one of Sarah Palin's main targets on her crusade. In addition to the conventional curriculum for teaching evolution, Palin believes that creationism should be taught in schools. When questioned by PBS during the Alaskan election for governor, Palin explained that we should not "be afraid of information" and "let kids debate both sides." First, evolutionary theory is backed by evidence and is

universally accepted by scientists. Second, promoting religious doctrine in public schools violates American constitutional principles and secularism.

Palin's religious views permeate her political stance on many issues. On June 8, 2008, Sarah Palin used state funds to pay for her trip to the Wasilla Assembly of God, her childhood church. In defense of her actions, her spokeswoman in the governor's office, Sharon Leighow, claimed that state funds were used because Palin was invited as a governor, not a citizen. However, as the governor of Alaska, she then delivered a speech linking Christianity and politics. She explained to the audience that sending troops into Iraq to fight is "a task that is from God" and to pray for "God's plan" in the war. Aside from her irrational reasoning, which would be dangerous in the hands of a national leader, she uses God as a justification for the Iraq War. And, again, she is speaking as a governor, not as a citizen.

She also asked the congregation to pray for the realization of "God's will" in the construction of a \$30 billion natural gas pipeline through Alaska. She explains that God is needed in "unifying people and companies to get that gas line built." Palin does not deserve condemnation for her piety and prayers or for her belief in Divine intervention and/or support. But religion has no place in the words

or actions of publicly elected officials in a country predicated on separation of church and state and in a country that prides itself on its diversity of people and ideas.

Palin's Biblical principles do violate people's rights. She supports legislation to deny spousal benefits to same-sex marriages because "honoring the family structure is that important" and therefore "marriage should only be between a man and a woman." Palin strongly opposes abortion, unless the pregnancy threatens the life of the mother. According to Palin, a woman impregnated as a result of a rape or incest should not be permitted to abort the child. It is unfortunate that these social issues are part of political platforms.

While Sarah Palin is entitled to her own values, her decisions in office will be based off of these principles, as they have been in Alaska. She has spoken and voted against gay rights and marital benefits, and she has also supported the Safe Haven bill, which allows mothers to surrender newborns without a penalty as an alternative to abortion when they cannot provide for the baby.

Rob Boston, a member of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, asserts that government officials should be "building the economy, creating jobs, and filling potholes." Instead, Sarah Palin is encouraging the Alaskan people to "get right with God," as she did when speaking to the congregation at her former church. Boston explains that "if any American feels that his or her soul needs a tune-up, there is no shortage of religious leaders" to whom they can turn. However, if Sarah Palin is elected Vice-President, she is not in office to provide a religious tune up.

Electing such a person as Sarah Palin to political office undermines personal freedoms granted in the constitution on which America has relied for over 200 years. Her policies are not necessarily predestined failures, but Palin is a threat to so much that our Founding Fathers held sacred and did establish for ourselves and our posterity. Hopefully, the public realizes it before November.

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ROBYN BECK/GETTY IMAGES

BY KATLYN CASEY

THE most important person in the world is going to be elected this November. John McCain, the Republican nominee, could be the oldest man ever elected president, thus making his choice of running mate incredibly important. Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska is the right choice for John McCain's vice president because she is not only the epitome of the average American, but Palin will do anything to promote the welfare of the people.

Palin is a mother of five with a typical American family. She is a committed family person who married her high school sweetheart. She has had no legitimate scandals, unlike our previous governor of New Jersey and our neighboring governor of New York. She is a Christian who attends mass, and no, she did not attend Harvard Law School. She graduated from the University of Idaho. Sarah Palin became a politician to represent the people whom she knows and with whom she identifies. According to polls in Ohio, more voters say that they identify with Palin than any other candidate. She is passionate in her love of country and has the strength to stand up for what she believes would be in the best interests of the people. She has represented the people of Wasilla and the people of Alaska, and she is well qualified to represent the people of the U.S.

Governor Palin is in politics to keep taxes low and give back the taxpayer's money. Palin opposes Obama's plans to raise income and business taxes; the latter would certainly hurt small business owners. When Palin's career as a politician began, she promised tax cuts in her town of Wasilla. As mayor, Palin delivered on her promises. As governor of Alaska, she sold the government's luxury jet on eBay because she didn't believe that Alaskans should pay for such extravagances. If elected, she promises to limit government spending.

The Bridge to Nowhere is an example of how Palin advocates for U.S. taxpayers. The Bridge was projected to cost \$398 million dollars and would have connected the island of Ketchikan in southeastern Alaska to an airport on another island. Palin shut down this project because the bridge was an unreasonably expenditure for the small population who would have used it. Instead, Palin told reporters that alternative "options for Ketchikan" are being sought out instead of wasting taxpayers' money on a \$398 million dollar Bridge to Nowhere.

There has been much discussion about patriotism in this election. Joe Biden, the Democratic vice presidential nominee, has said that raising taxes is patriotic. How could raising taxes to enable the government to increase spending possibly be patriotic? Palin's response to Biden's theory is that higher taxes will decrease jobs and hurt small businesses. With the amount of debt that Americans now have, who



THE RIGHT SHADE OF **LIPSTICK**

Palin's ethical rationale for her stance on abortion is very clear; she is strongly pro-life. She says, "Every baby is created with a future and potential"; therefore, no pregnancy should be terminated unless the mother's life is at risk. Palin cares for every life; she believes that every fetus is a person and should have its chance to live and prosper.

Many rumors have been raised concerning Palin's censoring books in her local library. Well, to put that fanciful story to rest, the fact is that the librarian told reporters that she does "not recall a conversation" where Palin attempted to ban books from the library. The list of books that Palin supposedly tried to ban included the Harry Potter series, which is impossible because in 1996, none of the books from the popular series had actually been published. What actually happened is that Palin asked how books could be removed but did not demand that certain books be taken off the shelves.

Palin helps McCain in the swing states by appealing to demographics including white women. A poll taken on September 11 in Florida shows that McCain is now leading by a huge 50 to 43 percent, compared to his 47 to 43 percent on August 26. Voters in Ohio and Pennsylvania are praising McCain's choice in picking Palin as his running mate. In Ohio, McCain's support is up four percent among women and up five percent among women in Pennsylvania.

Sarah Palin is the right choice for vice president. She epitomizes the average American person, and she makes choices determined by what she thinks is right for the people. Palin is what politicians should be like: honest, altruistic, and tenacious in defending the rights of average Americans. John McCain sure did find the right shade of lipstick for his Presidential campaign.

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Play Nice!



BY HENRIETTA HAKES

THE idea of negative campaigning is not a new one. In the 1800 election supporters of Jefferson condemned Adams as a weakling and atheist. In retaliation Adams supporters claimed that Jefferson was a radical and in league with violent French revolutionaries. In 1964 Linden B. Johnson premiered one of the first negative television commercials. It opened with a pastoral scene of a little girl picking daisies in a sunny meadow. Suddenly, the picturesque panorama is annihilated by a nuclear explosion, while a voiceover narrates, "These are the stakes. Vote for President Johnson." Johnson won the election by one of the largest landslides in American history.

The past several decades have witnessed the rise of a new era in negative campaigning. Thanks to the work of political consultants, like the infamous Lee Atwater, virulent attacks on opponent's political platforms, ideologies, and personal life are common place. New technology, mainly the internet, has enabled the rapid spread of slanderous claims and made it more difficult to discover their sources. Candidates continue the tradition of viscerously condemning their opponents in speeches and television ads, but the internet and prevalence has of third-party detractors is adding a whole new dimension to the political scene.

One of the most prolific scandals in the election is an anonymous email directed at Barack Obama. The email accuses Obama of being a radical Muslim and charges that he refuses to recite the Pledge of Allegiance. It began during the primaries and is still circling the globe this fall. John McCain's campaign in no way endorsed the email, but whatever tarnishes Obama's reputation boosts McCain's support. In response to the crisis Obama's campaign has created "rapid response" teams that constantly search the internet for false and misleading remarks about their candidate and provide links to other websites with accurate information.

The preventive measures taken by the Obama campaign have not

been able to ameliorate the damage done to his reputation. According to The New York Times one-third of the American public believes that Obama is Muslim or that he might be. And this widespread opinion is not generated by one email. Conservative Christian radio stations proclaim that Obama as the Antichrist and there are many blogs devoted to spreading the "truth" about Obama's past. McCain has never questioned Obama's religious affiliation, although, he is not above using the rumors to his advantage. Several weeks ago McCain ran a commercial that evoked the language of a best-selling Christian book series in a way designed to alarm fundamentalist Christians over Obama's religious beliefs. In the electronic age rumors can be spread at an unprecedented rate and volume. Even when the truth can be spread in the same time and manner, the contradiction leaves people confused. Any seed of doubt is a success for the anonymous, electronic detractors; they aren't seeking to inform, but frighten.

McCain also has not been spared from these harsh and untraceable attacks. He has been the victim of the "push poll". A voter will receive a phone call and is asked a series of leading questions that are designed to push the vote either for, or against, a candidate. A rash of calls asked voters if they would be more or less likely to vote for McCain if they knew that he had fathered an illegitimate black child. In many states push-polls are illegal for a campaign to use before a general election. When the calls targeting McCain were investigated their origin was traced through several organizations. The polling firm which originally commissioned the calls refused to identify the client, and firmly stated that the calls were for "message testing" and not meant to influence voters. The calls do not provide proof or links for more information. Even if most Americans disregard these insubstantial accusations, in a close race the few people the calls or emails persuade could be a deciding factor.

On both the Democratic and Republican sides candidates have aired negative commercials and been attacked anonymously through new technologies. The question is why? Would it not be more ap-

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Iron My Shirt!

BY ERIKA LAMPERT

IN 1920 when women gained suffrage, it seemed as though society was undergoing a transformation and taking steps towards ending sexism in society. Yet, 30 years later, the 1950s bred the subservient housewife whose duty was to clean the house and manage the children — so much for change. Fortunately today, major strides have been taken and women can pursue any career they desire. But this is not to say that women are not discriminated against anymore. Gender prejudice is still apparent in today's male dominated politics, and particularly in the 2008 presidential election with Hillary Clinton in her efforts to become the Democratic candidate for president and in Sarah Palin's current efforts to become vice-president on the Republican ticket.

Clinton and Palin could not have more different platforms if they tried to — Clinton being pro-choice, a supporter of gun control and opposing the Bush doctrine while Palin being pro-life, a member of the National Rifle Association and a supporter of the Bush Doctrine, that is, once she found out what it is. Yet, sexism has impacted both of them, demonstrating that sexism is a bipartisan demon that runs deep in our society and crosses all party lines.

As she battled for candidacy in this year's presidential election, Hillary Clinton fought a worthy competitor, Barack Obama, as well as sexism. Throughout her campaign, media and critics put way too much focus on her as a woman. Donny Deutsch, Big Idea host, appeared on another CNBC show, Squawk on the Street, to describe why Clinton does not fulfill the new feminist ideal. Deutsch audaciously stated, "Men want a sexy woman. Women want to idealize about a sexy woman," and later goes on to explain that, "Hillary didn't figure it out. She didn't put a skirt on!" Apparently Clinton is a poor candidate and does not meet the new feminist ideal because she isn't sexy enough! You can be sure that nobody is judging Obama and McCain on their outfits or sex appeal. There were many more derogatory statements against Clinton throughout her campaign. At one of Clinton's rallies in Salem, New Hampshire, a man stood up with a sign and shouted "Iron my shirt!" Sadly, Clinton was used to such remarks and calmly stated "as I think has just been abundantly demonstrated, I am also running to break through the highest and hardest glass ceiling," and received a uproar of applause. Jokes have been made about Clin-

ton's old age, but isn't McCain even older? Some even attack Clinton about her poor job as a wife, leading her husband to stray almost a decade ago. It is becoming increasingly harder to differentiate between news about the election and stories coming from the tabloids.

