


OPINION

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. - The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

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Penn State proud?

By Lenny Smith
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I haven't always been a Penn Stater. Neither of my parents went to college so I was never really raised to follow a certain team (except for the Steelers, of course!). So it wasn't until my junior year of high school when I started looking at colleges that I "found" Penn State.

My first visit to State College was in August of 2005. It didn't take long for me to realize that I didn't need to look any further. I had found my college.

There are big things and small things, but since I became an official Penn Stater, this university has done a lot to make me proud: Penn State Proud.

The Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance Marathon (THON) is the largest student-run philanthropy in the world. Last year, THON raised over 5.2 million dollars for pediatric cancer. Penn State Proud.

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Saturdays at Beaver Stadium are one of the greatest experiences a college student can have. Penn State has one of the most talked about student sections in the country. Our White Outs, cheers, and volume can intimidate even the most respected quarterbacks. Plus, you tell me 110,000 people yelling, "We Are...Penn State!" doesn't give you the chills. Penn State Proud.

In response to the Virginia Tech shooting, the Beaver Stadium student section set aside their traditional "S Zone" to make a maroon and orange "VT Zone." Penn State Proud.

However, Penn State Proud has started to go out the window in recent months. Just so you know, I will always bleed blue and white, but the students of this university have not done much lately to make me proud.

Several players from the Penn State Football team have done nothing but get in trouble this year. Aside from a sub par and worse-than-expected season, this season has been overshadowed by constant off the field legal

trouble. This trouble is highlighted by Austin Scott's rape charge. Not so proud.

After Hokie nation was so appreciative of our "VT Zone" at the Blue-White game last spring, two Penn State students decided it would be a good idea to dress up as victims of the shooting. These two students wore Virginia Tech t-shirts that were smeared in blood with a bullet-hole visible as well. Needless to say, these pictures were uploaded to Facebook.com and now it has become national news. Not so proud.

A student vandalized cars in the Amy Hail parking lot, smashing in windows and punching in roofs. This person has no respect for other people's things. I would assume that the majority of those students have worked hard to buy a car and keep it maintained. Not so proud.

It is popular to put magnets on the back of your car and being, as I said, a Penn Stater, I naturally have PSU magnets on my car- or at least I did. People on this campus think that it is okay to just take magnets off of other people's cars. The things are like \$3 people, buy your own damn magnets. Not so proud.

Last month I mistakenly dropped my PSU ID card outside of my building at night. When I realized it and went back to look for it, it was gone. After I got my new ID, I checked my account balances on the Internet. Someone had spent \$15 of my meal plan. I want to thank whoever decided spending my money would be the good thing to do. All you had to do was look me up on Facebook.com and message me. So again, thanks...oh, and not so proud.

On Oct. 27, students partying at the Phi Delta Theta fraternity before the PSU vs. OSU football game harassed a passing Ohio State fan. During the harassment, student were shown throwing beer cans at the fans in a video that surfaced on YouTube.com. The story made national headlines and showed the national that Penn State fans are rude and disrespectful. Not so proud.

In my current state of mind, the bad seems to outweigh the good here at good ol' PSU. However, this does not mean that I plan on transferring or not following Penn State athletics. It simply means that right now, I am a little more apprehensive to boast the fact that I am from Penn State, and if you know me, that's a big thing.

Why are we in Iraq?

By Christopher Brown
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Much time on the presidential campaign trail is dedicated to discussing what the candidates plan to do with Iraq if elected, but this leaves a more important discussion ignored. Why are we in Iraq to begin with? Astrological planetary alignment? President Bush's stupidity? The neoconservative kabbal? Nay, none of these offer a true explanation for why we are still there.

The fiasco in Iraq is a symptom of a much larger problem in America and apportioning blame to a single person, company or philosophy gives too much credit to where it is hardly deserving.

Many are quick to blame Bush for misleading Americans. They say, "well he gave us false information and skewed intelligence." Sure, he made some inaccurate comments; I'll be the first to agree. He should have never went public during his State of the Union Address with unreliable information from undependable informants like the infamous "Curveball."

But, who let him get away with it? Even a cursory inspection of the National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq before the war reveals some huge holes; the report is filled with enormous caveats. For instance no one bothered to read, or were to afraid to point out that the footnotes said Iraq's "efforts are not clearly linked to a nuclear end use." It continued, "the claims of Iraqi pursuit of natural uranium in Africa are...highly dubious" (My Emphasis). Yes it was a mistake for Bush to present such claims as fact, but it is just as much our fault for not critically examining the evidence.

The America I live in today is a completely different country

The ghosts of America the great now haunt America the present.

than the America I envisioned as a child. I used to believe that we always fight the good fight. We were on the side of truth (Truth=America) - everyone else was simply mistaken, we could do no wrong. As I grew older, and to my horror, I realized nothing could be further from the truth.

Where did things start to go wrong? Schools. Today, schooling is more about preparing the future workforce of America than creating an informed public in an active democracy. It seems every day a headline in the *Erie-Times News* here more and more about how schools in America need to focus on math,

science, and business, while schools cut extra-curricular activities, require less English courses, and de-emphasize art.

Critical thinking, who needs that? History? *That stuff is old news.* Why do high school and elementary history courses always stop at World War II? Has nothing of historical relevance happened since?

