

PERSPECTIVES

THE BEHREND BEACON

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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 it. The Beacon does not publish anonymous letters. Please include your major, faculty, or administration position and semester standing. Deadline for any submission is 3 p.m. Thursday 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 jdj5061@psu.edu or drop them off at the Beacon office.

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution:
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.

Beacon Thumbs Up



- Proper layouts
- Google
- NFL pick bets
- Free stuff from Club Rush

Beacon Thumbs Down



- Coffee scoops to cup ratio
- Summer headcolds
- First round of exams
- No Erie sperm banks

This week in politics

By Christopher Brown
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I can't say that I'm disappointed with the Republican National Convention. It has made good, if frustrating, television. The tone of the convention couldn't be much farther from the Democratic one last week. My immediate impression: the Republican party is just as ruthless and partisan as it was in 2000 and 2004, unwilling to show any respect towards those with different beliefs and belittling the problems this country faces and the principles this country was founded on. There has been a noticeable absence of discussion on the economy during the convention and the problems average people face, though not surprising given that the McCain campaign feels that we are in a "mental recession" and Americans have become a bunch of "whiners" according to former McCain Campaign co-chair Sen. Lindsey Graham.

It is obvious what the theme of the convention was, "Country First." Which is odd because I never knew any American felt differently. Democrats openly acknowledged during their convention that John McCain wants to improve the country, just that they feel his policies won't work or succeed. Of course Republicans haven't returned the favor with their constant insinuations that Obama doesn't put "Country First" like John McCain, or that if someone disagrees with them they obviously don't have the "Country First." The problem is, this is a misreading of what "Country First" means to many in America, and me especially. "Country First" actually means challenging our government, and fellow citizens, to live up to the principles of freedom and equal opportunity that makes this country great. Wednesday evening's speeches

[this article was written before McCain's speech on Thursday] constituted some of the most hateful, divisive, and misinformed speeches I have ever heard. Instead of moving towards the center, away from Bush-Cheney, they pushed further right than I ever expected the Republican party to push. If their goal was to rally their base they succeeded, if it was to win more votes, they utterly failed. Not only were the speeches partisan, they were flat out wrong and factually inaccurate on many issues.

For instance, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney went on a heated tirade, asking the crowd "what do you think Washington is right now, liberal or conservative?"

Oh, I know that one: Neither! It's Republican, they abandoned the conservative principles their party was founded on a long time ago. In the rare instance where Democrats were able to bypass a filibuster in the Senate, passing a bill to provide health insurance for children who can't afford it, President Bush vetoed it. Regardless of what they try and say about Washington, the Republican party has been in power for the past eight years, not the Democrats. Romney made his most egregious assertion when he said that the Republican Party is the party of "Big ideas, not big brother." I guess he never heard of illegal warrantless wiretapping, the Patriot Act, or extraordinary rendition (kidnapping suspected, sometimes innocent or wrongly accused, terrorists and taking them to countries where torture is legal). Ignorance is bliss. I understand Republicans want to distance themselves from the Bush presidency, but ignoring the reality of what their party has become, doesn't make it go away.

Perhaps my biggest problem with the speeches last night came from Palin. She was nasty, inconsiderate, and a liar. She

denounced pork-barrel spending and the infamous Bridge to Nowhere, saying, "told the Congress 'thanks, but no thanks,' for that Bridge to Nowhere. If our state wanted a bridge, we'd build it ourselves." Actually, Congress did say that, and she spent the money on other projects instead, not to mention that as mayor she secured \$27 million in congressional earmarks for her town of 6,700 including projects that McCain objected to and criticized as a Senator.

She also railed against the media during her speech. Over the past week the media has broken numerous stories about Palin, which is to be expected. She is a relative unknown, and I understand that while the McCain campaign hoped to create their own image of Palin, it is the media's job to ask the tough questions. The McCain campaign should be careful what they wish for; just a few weeks ago they were complaining about all the coverage Obama received.

Perhaps her most insensitive, partisan, and silly remarks came when she mocked Barack Obama's service as a "community organizer." She said, "I guess a small-town mayor is sort of like a 'community organizer,' except that you have actual responsibilities."

Community organizers are some of the most dedicated people and are truly servants for the greater good. She is demeaning the work of women's shelters, pro bono lawyers, free clinics, soup kitchens, the faith based organizations that Republicans are so keen on, and many more organizations that make up a robust civil society which keeps America strong. They give voices to people who don't have the benefit of multi-million dollar lobby groups on their behalf.

I'm surprised that Palin, the born-again Evangelical Christian, forgot that Jesus Christ was a community organizer, and Pontius Pilate was the politician.

An outsider's opinion

By Jeff Kramer
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New places are scary, I'd know. As a freshman here, I've been dropped off in the middle of nowhere, right off the highway, to participate in my first year of college. The catch is that unlike most of you, I'm from Vermont. Things are very different there. If you've grown up in Pennsylvania, you probably don't even realize how different things are around the country. Or maybe you do and it's just an isolated Vermonter thing. I'm writing this article so you'll hopefully realize things about your environment, or even about yourself, that you've never noticed before.