Sarah Palin has also been the victim of sexism in this election. If you are going to be against Palin let it be for her staunch political views that you disagree with or her lack of inexperience, not because she is a woman with a pregnant teenaged daughter, a large family and a young child with a disability. Palin's credentials should not be reflected by her family. The media had a field day with Palin's pregnant 17 year-old daughter who is planning on getting married. The ability to run a country is based on experience and knowledge not how one raises a family. Plus, it can be certain that if the father of this pregnant teen were running, it would not be nearly as big of an issue. Similarly, the rumors about Palin's newborn being her daughter's are a ridiculous attempt to lessen Palin's credibility. It is time that women are treated equally in the political world and that means that Sarah Palin ought to be judged as a running mate and not as a mother of a hectic family running for vice president.

Clinton and Palin have both been victims of sexism in this controversial presidential election. Be you Democratic, Republican or anything in between, your decision as to who to favor and support should be solely based upon the candidates political stances, not their gender, or for that matter, race, religion, sexual orientation or any other unrelated prejudice. It is time that America embraced women in an equal fashion because we are quickly falling behind both developed and undeveloped nations, such as Germany, Haiti, India, Switzerland and Pakistan (just to name a few), where women who are wives and mothers, are successful political figures.

Sources: shakespeareessister.blogspot.com; thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/01/07/iron-my-shirt/; spectatornews.com



LEAVING IRAQ

ALI YUSSEF/GETTY IMAGES



BY CAROLINE DREYFUSS

AS of September 2008, 4,155 U.S. troops have died in Iraq. Is the “surge” working? Should a firm deadline be set for American troop removal or should we stay until the Iraqi forces can safeguard their own country? These are the issues we hear about in the presidential campaign, but they are not what matters most for America. We need a new strategy in order to successfully leave Iraq and turn our focus to solving the problems of our own country.

The two presidential candidates have different approaches. John McCain believes that “it would be a grave mistake to leave before Al Qaeda in Iraq is defeated and before a competent, trained, and capable Iraqi security force is in place and operating effectively.” Barack Obama, however, says, “we must be as careful getting out of Iraq as we were careless getting in.” He has also set a deadline — summer 2010 — for U.S. troops to leave Iraq, more than 7 years after the war began.

Obama’s troop withdrawal plan is the only way that America will finally leave Iraq and end our involvement in the conflict there. Obama’s plan involves the removal of all troops except for a “residual force that will remain in Iraq and in the region to conduct targeted counter-terrorism missions against al Qaeda in Iraq and to protect American diplomatic and civilian personnel.” This force will not build permanent bases in Iraq. The combat brigades will then be redeployed at a pace of about 1 to 2 brigades a month, which will remove the brigades in 16 months.

After the initial withdrawal, the focus will switch from American troops to Iraqi citizens and the growing humanitarian crisis. Over 5 million Iraqis are refugees or are displaced within their own country. Obama and running mate Joe Biden will “work with Iraqi authorities and the international community to hold the perpetrators of potential

war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide accountable.” They will also form an “international working group to address this crisis.” Obama and Biden will also launch an “aggressive diplomatic effort to reach a comprehensive compact on the stability of Iraq and the region.” The effort will include all neighboring countries — including Syria and Iran — and will work to “secure Iraq’s borders, keep neighboring countries from meddling inside Iraq, isolate Al Qaeda, support reconciliation among Iraq’s sectarian groups, and provide financial support for Iraq’s reconstruction and development.” Obama and Biden also believe that the U.S. must “apply pressure on the Iraqi government to work toward real political reconciliation.” As there is “no military solution to Iraq’s political differences,” Obama and Biden will work to press Iraq’s government to take responsibility for their future.

John McCain argues that “it is strategically and morally essential” for the U.S. to stay in Iraq until a “stable, prosperous, and democratic state” is established. This may be possible in the long run, but in the short-term, especially during a time when we are spending over one trillion dollars to bail out our own economic system, the establishment of a democratic Iraq is next to impossible without unnecessary loss of American lives and resources. McCain also believes that “America’s failure in Iraq almost certainly would either require us to return, or draw us into a wider far costlier war.” McCain maintains that we must stay until we get “Iraq’s economy back on its feet.” But how is this possible when our own economy needs unprecedented help? As our own economy teeters, there is no room in the budget to rebuild another nation. McCain and Sarah Palin hope that the “international community” will “bolster proven microfinance programs to spur local-level entrepreneurship throughout the country.” But in a war supported only by the U.S., the “international community” has not shown much interest in financially supporting Iraq. McCain also calls for “international pressure” on Syria and Iran to stop supporting Iraqi insurgents, yet he

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

BY SHAAN GURNANI

“ARE we willing to risk our democracy?” The U.S. prides itself on its democracy: rule by the people. However, this November Presidential election, one of the most fundamental elements of this democracy—the right to vote—may be in jeopardy due to problems with voting booths found across the country. This is unacceptable, and it is the responsibility of the government to take action immediately in order to protect the U.S. democracy.

Just a few years ago, after voting problems in the presidential election of 2000, millions of dollars were put into introducing electronic voting machines throughout the country. In the 2006 mid-term elections, eight out of every ten voters cast their vote on such machines. Hopes were that these new devices would make voting a more economical, efficient, and accurate process. In a few weeks, Americans across the nation will head down to their local polling stations expecting to exercise their right to vote. However, their vote may not even be counted.

The electronic voting machines clearly have problems. There have been crashes, software glitches, hardware malfunctions, security issues, the lack of a voter-verified paper trail in many states, and, in some cases, a scarcity of machines that creates long lines and sends voters home.

A dire problem of the machines is inconsistency. In the 2004 presidential election, a voting machine in Columbus, Ohio incorrectly added nearly 3,900 votes to Bush's total popular vote. And, in the May 2006 Cuyahoga County, Ohio primary, the Election Science Institute calculated four different vote totals. Also, during the March 2006 primary, problems with new voting machines in Cook County, Illinois delayed results for a week.

Additionally, during primary elections in Montgomery County, Maryland in 2006, complications with Diebold machines forced 12,000 voters to use provisional paper ballots.

Because there is no federal law requiring the use of voter-verified paper trails in electronic machines, which would keep a record of each vote, 15 states do not have them.

Furthermore, the security of electronic voting machines is tenuous at best. A study from Princeton University, based upon Diebold's AccuVote-TS electronic Voting machine, “found that hackers can easily tamper with electronic voting machines by installing a virus to disable machines and change the vote totals.” This software can be installed by anyone and run with little risk of detection.

Another concern of this year's election; the scarcity of new equipment in counties in

of problems, the issues are still not resolved. According to “a new study by Common Cause and the Century Foundation... [ten] very vital swing states have significant voting problems that have not been addressed since the last election.” These states are Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin. This, once again, is not acceptable.

The weakness of the voting system is gaining attention, with several movies based upon this issue. This idea is the premise for the October 2006 political comedy “Man of the Year,” starring Robin Williams, who plays comedian and a talk show host named Tom Hobbs who runs for President and wins due to a glitch in the software. Also, in “Swing Vote,” a movie released this August starring Kevin Costner, due to a problem with an electronic voting machine, the entire presidential election comes down to one man's vote.

In addition, the November 2006 HBO documentary “Hacking Democracy” investigated problems with electronic voting machines in the 2000 and 2004 election in Volusia County, Florida. In the ending of the film, an in-use, working Diebold machine from Leon County, Florida is hacked on-camera.

Overall, the problems with electronic voting machines should not be taken lightly; something must be done to save our democracy, whether improving the machines and assuring their integrity with paper trails or getting rid of them completely and reverting back to the tried but true paper ballots. As Lou Dobbs puts it, “When voters

lose confidence in our elected representatives, we can vote the bums out. But what is the recourse if American voters lose confidence in our electoral system?”

Sources: cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/09/18/voting.problems/index.html?iref=newssearch; cnn.com/2006/US/09/19/Dobbs.Sept20/index.html; online.wsj.com/article/SB122179207897655599.html?mod=googlenews_wsj; hbo.com/docs/programs/hackingdemocracy/index.html



MYLES BRISTOW

at least nine states will also cause long lines, leading to voter suppression. According to a Common Cause study and quoted by CNN, “In Colorado, 20,000 [people] left polling places without voting in 2006 because of crashed computer registration machines and long lines.”

A 2005 Government Accountability Office report on electronic voting confirmed that “there is evidence that some of these concerns have been realized and have caused problems with recent elections, resulting in the loss and miscount of votes.” Still, after years

DEMOCRACY AT RISK?



GREEN HOPE

BY TORI MARTIN

IS green the color of hope? Senator Barack Obama's green plan gives hope to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by up to 80 percent by exploring green energy. The Obama-Biden New Energy for America introduces many ways for America to cut down on environmentally harmful fossil fuels.

Green energy will improve America's environment, turning it into an eco-friendly place without harmful emissions. A few examples of green energy are solar energy, wind power, and hydropower. By developing and researching these new types of energy, America can decrease its dependency on foreign oil and help battle the climate crisis.

Introducing different types of environmentally friendly energy into our economy is a key part of Obama's plan.

For example, solar energy is abundant and can be stored in batteries, providing power for cars, even homes. Another type of green energy is wind power. Wind turbines are great for the environment and are perfectly suited for America's geography. Turbines can be sold residentially as well, certainly helping our wallets as well as the environment. Hydropower uses water currents (such as a river dam) to create electricity. Hydropower leaves no carbon footprint and originates from a natural source. Wind power, hydropower, and solar power are all types of renewable energy. In Obama's New Energy for America plan, he proposes that one tenth of our electricity comes from renewable sources.

These various types of energy can help the U.S. to encourage its citizens to save the planet. Many car companies are exploring other ways to run cars without gasoline. There are a few hybrid cars that are on the market now, but many more will be released between now and 2012. Hybrids do cut down our gas dependency, but still is only a temporary solution. Hybrids require gas, just not

as much. Part of Obama's green plan is to put one million hybrid cars on the road by 2015, reducing our consumption of gasoline.

Most of our crude oil is imported from Canada and the Middle East. Within a decade, Obama wants to stop importing oil from foreign nations. For essential energy, the U.S. needs to be free of foreign influence and pricing. By purchasing less oil, the U.S. can focus more on the environment and cars that do not emit greenhouse gases. Obama will establish a \$7,000 tax credit to those buying vehicles that are eco-friendly.

Oil that is not being used will be saved. The saving of oil is central to Obama's plans. By having green energy and oil, there will be more options for energy. Green is always a good path to take if we want to conserve the planet for today and tomorrow.

Another part of New Energy for America is to create and install a plan that will decrease gas and air-pollutant emissions by 80 percent by 2050. By using renewable energy, America will not release as many greenhouse gases, which destroy the ozone layer and create climate changes. Furthermore, by instating a plan, people will become more knowledgeable about green energy and begin to live a green lifestyle. Much will have to be done to market a green life style, but strong leadership in our nation on this issue can make a significant difference.

The Obama-Biden New Energy for America plan contains many strategies to live in a better America. People will have cleaner air, which is always a lot healthier than air that is polluted by carbon dioxide and other gases. This plan creates new jobs for making a cleaner country and has many goals that can be reached. If this plan is put into place, the U.S. will continue on its way to reducing pollution and conserving a healthy planet for future generations.

Sources: Barackobama.com; Hybrid-cars.com; Energy Information Administration; Energy Quest; American Wind Energy Association; National Renewable Energy Laboratory



ISTOCKPHOTO

GREEN THUMBS

BY NATALIE BATTISTA

WITH rising oil prices on everyone's mind, John McCain recognizes that finding an alternative energy source is a prominent issue going into the 2008 November election. McCain sees the depleting oil resources as clear as anyone else and has developed a more eco-friendly and reliable plan to incorporate green energy into American households.

Senator McCain believes "in a world of hostile and unstable suppliers of oil, this nation will achieve strategic independence by 2025." Instead of having Americans suffering over inflating prices of gas, food, and other consumer goods, McCain believes that we should begin to utilize our own vast reserves of oil and natural gas. McCain wants to use natural gas, break oil dependency, protect our environment, and promote energy efficiency. The Lexington Project is McCain's ideas and proposals on environmental issues. He named his plan after Lexington, Massachusetts where the American Revolution began.

