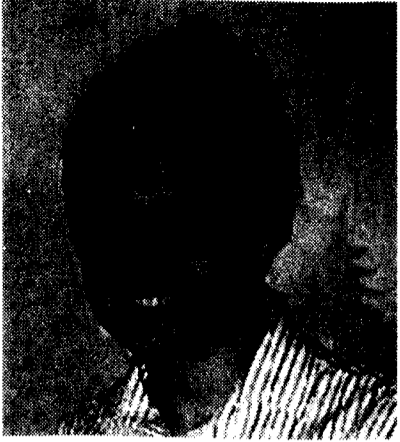


Culturally Inept; a bi-monthly pontification



Oscar Beisert

By Oscar Beisert
Columnist
odb102@psu.edu

As you may realize, we live in a country that welcomes, what I find to be inconsistent—eclectic—architecture, individuals, entertainment, interior design, and you name it.

We know this, but do we understand why?

The best part of being a member of an interdisciplinary masters

program—American Studies—is the fact that almost any interest is accepted and, often times, even promoted. While there are clearly, in my own words, distinct matters of interest—the, shall I say, “Pop-Culture” of American Studies—the community welcomes and nurtures a wide variety of subjects that are foreign to those most frequently pursued. My own intrigues are so numerous that the enormity of such could possibly threaten the solidarity of my specific studies and research. Incidentally, my most ardent vice is studying the Victorian Era—its decorative arts, architecture, societal regulations, and dominate influence on shaping modern culture. Most fervent in my mind is their attention to detail, the eclectic style of the era, and its influence on architecture and decorative arts today.

Recently, helping a co-worker find an apartment to rent, we were prowling the neighborhoods

when she inquired as to why the architecture was so inconsistent. I remember answering in an almost half-hearted manner and then for a long time, pondered her question. The next week, in Historical Preservation, the lesson enlightened me with the answer to her question.

Contrary to the common misconception, that Victoriana means stuffy, overly ornate, and feminine, is the reality that true Victoriana usually equates eclectic. A walk through Historic Harrisburg—whether it is midtown or Allison Hill—can introduce one to this said inconstancy that we have long since generalized as Victorian. Instead of this generalization, what we are actually seeing are the different types of architecture that earmark the era—some were Eastlake, Italianate, Second Empire, and Queen Anne. Another eclectic element was decorative arts. While the word Victorian usually leads us to think gaudy and

ornate, the actual décor housed a variety of different styles including English, French, Italian, and even Japanese.

By now, you may be wondering how this has anything to do with modern living. Well, while some may disagree, I find there to be a direct correlation. If asked to reflect modern subdivisions, where individuals buy lots and build their own homes, do we always see consistent architecture? No, of course not, we observe a taxing array of styles that amalgamate a modern concept—a neighborhood. And is it likely that these homes will house the same sort of tastes and décor? Can we really believe that an English Tudor, in a middle class development, will house old or even replicated English furniture? Absolutely not! Instead, we know that there are a variety of genres that mirror, as does the diversity of architecture, a part of the Victorian era that remained in our society—the idea

of individual tastes and styles that replicate our own taste rather than a cultural norm.

Taking it further, can we find a correlation between the diversity and the continued growth? Well, my answer is maybe. For people who were so obsessed with form and social behavior, was allowing diversity in architecture and décor a huge step, or did they even consider that civil liberties could derive from decorating liberties. Yet again, I say maybe, but will leave the question for you to ponder.

One thing is sure, while the post modernists and even modern thinkers today criticize the Victorians for their narrow-mindedness, we must attribute some sort of beginning to them. It just might be possible that this small addition of diversity might have opened the doors for progress in American culture.

Before officially concluding, I must touch on a piece I read in our first paper:

the SGA report. It is more than obvious that my slight poke at the student body president, in my first column, was more than kind. Since then, I have come to know that the best interest of the student body has been put on the back burner for soccer practice. While I understand that athletics are important, I truly believe that the key student body representative should never make the student body a matter of impropriety. And while I may sound like a Victorian, no decorating style or athletic event is going to change my mindset. President Edwards you are slowly but surely confirming the predictions of your failure.

Look for more articles from Oscar Beisert To respond to his column email the Capital Times at captimes@psu.edu. and mark it letter to the editor.