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Such are the trials of the times in which we live - a post World War II, a post-Cold War America, and ultimately a fantasy America. When we think about America, we still see ourselves as the good guys. After all, we did defeat the Nazis. We are trying to live up to the standards of a country that will never exist again. America will never be as powerful economically as it was after WWII. America will never have a greater enemy than the Soviet Union.

Unfortunately, these ghosts of America the great now haunt America the present. We learned all the wrong lessons. Instead of realizing that America's prowess after World War II resulted from being in the right place at the right time, more of a testament to our geographic isolation and the rest of the world destroying themselves, we concluded that might makes right. If we just smash something harder, eventually we will come out on top. Instead of realizing that America's singular focus on the Soviet Union's destruction in the Cold War forced immoral actions. If we trust the government, we will always be safe.

Capitalism is king. The ends justify the means. If America does no wrong, then everything it does must be right. America doesn't torture, therefore if we do waterboarding it can't be torture, cause we don't torture. You dig?

Despite what Alan Greenspan said, we are not in Iraq because of oil. Despite what the White House said, we are not in Iraq because of weapons of mass destruction and to promote democracy. Despite what Sean Hannity said, we are not in Iraq to fight the war on terror. In the end, the best explanation for why we are in Iraq is also the simplest. We are in Iraq because no one bothered to stop it.

Media oversteps boundaries again

By Rachel Reeves
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Just think...I'm gonna be [expletive] famous!" After years of feeling humiliated and insignificant, Robert A. Hawkins got his wish. Nearly every American knows that on Wednesday, Dec. 5, he walked into a shopping mall in Omaha, Nebraska and fatally shot eight people before shooting himself.

Over the following few days the media delved deeper and deeper into the tragic story. Surveillance images and video show Hawkins walking into the mall and taking aim with his assault rifle.

Witnesses, friends, an ex-girlfriend and the last person to speak to him were interviewed. Psychologists tried to analyze this killer's mind. Direct images of his suicide notes were broadcasted and posted online. Most disturbing were clips of 911 calls from some panicked shoppers, their voices breaking, gunshots and incoherent screams in the background.

The sight of Hawkins aiming his AK-47 is the last thing his victims ever saw, and now every American with a computer or television can witness it as well. The average citizen, drinking their morning coffee while watching the morning news, can hear a victim's last screams and hear the gunshot that killed them. Anyone can see his

final words of despair and hate scrawled in black. Robert A. Hawkins is not just a troubled teenager, he is also an image of terrible and final power. He is at last respected.

Two days later, Matthew Murray shot two people at Colorado's Youth With a Mission center. The next morning he opened fire in the parking lot of the New Life Church in Colorado Springs, killing two and wounding others before he was gunned down by a security guard

These murders did not take place in a TV drama or a thriller film; these were real people living real lives.

and finally killed himself. But unlike Hawkins, this is more than the story of a young man snapping; he had a vendetta and a plan.


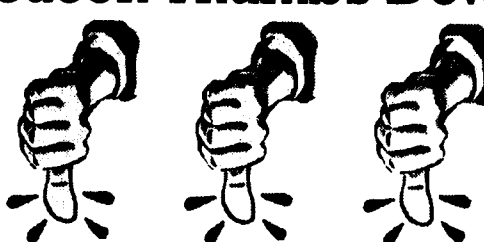
The cycle began again, and soon the news was full of background information, professional theories, first-hand accounts and direct sources. The hate postings he left on the public forum of the Association of Former Pentecostals website were removed, but excerpts are everywhere. Some of his warnings were verbatim of the warnings left before the Columbine shooting, which occurred just a few miles from his home. The title of his last post - "You Christians

brought this on yourselves." Murray had a cause, and he died for it.

I am not saying that victims should be forgotten or security neglected. I am not saying the questions of those directly and painfully affected should not be relieved. I am not saying that excessive media coverage causes killings like these. But there is a line of dignity and decency that the media has crossed. These murders did not take place in a TV drama or a thriller film; these were real people living real lives. The shoppers calling 911 are not actors; they are humans in a terrible state of fear and hopelessness. Moments like these should not be on public display. It is possible to honor the victims without also honoring the violence.

We should pay tribute to those killed and offer support to their loved ones. We should be aware of any security measures that need more attention. And then we should let mass killers die in the obscurity in which they lived. No one should see their faces in the morning paper, no one should read their last words and wishes on the internet. No one should give them titles like "greatest killer" or "biggest mass murderer."

These murderers should fade away with no respect, no memory and no name. The only hope they had was to be remembered and feared, and America cannot pander to their dying wish. To forget forever is the only justice we have left.

<p>Beacon Thumbs Up</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poofy Snow - Catching up on sleep over break - Mountain Dew Code Red - Sled Riding 	<p>Beacon Thumbs Down</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sleet - Drainage on campus - Teacher evaluations - Finals
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Submission Guidelines

Letters should be limited to 350 words and commentaries should be limited to 700 words. The more concise the submission, the less we will be forced to edit it for space concerns and the more likely we are to run the submission.

The Beacon does not publish anonymous letters. Please include your major, faculty, or administration position and semester standing. **Deadline for any submission is 5 p.m. Tuesday afternoon for inclusion in the Friday issue.**

The Behrend Beacon reserves the right to edit any submissions prior to publication.

Please keep complaints as specific as possible. Email submissions to cmb5313@psu.edu or drop them off at the Beacon office.