John McCain sees no reason why America shouldn't be a leader in the new international green economy. From an economic standpoint, he believes that the future relies on green jobs and green technology. For example, as an alternative to coal, wind could provide as much as 20 percent of our electricity by 2030. Solar energy has already proven to be a beneficial renewable resource and needs to be further explored and expanded in its usage. The senator from Arizona also plans, as President, to promote electric cars, which he believes will one day fill American roads. McCain also wants to reduce red tape, excessive government involvement or adherence to rules and formalities, to allow investment geared toward



upgrading our national grid to meet current energy demands.

Another energy efficient idea McCain supports is the installation of SmartMeters in houses and businesses. These meters would be a way for people to view their overall energy consumption and would, as the Lexington Project states, "encourage a more cost-efficient use of power." McCain continues to propose plans to compel Americans to put their green thumbs to work. In the Lexington Project, he has included the Clean Car Challenge, committing a \$5,000 tax credit to automakers for each customer who buys a zero carbon emission car, a \$300 million prize to improve battery technology for hybrid and fully electric cars, an annual \$2 billion donation to advance clean coal technologies, the construction of 45 new nuclear power plants by 2030, and a cap-and-trade system which would limit greenhouse gas emissions while encouraging the development of low-cost compliance options.

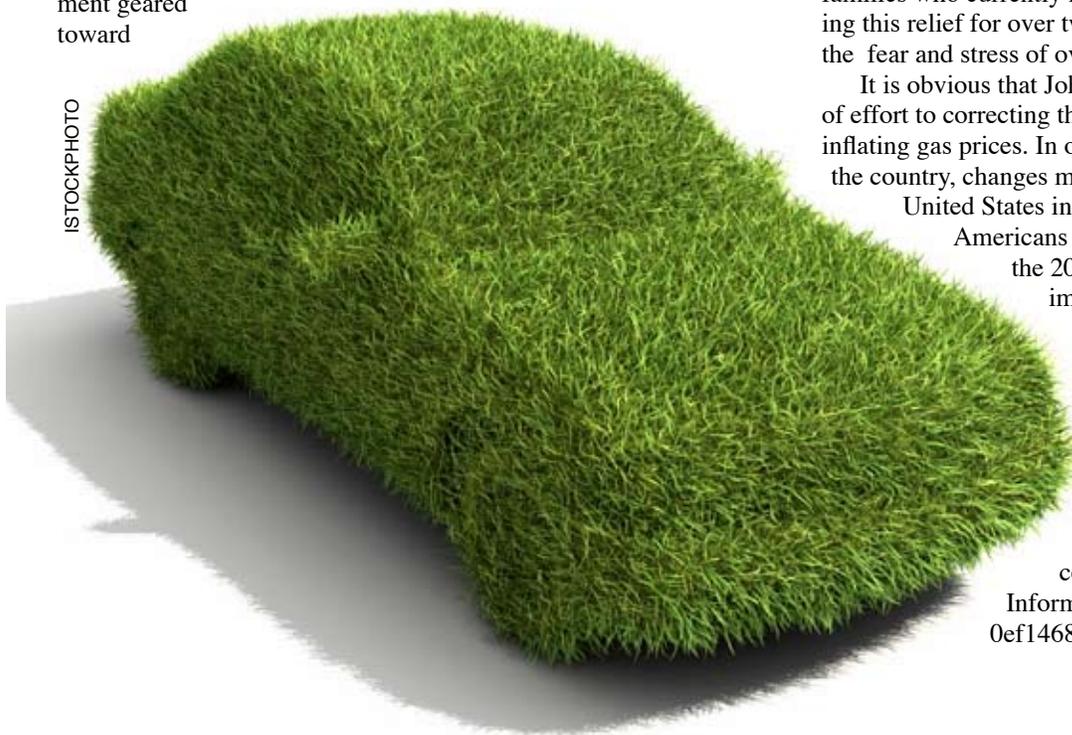
Obama also has many similar plans for creating a greener country. However, Obama is vigorously promoting his plan for short-term relief for American families. Most of McCain's plans in the Lexington Project provide fast enough relief for families who currently need it, as well as the hope of sustaining this relief for over twenty years and, ideally, eliminating the fear and stress of over-inflated gas and electricity bills.

It is obvious that John McCain is devoting a great deal of effort to correcting the dire issue of oil dependency and inflating gas prices. In order to ensure a strong future for the country, changes must be made towards advancing the

United States in a greener direction and it seems that Americans are looking to the two candidates for the 2008 presidential election to begin this imperative move. Through the development of the Lexington Plan and with his enthusiastic passion for this country, it is very possible that John McCain just may be the man who will steer the United States in the right direction.

Sources: my.barackobama.com/page/content/newenergy; johnmccain.com/Informing/Issues/17671aa4-2fe8-4008-859f-0ef1468e96f4.htm

ISTOCKPHOTO



ROE AT 35

By MICHAEL SANKOVICH

AS November 4th is just around the corner, one cannot help but ponder the future of *Roe v. Wade*, the famous 1973 U.S. Supreme Court case legalizing abortion. The Republican and Democratic stances on it are nearly polar opposites. The Republican platform is pro-life; they think abortion is immoral because it is killing a human being. The Democrats, however, believe that it is a woman's choice to decide whether she wants a child and that a fetus is not a living person. Regardless of each party's views, this election may well affect the future of the landmark *Roe v. Wade* ruling.

Presidential hopefuls John McCain and Barack Obama support of course their respective parties' platforms. Initially John McCain stated that "in the short term, or even the long term, I would not support repeal of *Roe v. Wade*, which would then force X number of women in America to undergo illegal and dangerous operations." However, at the time of his nomination, he stated, "I do not support *Roe versus Wade*. It should be overturned." Since that interview, he has remained pro-life. Does he believe that the risks women would experience in order to receive illegal abortions are high enough to keep *Roe v. Wade* intact or does he believe it should be overturned as soon as possible? His running mate Sarah Palin states that she is "as pro-life as any candidate can be," claiming that abortion is illegal and wrong unless the mother's health is in danger. Palin believes that even if a baby is conceived as a result of rape or incest, the pregnancy should not be aborted. Obama believes that "Abortions should be legally available in accordance with *Roe v. Wade*."

It is important to clarify *Roe v. Wade* which has often been misunderstood by the public. The decision permits a woman to have an abortion in the first trimester of pregnancy without any restrictions. This is the embryonic stage of development. There is no fetus yet; it is an embryo. The decision

goes on to state that a mother may abort her pregnancy for any reason, up until the "point at which the fetus becomes 'viable.'" The Court defined viable as being potentially able to live outside the mother's womb, which means without artificial aid. According to *Roe v. Wade*, in which the Justices examined and relied on extensive medical and scientific evidence, viability takes place at about seven months (28 weeks) but may occur earlier, even at 24 weeks." The Court also held that abortion after viability must be available when the mother's life is in danger. The Supreme Court based its decision on the Ninth Amendment to the Constitution and the right of privacy. Thus, according to *Roe v. Wade*, it clearly is a woman's natural right to control what lives in her, especially during that first trimester and, with exacting restrictions, may have an abortion in succeeding trimesters. According to the latest statistics, 88.7% of all abortions in the U.S. are performed during the first trimester of pregnancy.

Many of the pro-life views are based on the belief that all life is sacred. Pro-life supporters believe that even an embryo is a living human being and, therefore, abortion is equivalent to murder. Although an embryo and later the fetus has the potential to be a human, it doesn't begin to show human characteristics until the second trimester, which begins at approximately 12 weeks.

Most opposition to abortion is rooted in religious convictions; however, the U.S. is a

secular society in which state and church are separate according to the First Amendment. Religious views should not be brought into the debate because the government does not and should not base any of its decisions on religion. Most people, including pro-lifers, do believe that abortion should be allowed if the mother's life is in danger. There are a few who believe that the baby's life is more important than the mother's and if a choice must be made, the baby's life should be saved, not the mother's. Most people, including pro-lifers, also support abortion in cases of incest and rape (an exception, as mentioned earlier, is the Republican nominee for vice president, Sarah Palin).

A woman who chooses to have an abortion often bases the decision on her inability to be a good parent and/or provide for the child. Pro-lifers contend that if a woman doesn't feel ready to have a child, she should not have had unprotected sex. We do not live in a utopian society where everyone will always exercise the best judgment. In fact, should we not be concerned about life after birth and the strong possibility that an unwanted child might grow up in an abusive or unsupportive household, scarring him or her for life.

If *Roe v. Wade* is overturned, the amount of illegal and dangerous abortions would increase dramatically—regardless of the law, there will always be abortions. Pro-choice supporters would rather see abortions performed in safe environments rather than done illegally in a back alley.

In the end, abortion should remain legal. Not only would many women go out seeking dangerous, illegal abortions if abortion was banned, but it would take away a woman's right to control her body—at least until she is carrying a viable fetus and the mother's life is not in danger.

Sources: CNN; nytimes.com; time.com; guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html

The New York Times
*High Court Rules Abortions
Legal the First 3 Months*

0 to 5 in \$18 Billion

BY GABRIELLA SCRUDATO

IN the Presidential debates between Barack Obama and John McCain, the topic of education has taken its place in the back of the line. Fixing education in the U.S. is on the backburner as we deal with our economic crisis as well as the Iraq War. However, when the education platforms of each candidate are examined, McCain offers real solutions to our educational crisis.

Senator Obama raises many concerns about the failures of American education today, but his sole solution to alleviate these problems is purely funding. Given the current national deficit and economic crisis, it is obvious that the U.S. has a limited amount of money. Furthermore, it is doubtful that the problems present in American education will be fixed by money alone. Obama proposes to spend \$18 billion on these problems, \$10 billion of which would go to increasing federal involvement in early education. His campaign focuses heavily on his “Zero to Five Plan,” which, according to his website, “places key emphasis at early care and education for infants” and “will provide critical support to young children.”

Every solution Obama offers simply proposes the use of more money. Where exactly does he suggest getting all this money, when we are faced with the greatest deficit in history? According to Mark Gurdish, an education reporter for timesleader.com, “Obama claims he’ll find the \$18 billion...by taking from NASA programs and otherwise cutting or shifting federal funds.” This proposal is a nice suggestion,

but as Misericordia University history professor Brian Carso says, “It’s easy to say, it’s much harder to pay for.”

Unlike Obama, Senator McCain’s platform revolves around school choice and accountability. McCain believes that parents should be able to choose the school their child attends; this would increase competition between public and private schools. According to McCain, the improvement of public schools will soon follow the increase in competition between schools. Consistent with his “school choice” proposal, McCain strongly supports government vouchers that parents can use towards paying for a private school education. McCain says that “empowering parents and students through educational choice and competition is the surest path to academic excellence.”

McCain is against nationally imposed standards and funding strings; he is a strong believer that state and local agencies should be responsible for developing and enforcing high academic standards. The U.S. Department of Education should not be responsible for enforcing national standards, when areas are as different as Jersey City and Lebanon Township. Why should the federal government be responsible for setting standards and all regulations? Schools in different areas, with different problems, need different solutions and regulations.

The other essential component of McCain’s education platform is accountability. In one of his statements, McCain says that schools should not be “safe havens for the uninspired and unaccountable.” The standards of public schools have fallen, sending many high school graduates into beginner college courses unprepared. McCain wants to hold schools accountable for failing to educate their students and refusing to acknowledge the problem. He also advocates competency testing for teachers. Too many public school teachers fall victim to the “those who can’t do, teach” slogan, and the students are the ones who suffer because of it. Teaching should be a calling, not a last resort. Further, teachers should be enthusiastic and positive, not resentful

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SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES

T R A V E L S I N G O R K H A L A N D



Community prayer service for the achievement of Gorkhaland

BY MADDY POPKIN

THIS summer I was fortunate enough to spend a month in India with a travel group called “Where There Be Dragons.” I was among 12 students and three leaders traveling through northeastern India, where ethnic Nepalis, Tibetans, and Bhutias live side by side as Indians. Most of our time was spent with the Nepali population, and we came to know people who warmly welcomed us into their homes and immersed us in their culture. We shared some wonderful facets of their lives and also grew to understand the real challenges they face as Nepali people living in India.