Why the Patriot Act Works



Marco Primoroc

By Marco Primoroc
Staff Reporter
mcp164@psu.edu

I have been to six different countries since the tragedy of September 11, up and down the east coast, and to both California and Nevada. I have felt pretty safe no matter what my means of transportation, nor my destination. Sure, at the airport, it is always a drag unlacing my worn-out boots in front of people I don't know (literally exposing my “dirty laundry”). Yet, after the public shaming, I know that I am looking forward to an interesting adventure of some sort, because I will, mechanical failure or act of God withstanding, make it to my destination.

Obviously, the Patriot Act is not as simplistic as airport

security, road-trips, travel, or unlacing footwear in front of horrified security personnel and bystanders. No, the Patriot Act goes far beyond that, granting sweeping authority to government agencies, especially in regards to surveillance of individuals. It was, and remains, a necessary tool in keeping our Homeland safe from terrorists.

I am not the only one who feels this way. Since July 22, 2005, a 257 - 171 vote was taken in the House of Representatives making permanent 14 of the 16 provisions of the USA Patriot Act, and extending two others for another ten years. This was a bipartisan, democratic vote by our elected representatives.

Critics say that the bill is “not so patriotic,” and that it violates civil liberties. In certain instances, the Patriot Act has been misused and civil liberties have been violated. While violations of civil liberties, such as the Mayfield case (and others) have unfortunately occurred, overall they have been the exception to the norm. The norm has been the successful prevention of attacks, in addition to the apprehension and prosecution of suspected terrorists and their supporters and enablers.

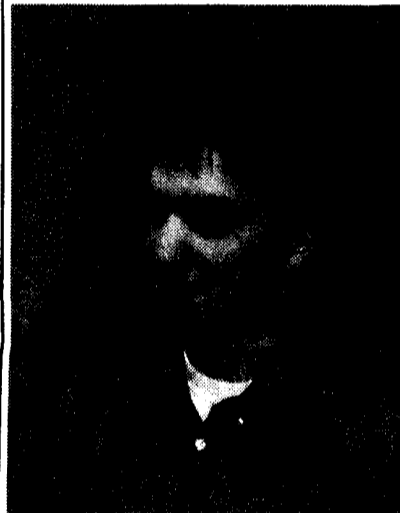
The figures supporting success

are staggering. According to the Department of Justice's website, over 150 terror threats and cells have been disrupted, five domestic cells have been broken up, 401 individuals have been charged, 212 individuals have been convicted, and 515 people linked to the September 11 tragedy have been taken out of the United States

Is the Patriot Act perfect? No, but it is working. Do certain aspects need to be re-examined or reformed? Absolutely, but let us not tie the hands of the government and prevent it from gaining the intelligence it needs to prevent another catastrophe such as 9/11, or worse.

The loopholes (such as using the Patriot Act to investigate and prosecute non-terrorist activities and crimes) need to go, and stricter regulation and bipartisan oversight must be rigorously pursued and imposed; but let us not operate under the false presumption that the act itself inherently violates civil liberties, because it does not. The Patriot Act is a necessary legal step towards enhanced security, and yet again, it works. While some minor changes need to be made, the Patriot Act should stay for the long haul and continue to keep us safe.

Are you Penn State? From your SGA president



Michael Edwards

By Michael Edwards
SGA President
mle5000@psu.edu

My fellow Penn Staters,

Mike Edwards, Student Government President here, with some words to think about. I hope things are finally settling down for most of you as we pass the middle of this semester. You have a great opportunity at your feet. You are taking part in one of the most diverse, fun and exciting experiences that you could not

get anywhere else.

I urge you to get involved with your campus as often and as much as possible. Experience some of the unique and different clubs and organizations at this campus. Take part in your school and what it has to offer.

This is an important time for Penn State. As many of you know, our Nittany Lion football team is doing better than usual and this brings a height in pride for many of us blue and white fans. However, our pride should not just be a football thing. It does not take a winning football team to have pride in our school.

We should have pride constantly throughout the year, at home, and during school hours. We should have pride for our other sports teams on this campus as well. You all will cheer on Saturday for your Penn State Nittany Lion Football team, but do you cheer for your baseball, volleyball, or soccer team? This is the first year for many PSH sports teams in a while, so now is the most important year for them to do well.

This is the year where Penn State Harrisburg will define itself.

We will shed a new and different light of Penn State Harrisburg to the rest of the world. This light should be bright and shining, a light that can and will last for years to come.