Vermont is a very different state from all the rest: every restaurant buys local food, the Roxy in downtown Burlington is accepted statewide as the best theater, and everybody knows not to speed in Ferrisburgh or down Dorset Street. Not having lived anywhere else, I can only observe with an extremely biased viewpoint. That's to say, things are different here, even if you don't realize it.

You may have seen me around campus, and if you haven't, you could definitely pick me out of a crowd. In Vermont, not many people dress the way they do here. For instance, a good friend of mine who just moved to California doesn't wear shoes. Ever. Walk into Middlebury Union High School and you'll see maybe two or three students (out of 850) wearing gym shorts outside of phys ed. Everybody's jeans have holes. Nobody's sweatpants

say "foxy" on the butt.

When I first arrived, I knew things would be different. I didn't realize, however, that people would be dressed just like *Mean Girls*. I didn't think that was a reality—the whole "cliques dress differently" thing. Back home, there were three major groups: the goth kids (5%), the automotive class kids (20%), and the rest of us (75%). The kicker was that almost all of us would intermingle. Sure, some people weren't included in the massive group. There was the tall kid who nobody really knew his name and dressed in black sweatpants every day, the short girl with the mullet, and that one weird freshman in red who talked kind of weird. I'd say about 90% of the 850 students had one degree of separation between any given student. Even lowerclassmen and upperclassmen got along. At parties, everybody knew everybody else, and everyone got along.

Out here in the real world, I know that's not the case. I see the snide looks the preppy girls give the guys with "World of Warcraft" shirts. I've already heard stories about a freshman waking up with his pants full of EZ-Cheese from some upperclassman. That would happen back home, but not because of the class difference. It would happen because we could all appreciate a good joke (and because Jameson passed out in two hours.)

What I'm trying to say is that you shouldn't just browse over what is considered to be the social norm without even thinking about it. It could be drastically different just a couple hours away.

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Left out of the loop

We're sure you've heard the rumors about the recent RA firings. We're also sure that you haven't heard much else.

As you may have read, the students who were let go by Residence Life have stronger privacy protection than usual since their case is being handled through the university. The administration is not allowed to release any information that could identify one of the students involved.

Protecting a student's privacy is important. But it is also important to let students know about major changes on campus, especially within the buildings that they call home for the better part of the year.

Most students who lost an RA this week discovered it simply by walking past the empty dorm rooms. Some residents even found that there was no RA in their entire residence hall.

These residents should have some information. It is not fair for a student to witness these changes in their own hall, but not be told that the school has it under control. It is not safe when residents who have no RA are not told that they will have to leave their buildings for help. The school can release at least this much information without betraying anyone's privacy.

Student Affairs has done an excellent job at protecting the rights of the students who have violated their Resident Assistant contracts. But when it comes to the safety of students who have done nothing wrong, perhaps they have been neglectful.

Surprising connections between college and "Shawshank"

By Jennifer Juncosa
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Last weekend I saw, for the first time, *The Shawshank Redemption*. Most agree that it is a fantastic movie and that I waited way too long before watching it. But while watching the movie I couldn't help but think that college is a lot like prison. Don't get me wrong; I love school. But there were a surprising number of similarities.

The first one dealt with Red, Morgan Freedman's character. Red was the go-to-guy when prisoners needed something. In the movie, Andy Dufresne, played by Tom Robbins, needed a rock hammer and turned to Red to get it for him. The hammer was put into bed sheets and given to the guy who hands out books just to get it to Dufresne.

Now what's the connection? Well, has anybody smuggled something into their dorm? It's usually liquid and you're usually underage. You might talk to your friend, who is always prepared for the weekend, about where to get what you need. They take your money and talk to their supplier who is usually of age. Then when your friend gets the wanted substance, they sneak it into a bag and deliver it.

In the movie, during Andy Dufresne's first few years of his two consecutive life sentences, he gets a job in the prison's laundry room. In the few clips they show him at work, you get the impression that the working conditions weren't the best and

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that prisoners would be willing to work in the laundry room if it meant having something to do.

In college, students are known for scraping the bottom of the barrel to earn a few bucks. Girls might take jobs at restaurants like Hooters or become bartenders knowing their looks will get them respectful tips. Guys usually aren't seen in Hooter's outfits but they might also become bartenders to use their looks to get the tips. Some people get extremely desperate to earn money in college, even if it means being a fry-cook at Applebee's, or selling your sperm and/or plasma.

In *The Shawshank Redemption*, there was a character named Brooks, played by James Whitmore, who was paroled and released. He talks about how he tries to adapt to being a free man but says how difficult it is. He admits in a letter that he thinks of ways to commit a crime and break his parole just so that he can go back.

Everyone says that college is the best time of your life and most of the people I talk to that have graduated would gladly go back. Most say that "the real world" is just not as much fun. Sadly, no one can do something that will force him or her to return to school. They could change their mind about their career but that's more expensive than breaking parole.

Now, I may have a huge imagination, but I saw the connections. Perhaps I'm just rattling the bars of my jail cell, here. But enjoy the gruel, and don't drop the soap.

Have an opinion?
The world needs to hear your opinion. Get out there, throw a football around, and spend as much time as you can with it. Because we all know it won't last much longer.
Have an opinion? e-mail jdj5061@psu.edu