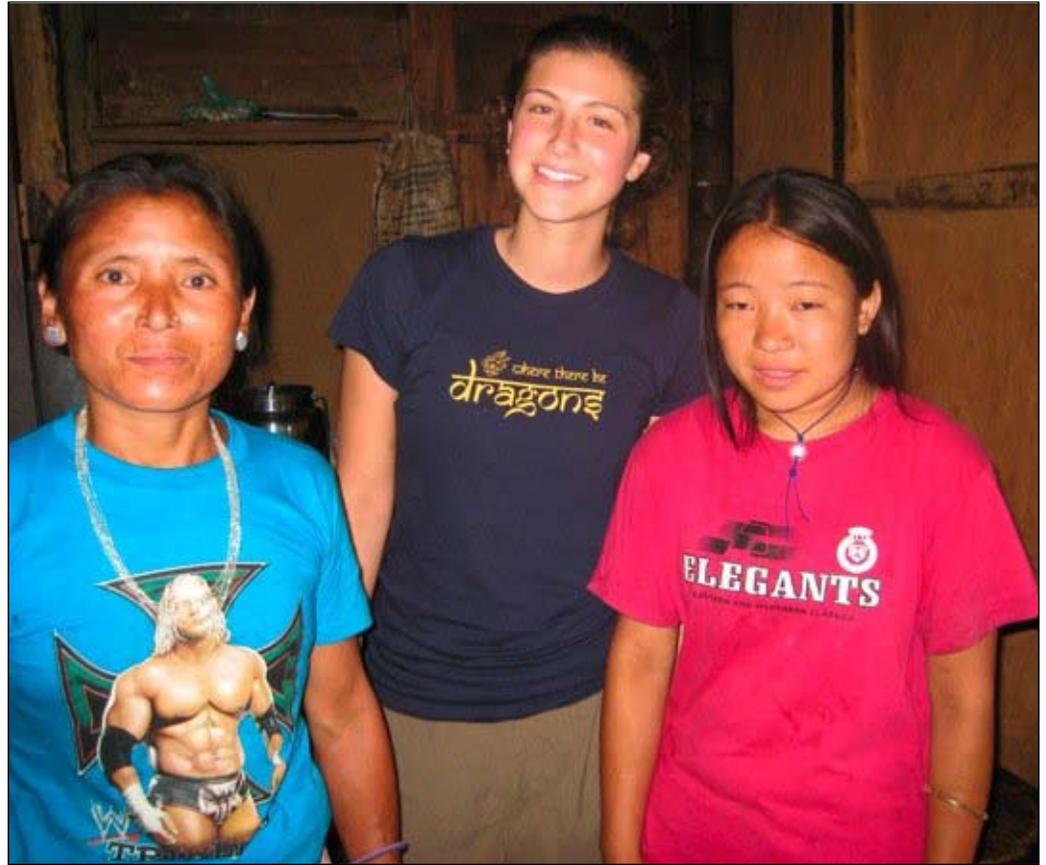
Approximately two hundred years ago, a massive group of laborers from Nepal flooded into what is now northeast India, nestled between

Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet. Today, the descendants of these immigrants, still inhabiting Sikkim, an Indian state and former Buddhist kingdom, and parts of the Indian state of West Bengal, are known as Gorkhas or Nepalis. Gorkhas have retained their Nepali culture and language: they practice unique customs, eat a distinct cuisine, wear different clothes, are physically different, and have a different mindset than the Indians that live in West Bengal. This is where the problem starts.

The Gorkhas of India have been demanding a separate state, to be called Gorkhaland, since 1980, when the Gorkha National Liberation Front was formed. Gorkhaland would be a state within India, equivalent to West Bengal and Sikkim. But the Gorkhas have been asking for a separate administrative setup for a century. Since then, major parties in support of Gorkhaland have come and gone, corrupt leaders have been exchanged for more ambitious ones, and countless strikes and

At right: Maddy with a home-stay family in the foothills of the Himalayas.

Below: Gorhaland flag



protests have been carried out to no avail. Regardless of their lengthy and mostly fruitless efforts, the Gorkha people remain as committed to Gorkhaland as ever. The atmosphere in their communities today is remarkable. Gorkhaland flags line the streets and fly proudly in front of every home. “WE WANT GORKHALAND” is painted on roadside walls; political rallies and speeches flood the media and their bazaars on a daily basis.

The reason that this movement has stayed alive for over a hundred years is because living in India robs the Gorkhas of an identity. Gorkhas today are Indians just as their grandparents were, but other Indians don't consider them to be. If they were granted their own state, their culture could be accepted as an aspect of Indian culture, just like the Gujaratis and Tamils, who are culturally different from each other but are still regarded as Indian. Further, the Indian government maltreats them. For example, today, they do not receive the same pensions in the army as other Indians, despite their renowned courage and willingness to fight for their country. Other mistreatments include the West Bengali government's unwillingness to listen to their complaints. They refuse to alleviate serious ecological problems plaguing the area such as large scale garbage disposal. There is also the serious grievance of hydro-electric dams being built on holy land. Many of their concerns are overlooked because the Gorkhas are not represented fairly in the state and national government, leaving them abandoned with serious challenges.



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Darjeeling market, a hub of protest and support for Gorkhaland.

The struggle for a national identity is an interesting concept that is definitely not exclusive to this one movement in India. In fact, our upcoming election in America exposes a similar issue. During this campaign season, patriotism and bipartisanship have been highlighted and focused on by both parties. This is because the recent past has polarized the nation, and separating patriotism from loyalty to the federal government has been a necessity for those opposed to George W. Bush's policies. Thus, for those Americans opposed to Bush, identifying oneself as an American has become a balancing act between appreciation for one's country and discontentment with the government's actions. The question facing us now is whether the upcoming president will be able to heal the antagonistic split between Democrats and Republicans and rebuild a united sense of pride in America.

Representative democracy in America enables us as citizens to take part in choosing who leads, and opportunity for change is built into the political system. We are never stuck entirely without realistic chances of relief. The Gorkhas of India do not live with this luxury. Their cries have been ignored for one hundred years, and are likely to remain that way without the autonomy they desire or sufficient representation in their government.



Maddy Popkin's first home-stay family

ALL PHOTOS BY WHERE
THERE BE DRAGONS, SIKKIM
PARTICIPANTS 2008



Separatist slogan painted on a bridge



Nepali mother and child



Nepali girls in traditioanl dance garb

The Empire Strikes Back

BY MAC CORDREY

IN late July of 2007, Mikhail S. Gutseriev, a Forbes 500 billionaire, told the public that the Russian government was pressuring him to sell his oil-gas company, Russneft, to a company owned by Oleg Deripaska, an entrepreneur with close ties to the Kremlin. Reprimanding the government, he unwillingly resigned from his position in Russneft and moved to London. Later in August, Russian authorities, attempting to lure Gutseriev back to Russia, allegedly murdered his 22-year-old son. Six days after the murder, the Russian court put out an arrest warrant for Gutseriev.

The “Evil Empire” has returned. Over a decade and a half after the collapse of the U.S.S.R., Russia has burst out of an era of confusion and chaos and catapulted its way to the forefront of the geopolitical landscape. In the 21st century, Putin-controlled Russia is a hybrid government, combining elements of the Soviet era and Tsarist Russia. Vladimir Putin, who headed Russia as its president for eight years and maintains his power now as the “Prime Minister,” was a high officer in the KGB and then headed its successor, the Federal Security Service, under Boris Yeltsin.

On the most basic level, Russia might be best characterized as a thug-ocracy. According to Reuben Johnson of The Weekly Standard, “The entirety of state-owned and controlled enterprises are run by, and for the benefit of, the cabal around Putin—a collection of former KGB colleagues, St. Petersburg lawyers, and other political cronies.”

It is obvious that the Russian plutocracy of KGB thugs and other Soviet affiliates are simply out to make a profit. The Guardian reports that Putin is worth at least \$40 billion dollars, and he, along with his fellow plutocrats, own large amounts of stock in many state-owned corporations. An article from the New York Times Moscow bureau last year, “Workers’ Paradise Is Rebranded as Kremlin, Inc.” described

how the presidential apparatus under Putin had taken control of almost all of Russia’s industrial wealth.

The recent conflict in the Caucasus region between Georgia and Russia only reinforces the Russian reality. Force will be used to not only defend Russian interests but to enlarge its territory. Russia’s quick waltz with Western principles of freedom and democracy is over. There has been significant censorship, and a number of journalists have been murdered. Dmitry Medvedev, now the President of Russia, was handpicked by Putin for the position. He is Putin’s puppet, satisfying only the demands of the Siloviki (former KGB members now holding authoritative status within the Kremlin).

Most of Europe depends on Russia’s abundant natural resources, especially its enormous oil deposits and natural gas. For that very reason, it has Europe in a chokehold. If the European Union were to rebuke Russia for its actions, the state-owned gas companies could easily cut the pipelines to Europe.

Russia’s relationship with the U.S. is quite different. After World War II, the fates of the two nations were inextricably bound, based upon ideological differences rather than hydrocarbon reliance. The U.S. is the face of the free world, while Russia has again become an authoritarian government that scorns its critics. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia has seen some of its neighbors turn away from Moscow and towards a Western, democratic system. Both the Orange Revolution of Ukraine and the Rose Revolution in Georgia undermine Russian control of the Caucasus region, and demonstrate the positive Western influence on Russia’s neighbors. Pro-Western governments have been elected in both countries. But is Russia going to stand by and do nothing? Perhaps the intervention in Georgia indicates that Russia is on the move to reestablish its empire.

But does Russia pose a real threat to the West? No. Its economy, based on volatile commodity markets, is too unstable, and with a Putin-led government working towards personal interests, it faces serious infrastructure problems. In recent weeks, it has closed down its stock market for one or more days at a time because of the free fall in the value of its companies. While the Kremlin has monopolized some of Russia’s most prosperous markets (gas and oil) for its own benefit, it has put the government’s stability at a serious risk. Without the recent surge in oil sales—and consequentially natural gas—Russia would be in a worse fix.