You are the faculty, the staff, the students, and we all know what we are. However, we need to show to everyone else that we are separate from the other schools, like Pittsburg, Ohio State and Michigan. We need to show that we have spirit, and glory. You need to ask yourself, do you have what it takes to be a true Penn Stater? Do you have the pride and the spirit to be a true Penn Stater? Are you Penn State?

If yes, then please show it. If no, it is never too late to start. Get involved in the activities and events on campus, join clubs and organizations, and support our sports teams when they take on other Penn State campuses. Show your pride, show your spirit, show your glory but most importantly show that you are a part of Penn State. Show that You Are Penn State.

Counter to Primoroc: arguing the draft

Letter to the Editor

By Christopher Blazi
cab450@psu.edu

Dear Editor,

Marko Primoroc's “Bring Back the Draft” argument lacks deep thought, is contradictory to the ideals implied and needs to be challenged. I agree that U.S. citizens need to be more active in serving their country and applaud his presentation of ideas to achieve this feat. However, I strongly disagree with the manner in which he suggests this to be done and his reasoning as well.

Primoroc suggests giving both male and female high school graduates “the choice” of either going to secondary schools or serving the government. He later suggests that male foreigners, in order to gain citizenship, enlist in the military as “the only option”.

First of all, there is no real choice in providing only two options to recent graduates. Even later in his article he calls it “mandatory governmental service”. A graduate can serve their country just as well by being a worker. Also, the “choice” he discusses is offered to both males and females born here but only to males born elsewhere. See the hypocrisy? And who really wants foreigners fighting for a country, in order to protect its “natural-born” citizens, they recently moved to and probably know little about? Why would they want to fight for a country that only offers citizenship if they put their lives on the line? This reasoning is unsound on many levels.

If on “chose” college, according to Primoroc, after graduation they would be required to serve the government as well. Why even “choose” college? This suggestion is absurd. Not only

would it be a waste of a few years of education but it would eventually cost taxpayers more to finance their military requirement and the necessary training or re-education for employment. He mentioned such opportunities of military/government service as traveling, making money, being responsible, etc. But the very next lines are written as follows: “Or party like rock stars. Either way, mandatory governmental service prepares them for life...” Do I need to make an argument here?

Primoroc then touches on immigration and international development. He suggests that with all the new military/governmental personnel “we save money by preventing illegal immigration and terrorism”. What a joke! On the contrary, it would cost us much more money to cover expenses for all the new military personnel and this would

still not stop illegal immigration or terrorism. Remember Timothy McVeigh? Who's going to search every container on every vessel in every port? It simply is not possible.

He also paints a rosy picture of the U.S. being the friendly rich country “helping build roads and infrastructure and educating their youth” for developing countries as a money-saving investment. This is where the author shows his ignorance of U.S. foreign policy and history. We have engaged in this type of behavior only with certain interests, guarantees, and miserable results. Besides, we have Americans doing this type of work as NON-governmental organizations.

I agree with Primoroc's desire to see more of a representative military with rich serving beside the poor. The poor and minorities have filled the ranks for far too long. However, this would lead to

a few problems. Corruption could be rampant, with rich parents trying to buy their child's way into certain positions. Leadership roles would most likely be given to well-educated, rich, white males despite qualifications (isn't this already proven in society?). And besides, we've become the wealthiest and strongest nation in the history of the world by a mostly volunteer military. Why change that? Remember the problems the draft created in Vietnam? You can not force an individual to kill for a cause in which they do not believe.

The author mentions his reasoning as, “because it is the right thing to do” and “we should want to”. This just shows the biased perception of right and wrong by the author. Perhaps he needs to reconsider being a reporter, or maybe work for Fox News.

Finally, when discussing war,

Primoroc writes, “We should all bear the burden equally. All capable and qualified to serve must serve the U.S. in some way.” I am writing to say this: war affects everyone. It affects some more than others because they “choose” to enlist in a manner not like the one the author suggests. They chose to defend democracy and freedom of which both provide the freedom of choice, not a restriction of choices. And we all serve the U.S. in some way already including the unemployed, handicapped, immigrants, females, minorities, etc. And don't forget about the blue-collar workers that would be greatly affected by your proposals. Everyone plays a role. Everyone contributes. It is the way they “choose” to contribute that makes us a democracy. Bring back the draft and you take away choices and ultimately democracy.