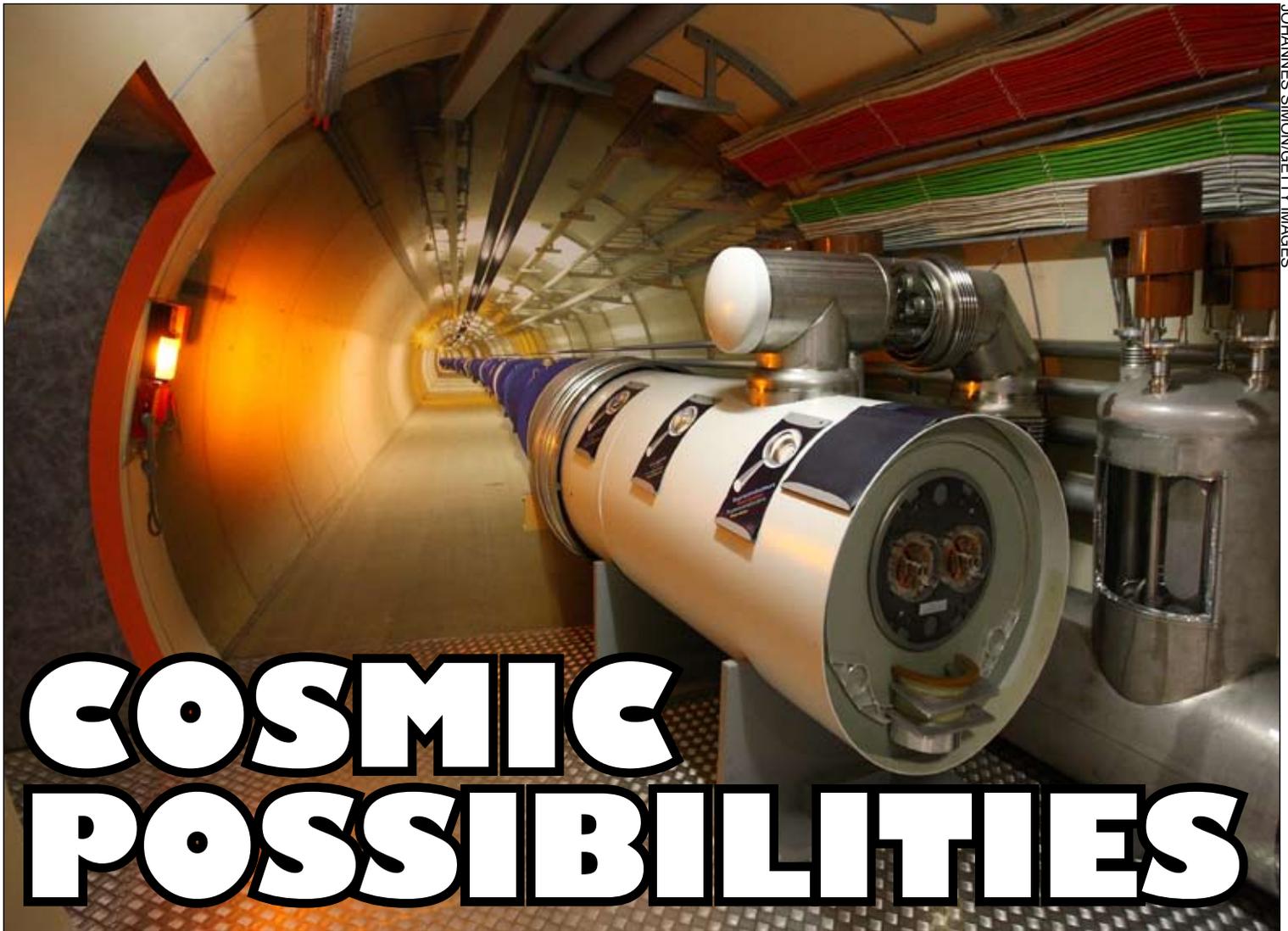
Russia is a rogue state in an international system that calls for balance of power among states. The new Russia is dominated by the vested interest of a few, and as long as the authoritarian-capitalistic regime remains unchallenged, the Kremlin’s elite will thrive. But maybe not for long.

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A group of Russian soldiers depart from Kventak.

VANO SHLAMOV/GETTY IMAGES



COSMIC POSSIBILITIES

BY WILL PINKE

Since the inception of the human race, people have been creating stories to explain the things that we do not understand. As our technology and understanding of the universe have progressed over time, the range of undiscovered mysteries has diminished. Today we have reached the pinnacle of technology, and the embodiment of this achievement lies 300 feet below France and Switzerland in a 17-mile long tunnel that may hold the key to so many of man's most sought-after answers.

This tunnel is home to the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), the biggest, most expensive scientific instrument in history. Around 7,000 experimentalists (roughly half of the world's particle physicists) have been working at the European Organiza-

tion for Nuclear Research (CERN) on the LHC for 14 years, backed by eight billion dollars. They have designed the collider so that at full power, trillions of protons will be injected into the otherwise empty track and will race at a speed of about 99.999 per cent of the speed of light. These protons will be racing in opposite directions, so that every second the protons will engage in more than

The Large Hadron Collider is the biggest, most expensive scientific instrument in the world.

half a billion head-on collisions! Over 1,600 superconducting magnets have been installed and approximately 96 tons of liquid helium is needed to keep the magnets at their very low operating temperature, making it one of the

emptiest and coldest regions of space in the entire solar system.

What exactly do scientists plan to discover from this freezing, sophisticated, underground leviathan? Well, physicists learn about the subatomic world by smashing things together and observing the debris. New York Times writer Jim Holt stated the expectations simply, putting it in terms of watermelons. He says that two protons colliding head on at a high enough speed would produce a shower of new particles, as "if colliding watermelons splattered into a shower of pineapples, blueberries, mangoes and more exotic fruits." Scientists already know about some of these fruits, or particles, that will be derived from the collisions, but they postulate that a whole realm of particles yet to be discovered could result from the collisions. By creating so many head-on collisions each second, physicists hope to understand the

conditions of the universe one trillionth of a second after the big bang took place.

The LHC is the most advanced piece of scientific machinery ever built, and it has excited the scientific community. Particle physicist Dick Loveless says, "We're like Columbus here. [We] don't know what we'll find. [...] It would be surprising if we didn't find something new." This mystery surrounding the machine has caused many theories to develop about what it might prove and discover.

The LHC is most likely going to verify the theory of Higgs particles. These are theorized particles that explain the origin of mass. This theory, proposed over forty years ago by Peter Higgs, an English physicist, and a group of collaborating researchers, states that mass comes from a field that pervades space and acts like invisible molasses. The resistance that the Higgs field is believed to exert against an object as it tries to move faster is its mass. Scientists hope that the collisions in the LHC can chip off chunks of the Higgs field, creating Higgs particles and proving this long-standing theory. While the discovery of the Higgs particle would be groundbreaking, most physicists believe that it would not be enough. Physicist Steven Weinberg, a Nobel Prize winner working for the University of Texas at Austin, said, "The one result that

everyone is dreading is that LHC will discover the Higgs and nothing else. That would confirm existing theories, but do nothing to point towards the future."

Albert Einstein spent his life searching for a unified theory that incorporated all types of force and matter. The LHC, which was built around the ideas of his most famous formula, $E=MC^2$, is a possible method to realize his dream. Confirming the idea of supersymmetry: that for every known species of particle (electrons, quarks, neutrinos, etc.) there exists a partner species (selectrons, squarks, sneutrinos, etc.), would be a monumental achievement. These "sparticles" are suspected to be much larger than their known counterparts, thus requiring more powerful collisions for their production—power that perhaps only the LHC can provide. Columbia math and physics professor Brian Greene claims that if so, the LHC would be "taking us far beyond Einstein by establishing a deep link between nature's forces and the particles of matter." He goes on to say, "Such a discovery also has the potential to advance our understanding of dark matter — the abundant matter that permeates space but does not give off light and hence is known only through its gravitational influence." Many believe that dark matter is composed of "sparticles."

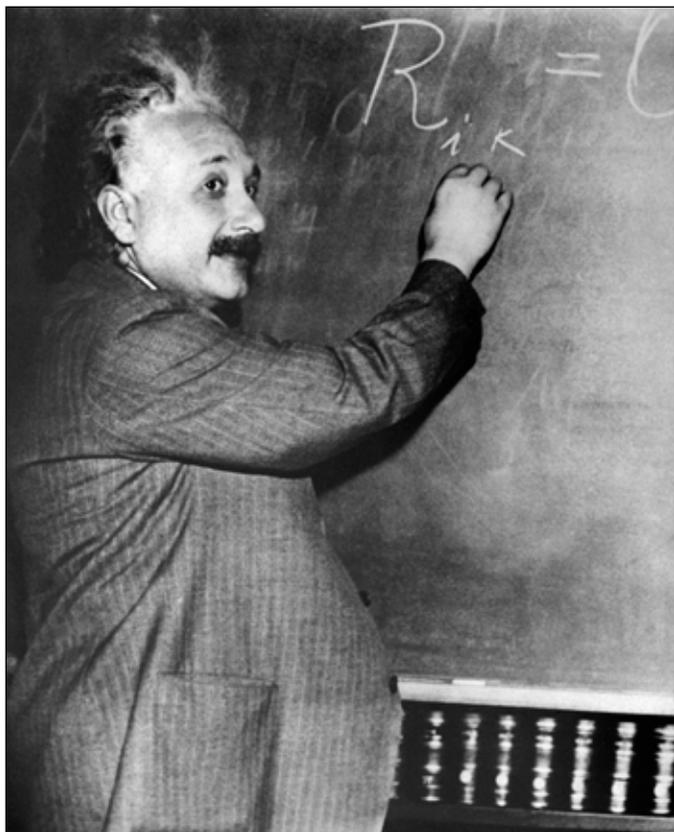
The final hypothesis for the LHC is that it will strengthen the string theory. String theory is built on the idea that all apparently fundamental particles are in fact made up of even tinier "strings" of vibrating energy. For this to be possible, our universe of one time and three dimensions would have to expand to include six or seven dimensions that are curled up to such a small size that they have remained undiscovered so far. There is a small chance that the LHC can find evidence of other dimensions, but Brian Greene believes that "should the Large Hadron Collider have the power necessary to reveal extra dimensions of space — to overturn our belief that length, width and height are all there is — that would rank as one of the greatest upheavals in our understanding of

the universe."

With such monumental and pioneering prospects, some people have become wary of possible negative consequences of the LHC. A machine that harbors so much power must have the potential to be very dangerous, right? Wrong. Some people are worried about the emergence of tiny black holes that would swallow the Earth from the inside out. Researchers acknowledge that black holes may form, but there is no reason for alarm. If a black hole were produced, it would be so tiny that it would disintegrate within fractions of a second of its creation. The collisions at the LHC have never before occurred under laboratory settings, but they've been taking place naturally on earth and throughout the universe for billions of years.

The first protons were threaded through the machine on September 10th. They traveled the full 17 miles of tunnel and were met with the cheers of the 7,000 researchers from 80 countries that have been working on the LHC. On Friday, September 19, an electrical connection between two of the superconducting electromagnets that steer the protons suffered a quench, heating up, melting and leaking helium into the collider tunnel. Liquid helium is used to cool the magnets to superconducting temperatures of only about 3.5 degrees Fahrenheit above absolute zero. Stray heat can cause the magnets to lose their superconductivity with potentially disastrous consequences. The collider was shut down. Due to these complications, all tests have been put on hold while repairs are made. Unfortunately, particles in the LHC will not be colliding again until the spring of 2009. Even with these delays, anticipation and excitement are still high. Today, we are on the threshold of discoveries that could provide some of the most sought-after answers to questions about the existence of the entire universe. The LHC is our key to proving some of our potentially groundbreaking theories and even more excitingly, possibly introducing us to ideas that we have not even ever considered. We are at a point in our world where almost no question will be left unanswered. This coming spring, with the power of the LHC, we may put together some of the final pieces to our universe's puzzle.

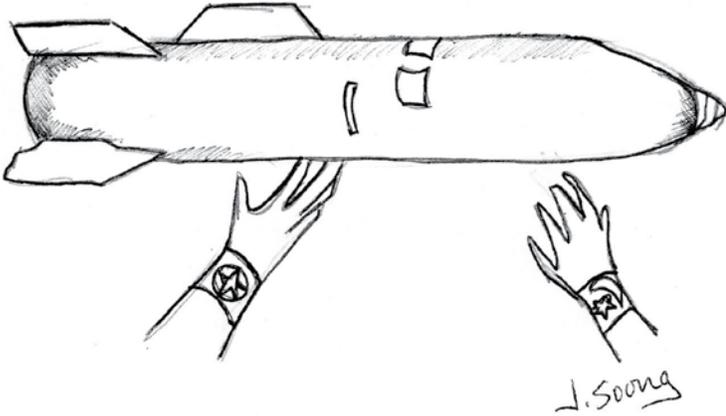
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AFP/GETTY IMAGES

PROLIFERATION PROBLEMS

JENNIFER SOONG



BY ALBERT MAGNELL

WHY should we be concerned about tensions between India and Pakistan, two countries on the opposite side of the globe? Why should we, living in the most powerful country in the world, be afraid of North Korea, a country so poor that many of its citizens cannot afford enough food to live? Why are we so involved with Iran and the Middle East? The answers to these questions lie in the proliferation and control of weapons of mass destruction, tools with the potential to annihilate the world.

1945 marked the start of the nuclear era; the U.S. dropped the uranium bomb, Little Boy, on Hiroshima and the plutonium bomb, Fat Man, on Nagasaki to compel an implacable enemy, Japan, to surrender immediately. In the aftermath of the blasts, more than 100,000 people died instantly and another 100,000 died from radiation injuries. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were left completely destroyed.

In the decades that followed, nuclear weapons, like all other types of technology, became cheaper and more destructive. Little Boy and Fat Man, both fission bombs, released energies equivalent to 15 kilotons of TNT and 21 kilotons, respectively. Today's hydrogen fusion bombs can release energies equivalent to 1.5 megatons of TNT, but some hydrogen bombs have been produced that release more than 50 megatons, making them over 2,500 times more powerful than the fission bombs. Since nuclear weapons have

become cheaper, it's no longer impossible for a terrorist group to gain access to them, either by developing them or purchasing them. Had the terrorists responsible for 9/11 originally fired a missile at New York City, we would not be working on the Freedom Tower today but a Freedom City.

India and Pakistan border each other, and both nations have been manufacturing nuclear weapons since the 1980s. Unfortunately, they share a mutual antagonism due to conflicting religious and political values as well as territorial claims. Pakistan has almost completed the construction of its second plutonium-producing reactor and is also building a third. These additional reactors will speed up the production of plutonium fission bombs. The Institute for Science and International Security responds to this, saying, "The wider implication...[is that] there is a real risk this will exacerbate an India-Pakistan nuclear arms race and increase tensions more broadly between the two." The U.S. is particularly interested in maintaining good relations with Pakistan, since it is believed that many Al-Qaeda members, including Osama bin Laden, are hiding there. Both nations have been subject to previous terror attacks and have shown a readiness to fight over the disputed territory of Kashmir. The Pakistani government is particularly unstable and, again, it possesses nuclear weapons.

The Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, the DPRK, also known as North Korea, tested an atomic bomb in 2006. In response to six-party talks, meetings on the subject of

nuclear proliferation between North Korea, the U.S., South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia, a North Korean plutonium-producing reactor was supposed to be shut down. Recently though, North Korean leaders have stated that they no longer want to be removed from a U.S. terrorism blacklist. They also have started to rebuild the reactor. With speculations made about the deteriorating health of North Korean President Kim Jong-il, the country could soon fall into a state of political turmoil. While it is bad enough that a declared enemy of the U.S. is developing nuclear weapons, it is even worse if there is no stable government with which to negotiate.

The process of making fission bombs requires massive quantities of concentrated U-235, an isotope of uranium, found together with U-238. Since the ratio of U-235 to U-238 is 1 to 140, it is difficult to obtain a sufficient amount of nearly pure U-235. The International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA, the so-called nuclear watchdog of the U.N., reported that Iran has been running 3,820 gas centrifuges, which are used to process uranium and collect enriched U-235. Iran has also stockpiled half a ton of low-enriched uranium. Since very pure U-235 is only needed for weapons, this is extremely strong evidence that Iran is trying to develop fission bombs. And again we are looking at a state that has extremists and instability.

All of these nations except Iran already have nuclear weapons. All of them also have medium range missiles to deliver them, as does Iran. The IAEA has also offered photographs showing that "Iran secretly tried to modify a missile cone to fit a nuclear bomb."

There is no reason to suppose that the proliferation of nuclear weapons will end with the development of a fission bomb by Iran. With the costs going down, many more nations and even terrorist groups may try to acquire them. A measure of how far costs have gone down

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ISTOCKPHOTO



BACK TO THE MOON



BY BRIAN ZHOU

IN the first weeks of 2004, President George W. Bush presented America with a plan to get back to the moon by 2020 and use the mission as a steppingstone for future manned trips to Mars and beyond. Bush then proposed spending twelve billion dollars over five years on the effort, with one billion dollars coming from an increase in NASA's budget and eleven billion dollars from funds shifted from existing programs. Some in Congress questioned whether the increase would be enough and if funds would be better used in domestic programs. LA Weekly writer Margaret Wertheim even labeled the mission "loony." However, going back to the moon will be worth the money and effort in order to find the holy grail of nuclear fusion energy and end the current energy crisis.

Professor Kulcinski, Associate Dean for Research at the University of Wisconsin and a member of NASA's Advisory Council, conducts Helium-3 research with his graduate students. To find out approximately how much Helium-3 was on the moon, Kulcinski contacted the Lunar and Planetary Institute at the Johnson Space Center, where they store soil samples from the Apollo Missions, and found that every soil sample from the moon contained traces of Helium-3. Even samples extracted a meter below the moon's surface had Helium-3 in them.

Helium-3 is deposited on the moon when solar wind, a rapid stream of charged particles emitted by nuclear fusion on the sun, strikes the moon. Nuclear fusion is achieved by smashing two small positively charged nuclei together, releasing huge amounts of energy. Fusion requires extremely high temperatures, roughly 10 million degrees Celsius, in order to create enough energy to overcome the repelling

positive charges. The atmosphere of the Earth shields us from the emitted Helium-3, but Helium-3 accumulates on the moon's surface. Since meteors pulverize the moon over time, Helium-3 can be found meters below the initial surface.

For solving long-term energy problems, advocates say that Helium-3 is a better choice than other nuclear fuels like deuterium and tritium. These fuels are being tested in tokamak thermonuclear reactors, which use strong magnetic fields to contain the tremendously hot plasma in which fusion occurs. These approaches

have cost billions already and yielded little results. "I don't doubt that [these gases] will eventually work," states Professor Kulcinski, "But I have serious doubts it will ever provide an economic power source on Earth or in space."

This is because deuterium and tritium nuclear fusion release eighty percent of their energy in the form of radioactive neutrons, which makes safety a critical issue. In comparison, a fusion of Helium-3 and deuterium would produce very few neutrons, about one percent that of which is produced by the deuterium-tritium reaction. Along with having high power, Helium-3 also has potential use in a rocket propulsion system since Helium-3 fusion rockets would need less radioactive shielding, thereby lightening the load of the rocket.

One argument of skeptics is that Helium-3 is too difficult to extract in large quantities. Helium-3 can be extracted from the moon's soil as a gas by heating it to seven hundred degrees Centigrade. The gas is then cooled until everything except the Helium-3 condenses out. Then it can be separated from the common Helium-4 isotope. The remaining gas is bottled and then shipped back to Earth. Skeptics say that one would have to strip-mine millions of tons of lunar soil to acquire seventy tons of Helium-3 and that is correct. However, strip-mining is not the goal. Acquiring Helium-3 on the moon could serve as a stepping stone to other Helium-3 rich sources like the atmospheres of Saturn or Uranus. Professor Kulcinski and graduate students at the University of Wisconsin are also working on an automated lunar miner to rove across the surface of the moon and extract Helium-3 and other life-support volatiles.

There is no doubt that the process of extracting Helium-3 is not ideal since it requires that a large amount of moon soil be processed to acquire a feasible amount of Helium-3. But the relatively small amount of Helium-3 needed to power the entire U.S. for a year and its lack of radioactive byproducts make Helium-3 too good of an option to simply pass up. Skeptics have called it the Helium-3 Myth; some have called going back to the moon loony or crazy. But in the words of the Discovery Channel, "Crazy is just another word for a big idea that hasn't been tried yet."

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Modern-Day SLAVES

BY KATIE SALVAGGIO

OUR history texts celebrate the 13th amendment for outlawing slavery in the U.S., but somehow, a few hundred dollars and a plane ticket to Nevada are all you need to legally experience it - prostitution. Brothels have been the norm in Nevada since the land was settled; today, they are permitted in any of Nevada's counties that have less than 400,000 citizens. In some ways, Nevada has turned a scene of organized crime and drug dependency into a lucrative, relatively safe business. As long as government-regulated sexually transmitted disease and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) screenings persist, many argue that the legalization of prostitution is a smart alternative to inevitable underground transactions. If there is mutual consent between two people to take part in this form of recreation, prostitution should be perfectly acceptable, right?

After watching the HBO series *Catwalk*, which glamorizes Nevada's famed Bunny Ranch, one might think so. However, in reality, being a prostitute is anything but empowering. For the majority of prostitutes, there

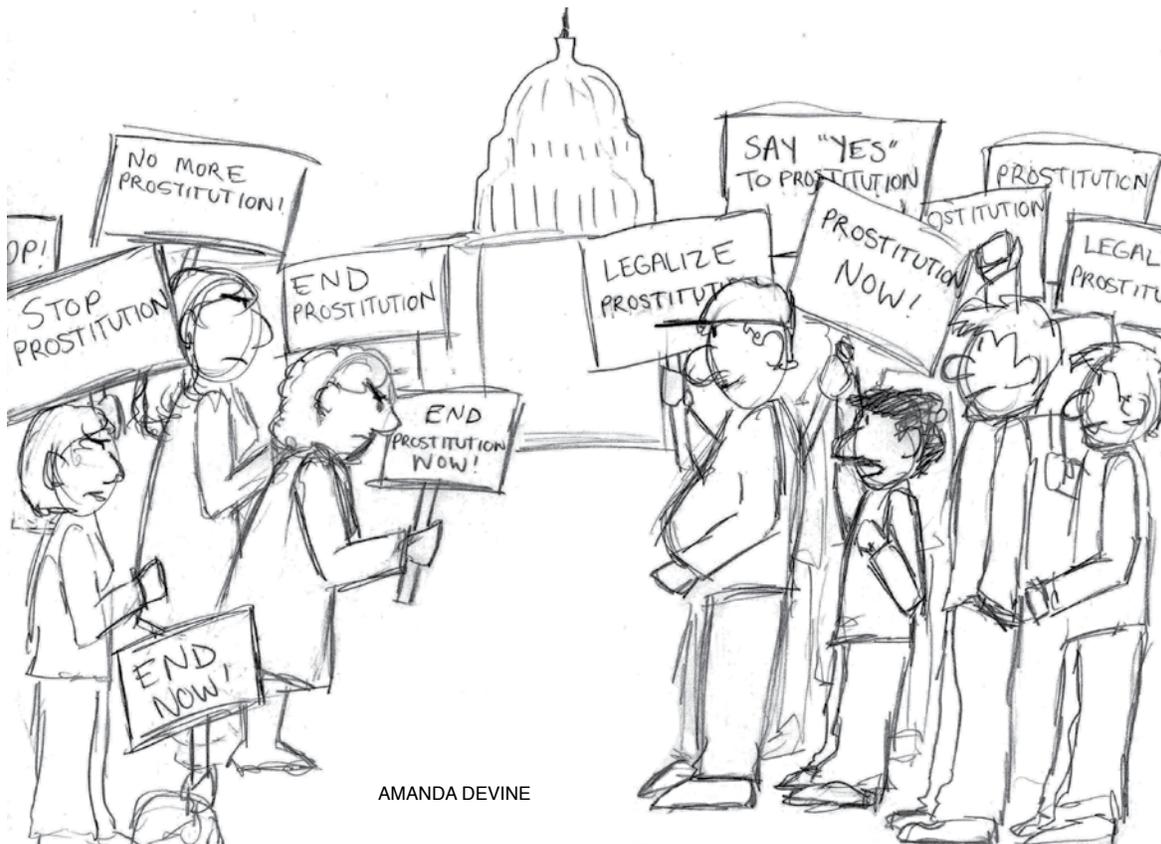
is no genuine mutual consent; most girls are forced to work because of economic pressures and are eventually scarred from the degrading experience. According to a New York Times study, two-thirds of prostitutes, both illegal and legal, have post-traumatic stress disorder. Even though legal prostitutes are safer because customers are lawfully bound to use protection, their lives are equally as appalling as those who work for pimps.

In Nevada, prostitutes typically work exhausting fourteen-hour shifts and are virtually imprisoned in their brothels, since owning a car is forbidden. If they go out to a restaurant, they must leave before 5pm and reenter through the back entrance accompanied by a man. The girls only receive half of their profits, and with these minimal salaries, they are expected to pay for the use of condoms, sheets, and mandatory tips given to any taxi driver who delivers a customer to the brothel. Legalized prostitution uses the same shameful ploys of debt and intimidation to trap girls into this wretched lifestyle; it is the same abuse and entrapment of women but protected by the state. As Angie, a registered prostitute from Nevada puts it, "It's like you sign a contract to be raped."

It is flabbergasting that a U.S. state government openly grants permission to abuse women in a manner similar to that of a third world country. The town of Poipet, Cambodia, for example, is notoriously ruled by prostitution, gambling, and gangs. Most of the prostitutes, who are as young as ten-years-old, have been kidnapped by neighbors and sold to brothels; others are simply sold by their families in times of economic distress. It is horrifying that children are sexually abused and traumatized so early in life. Abandoned by their families and immediately taught that they are solely sexual objects, the girls learn that their worth depends on the darkness of their skin color. The lightest skinned girls are paid the highest salary which is as little as \$2.50 per session.

Like the Nevada prostitutes, they are cheated out of their meager salaries and trapped by a vicious cycle of debt. If a girl wishes not to work at a particular time, she is physically beaten into submission. Since the corrupt police force in Cambodia is bribed by the brothel owners, there is truly no one to turn to in these times of desperation. The majority contracts AIDS and only lives to see their mid-twenties, although death might be preferable to sexual torture.

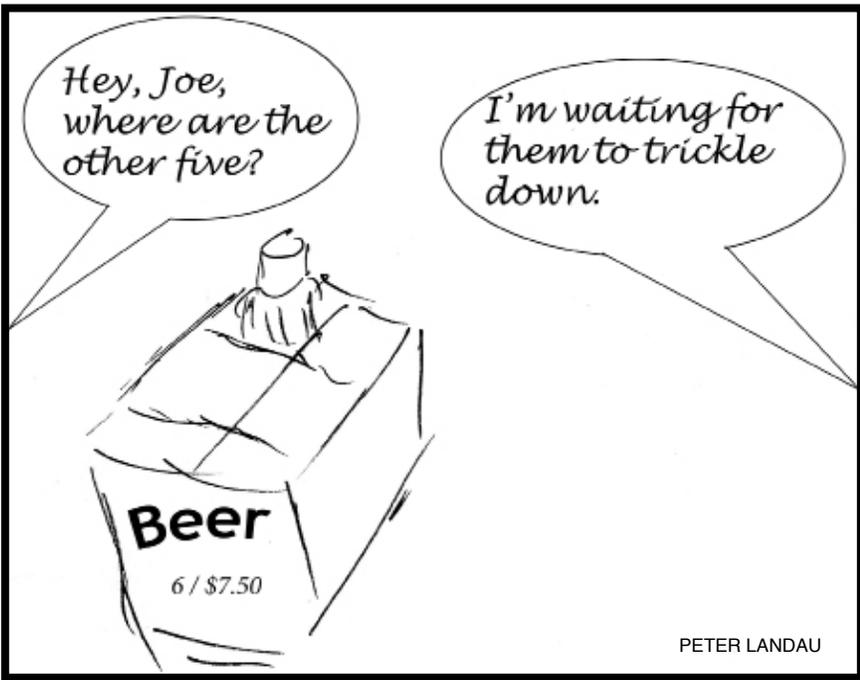
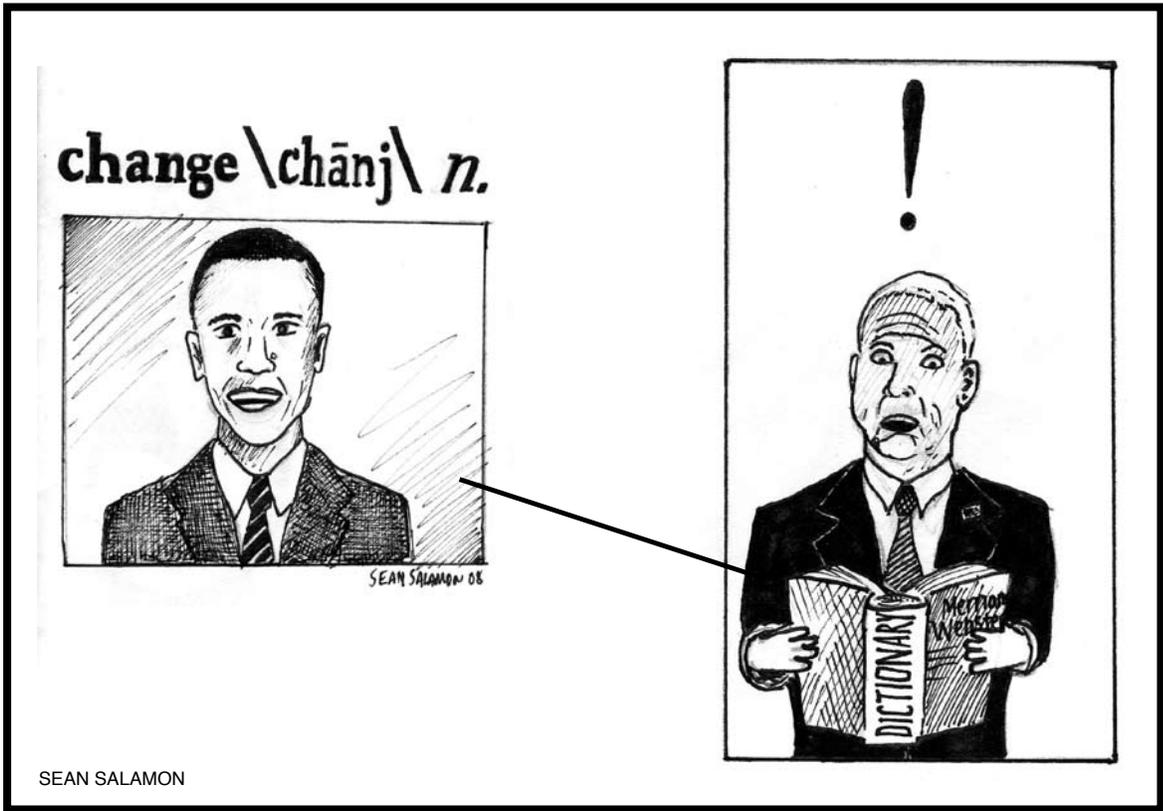
However, there is one alternative. The Cambodian brothel owners set a price for each girl's freedom. For most girls, the possibility of collecting enough money to purchase freedom is infinitesimal. *New York Times* writer Nicholas Kristof could not leave Cambodia with a sound conscience without freeing two prostitutes. The three hundred dollars spent was trivial when he considered the new futures that he instantaneously brought to teenagers Srey Neth and Srey Mom. Srey Neth, whose timid submissiveness burgeoned into spunk and sass within the first few hours of her freedom, actually experienced rejection from her own family. Her parents were pleasantly surprised to see her, but nevertheless, Kristof observed that "she was treated as no more than a lost cat."

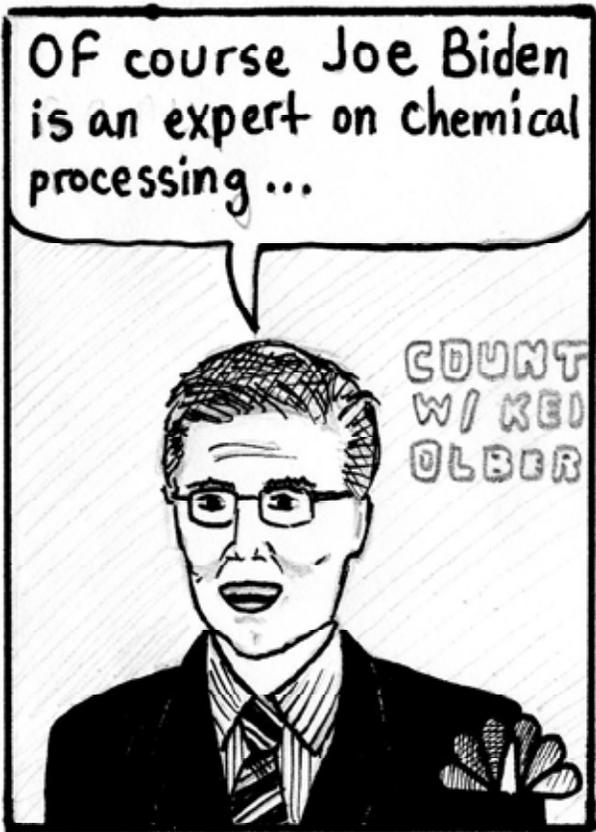


AMANDA DEVINE

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Cartoon Commentary





SEAN SALAMON



OVER the summer in the Philippines, my cousins and I took a day trip to the Taal volcano in the city of Tagaytay, located on the Pacific Ring of Fire. The climb was treacherous; the trail was fraught with crevices and rocks, and horses often threatened to push us over the cliff. As we climbed a nearly vertical slope, the rock emitted whispers of sulfurous smoke. Somewhere, several miles below the ground on which we were standing, there was molten lava pulsing through the earth. “Let’s go back!” my young cousins protested, tired and frightened at the fumes. “We’re almost there!” I told them every five minutes. As we ascended the last steps, we beheld that the mouth of the volcano opened to a serene lake – a truly spectacular view. Although it took some motivation at first, my cousins concluded the hike up was worth it.

This summer, I traveled to Manila, Philippines, to work for the Synergeia Foundation, a non-profit organization that works with local governments, schools, teachers, and families to implement programs that improve teaching and learning for every Filipino child. Dedicated to improving the accessibility and quality of basic education, Synergeia’s key goal is to motivate – to inspire desire and initiative for change in local Filipino communities. I worked under Madam Guevara, the CEO of Synergeia, and Nicole Paterno, the Program Director for Metro Manila. Under Nicole’s mentorship, I volunteered at a children’s museum, taught Filipino students English at local schools, created program proposals, and shadowed my coworkers as they met with local government officials.

I worked at P. Guevara elementary school, where I taught English to a class through story-telling and poetry. The school was colorfully painted in an array of pink, orange, and light green. There was a large center courtyard with children running around in white button down shirts, looking both innocent and mischievous. Despite its lively appearance, the school taught children afflicted by poverty. Ma’am Marina, the principal of P. Guevara, informed me that only ten percent of her students have permanent homes; the others either rent or squat. About one-half cannot afford public transportation and only attend school one or two days a week. Many of the children that do make it to school cannot concentrate due to gnawing hunger. Parents do not motivate them to attend school since it is more economical for children to work.

What’s more, students struggle with the contradiction of morals taught at school and at home: they see parents loiter and act immorally and imbibe these values. In fact, the Philippines Human Report of 2000 stated that schools in the Philippines have dismal dropout rates, and its children perform poorly on international standardized testing. Filipino test scores are ranked 2nd from the bottom in math and 3rd from the bottom in science amongst Southeast Asian nations. Students in the Philippines who lack literacy face lower paying jobs, are often unemployed, and have poor health and housing. Education, especially literacy, is their key to employment, gaining a livelihood, and escaping poverty. Yet socio-economic factors viciously trap them in a cycle of poverty.

OVERCOMING VOLCANOES



Looking down from Tagaytay Volcano

At P. Guevara, I was assigned to work with the Section One, the brightest class of students, once a week. Although most only had a rudimentary knowledge of English, my fifty students were at least enthusiastic and attentive. However, the state of the lower sections, Five through Ten, was heartbreaking. The Section Nine teacher was reluctant, even embarrassed and angry, that I asked to observe her classroom. But I’m glad I did. Students were bone thin, disheveled, but most of all, utterly listless. They did not answer questions and did not understand English. The teacher herself would not always use correct English and often spoke in Tagalog for the students. Worst of all, it seemed like they didn’t care and were resigned to their lack of knowledge.

Often for work, I passed through Manila’s inner city. In the Intramuros District, the section of old Manila developed by the Spanish centuries ago, beautiful, antiquated Spanish buildings were juxtaposed with extreme destitution. I saw people who lived in meager conditions on government property, in tiny rooms that opened into the street. Half dressed and gaunt, children ran about, mothers crouched and scrubbed clothes vigorously, and men loitered. When I peered into their homes, I saw people, called squatters, sharing rooms with two or three families. I asked myself, why aren’t they looking for jobs? Why isn’t anyone helping them? Does anyone care? Later at work, I learned that these people are neither sad nor happy; most accept their fates and live quietly in the corner of society.

On our trip through the city, Nicole told me that the Philippines has great potential, but suffers from government failings and a lack

of means for channeling people's ideas. Entrenched with nepotism, the government has leaders often too incompetent and greedy to pass reforms. Working for Synergeia, an altruistic organization, allows her to help others, feel fulfilled, and actually achieve change.

This change was apparent in the education summits I assisted: annual meetings at various schools where principals, guidance counselors, and parents discussed the improvement of their children's literacy. Thanks to Synergeia, in the schools in which they are involved, the percent of students in pre-primer level reading went down from 95 percent to one percent. Parents were then divided into classrooms where they answered questions such as: what are your dreams for your child? The parents shared their answers in front of the assembly in booming tones, filled with enthusiasm and hope for a brighter future.

On this trip, I watched kids struggle and I fought the frustration of a language barrier, to teach someone who just doesn't understand. I befriended kids who smile and laugh at school, yet go home to an abusive mother and an empty dinner table. It seems abominable – such wasted human potential! – that many children cannot break free from their socio-economic conditions.



Neha with teacher Mam Marina



Students at P. Guevara Elementary School

But truly, the most profound lesson for me was learning how to push someone who doesn't want to be pushed, when it comes to making a student care about English, motivating parents who have accepted their fates and have relinquished all hopes for their children to want more, and pushing local governments and leaders to desire change in their communities.

Through observing my co-workers, I learned that the trick to motivate others is to show them what they could have, what they should want, what they could attain through tenacity and faith. Synergeia Foundation does this; it inspires parents and mobilizes entire communities to dream big for their children, thus motivating them to get involved in education. On this trip, I met many wonderful, inspiring people who brought passion and determination to every task: people who are capable of overcoming mountains — volcanoes, if you will — to succeed and achieve their goals. Through witnessing Synergeia's remarkable accomplishments, I've discovered how great an impact individuals can make on others' lives. This experience was enriching, exciting, and will remain permanently implanted in my heart.

Modern-Day Slaves

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Thankfully, Srey Neth did not let the disapproval deter her. However, Srey Mom's reaction to her new freedom demonstrated the devastating psychological effects that prostitution entails. She was extremely wary of leaving the brothel, despite the daily heartache it caused her. Srey Mom had been ostensibly manipulated into believing that the abusive brothel owner, referred to as "Mother," had her best intentions at heart. She was also worried that society would not accept her return – and rightfully so, seeing as registered prostitutes are discriminated against around the world, and even prohibited from traveling in some countries. Srey Mom, like most freed prostitutes, fled back to the brothel within a week.

I suppose it is wishful thinking to assume

that money could erase emotional scarring that has built up from years of tolerated sexism and violence. Indeed, there may be no ideal solution to abolishing the embedded practice of prostitution, be it clandestine or state mandated. Still, there is room for progress. The most substantial achievement the U.S. made is encouraging foreign governments to prohibit exploitation of younger girls – and seventeen is still fair game. Major feminist groups have also displayed an embarrassing lack of progress to stop human trafficking. The National Organization for Women and the Feminist Majority Foundation have practically neglected to work on the issue. As a leading nation, we truly need to take responsibility to save the 700,000 victims of human trafficking that occur each year.

Whether it takes the faces of New York governors and Duke lacrosse players plastered on front pages to remind us, human traffick-

ing and prostitution are not issues unknown to the U.S. We, too, need to find a solution at home. While legalizing prostitution does not reduce the incidence of abuse or AIDs, even in Western nations like the Netherlands, there may be a practical alternative. In Sweden, it is not an offense for women to offer sexual services, but the act of paying for prostitution is criminalized for men. The results show a significant reduction in human trafficking and forced prostitution. Perhaps Kristof is right to suggest that "American states should experiment with the Swedish model and see if it works better than the existing" one.

Regardless of where you stand on the issue of legalized prostitution, we can all concur that human trafficking and the exploitation of young girls should no longer be tolerated.

Sources: nytimes.com/kristof; guardian.co.uk/world/2007/sep/07/usa.gender

Play Nice

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appropriate for candidates to band together in condemnation of harsh third-party criticism that lacks evidence? Would it not be more effective to focus on their own positive qualities, instead of beating their opponents into the ground? Playing nice simply doesn't work as well, or get as much attention. Ironically, the media, while lamenting the downward trend in American politics, constantly rehashes negative advertisements and gossip, thus, promoting the salacious messages. People remember and respond to negative comments; they also start believing more strongly in a message that is repeated; facts that ensure the continued prevalence or negative advertising and smear tactics. Politics campaigns are about winning and negative propaganda will be in use for as long as it is effective, judging by the 2008 Presidential election that is not going to change anytime soon.

Sources: Encyclopedia Britannica Online; Newsweek; New York Times

Leaving Iraq

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also says he wants Iraq's Arab neighbors to "directly invest the fruits of their oil exports" in Iraq. But which "Arab neighbors" does he expect to follow the urging of the United States to take our place as the financial supporters of the Iraqi regime? For a candidate who claims to be "experienced" in foreign affairs, McCain's solutions seem painfully unrealistic.

Obama's plan for Iraq is the only practical way to extract our troops from the war during this time of unparalleled economic crisis around the world. The time has come for America to recognize that its power is limited, and to focus instead on improving the lives of our own citizens before we can hope to help others around the world. That's the real meaning of "Country First."

Sources: nytimes.com/2008/07/14/opinion/14obama.html; origin.barackobama.com/issues/iraq/ johnmccain.com/Informing/Issues/fdeb03a7-30b0-4ece-8e34-4c7ea83f11d8.htm; cnn.com

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or spiteful. In turn, this would cause students to be enthusiastic about school as well.

For Senator McCain, education is a choice and students, with their parents, should be given the opportunity to choose for themselves. Unlike Obama, McCain searches for real solutions, instead of falling back on money. Simply educating toddlers in a more structured environment will not stop thousands of teenagers from being unprepared for college. The U.S.'s education system needs to be re-evaluated, and McCain's platform is a step in the right direction.

Sources: www.barrackobama.com; www.ontheissues.org; www.edweek.org; www.johnmccain.com; www.timesleader.com; www.dmi blog.com

Proliferation

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is that one of the countries that actually has nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them, North Korea, is so poor that its population has been subject to mass starvation. What is to stop North Korea or any of the other nations that have nuclear weapons from selling them? Venezuela, for instance, might be ready to trade some of its oil wealth for ready-made nuclear weapons. This is just one case of what will be a serious problem if nothing is done to address it. The problem of proliferation is global. No nation, large or small, can hide behind its borders, even borders set by oceans. Nuclear proliferation is a problem that requires enormous attention now, not later.

Sources: reuters.com/; dailytimes.com.pk/; nasdaq.com/aspcontent/newsStoryPrintVer.aspx?cpath=20080919%5cACQD; newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/u/hi/asia-pacific/762895;

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new addition was unveiled in February 2008, and it successfully accomplished its goal of representing China and the Olympics. When I walked through the terminal, I took in the “dragon scale” lights along the curved ceiling, the faux-pagodas, and Chinese gardens (full with peaceful ponds and a fog machine). The design team recreated the Ming dynasty inside this 21st century airport, and as we drove away, a soft orange-yellow glow radiated through the roof.

only rice planters and factory workers. And in truth, there was no trace of Mao’s China anywhere. Gucci and Prada bags adorned the arms of women of all ages. Mercedes and BMWs roamed the streets. The 798 Art District looked more like Soho than anything I expected to see in the city. The Chinese people were proud that Beijing had finally become a thriving capitalist city, and they wanted to show it off.

However, beneath this pride was a sense of fear. Following the



MIKE HEWITT/GETTY IMAGES

Changes could be seen all over the city as well. Under the government’s orders, construction was officially stopped before 2008, and the projects that had not been finished were covered by boards with bamboo wallpaper. I noticed the heavy smog had cleared up since my last visit. This action was taken as part of, in the words of China Daily, “the emergency green plan for Games,” in which the government moved and closed surrounding polluting factories in hopes of attaining 245 days of clear blue skies. The odd-even license plate rule, which limited odd-numbered license plates to driving on odd-numbered days, also improved the air quality of the city and eased traffic flow. This cut traffic in half, and with the addition of three new subway lines, transportation is now more convenient for tourists.

Not surprisingly, China had an open budget for the Olympics, and spent around 43 billion U.S. dollars in preparation. As China Journal writer Hiroko Tabuchi reports, “China has spent the most money on its Olympics in the Games’ history.” The Chinese saw the Olympics as a chance to dazzle the world and prove they deserve a spot on the international stage. The Olympics were China’s time to shine, and ordinary citizens as well as government officials wanted to take advantage of it as well.

Over 150,000 people in Beijing registered to be volunteers, taking up positions all over the city. I would see at least ten every time I got into a subway car, ready to help people with directions. This constant flood of blue Beijing 2008 shirts showed the strong unification and nationalistic spirit of the people. The Chinese wanted to show the world that their country was prospering, that China’s people were no longer

controversy surrounding Tibet, China felt it had to take precautions; the government did not want anything to interfere with the Olympics. Imagine if the opening ceremony had gone awry: China’s reputation would have been shattered, and we all know how important “face” is to the Chinese. Thus, China became paranoid, and the government tightened visa restrictions as the Olympics neared. A three-month heightened security plan subjected subway riders to searches via x-ray machines and metal detectors at all stations.

As a tourist, I felt these security measures took away from the splendor of the Olympics, and in the words of Teng Biao, a professor at the China University of Political Science and Law, China’s domestic human rights record “is an obstacle to its international-image building.” Yes, China is already feared for its rapidly expanding economy, but is it revered? If China wants to reach its goal of gaining respect and acknowledgment from fellow international superpowers, it must be willing to amend its human rights policies.

Despite its human rights record and the amount of money spent in preparation for the Games, this summer I opened my eyes to the efficient changes China has made in the past year as well as the unification that has occurred, and I became very proud—proud of its accomplishments, proud of its history, and, most of all, proud to be Chinese.

Sources: guardian.co.uk; cnn.com; english.peopledaily.com.cn; designbuild-network.com; nytimes.com; usnews.com; wsj.com; china.org.cnn

ONE WORLD, ONE DREAM?

BY STEPHANIE FUNG

At precisely 8:08:08 PM on August 8, 2008, twenty-nine thousand dazzling fireworks and two thousand pounding fou drums marked the start of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics. The Opening Ceremony consisted of flying acrobats, a traditional scene from a Chinese opera, and performers dancing a painting onto a huge scroll. This was nothing short of a spectacle, and while I was watching this in astonishment from my home, I could not help but wonder—why was China putting so much effort into the Olympics? Why did it recruit some 14,000 performers for games in which only Michael Phelps would likely be remembered? The answer was simple: this 29th Olympiad was China's coming-out party.

China had been preparing for the Olympics since 2001, but the major changes in Beijing occurred just this past year. Having visited Beijing in the summer of 2007 as well as this past summer, I was able to witness these changes firsthand.

In 2007, I could feel the preparation: this was my first time in Beijing but my parents noted that it was cleaner than 20 years ago, more people were speaking English, and there was a kinder tone in the people's voices. Construction seemed to be the main goal in the capital city. Half of the Beijing Capital International Airport was being renovated, and 7,467 construction sites in 2007 alone were fined for failing to control dust! You would realize why if you stepped outside: the air pollution in the city was terrible, even compared to highly polluted cities such as Hong Kong and New York. In the two weeks I spent there, I had not seen one blue sky, even after rainfall. Traffic, the inconvenient subway system, and congested buses made going out a nightmare.

This summer, I travelled to Beijing once again to see the men's volleyball final of the Olympics, and I noticed changes right away. My plane landed in Terminal 3, and even at three o'clock in the morning, my eyes widened in astonishment. Having been under construction for four years, this

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AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Fireworks on the eve of the Beijing Olympics