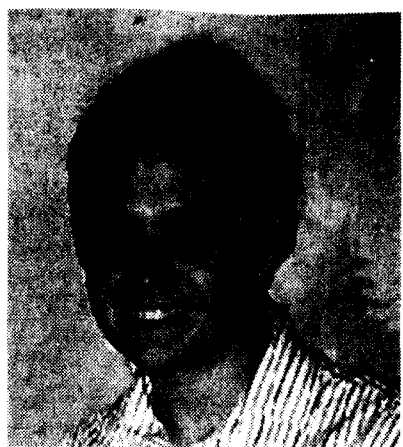


Culturally Inept; a bi-monthly pontification



Oscar Beisert

By Oscar Beisert
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When we allow ourselves to escape reality long enough to fathom reality, we sometimes find repugnant perceptions—excuse me, I'm generalizing and, basically speaking for myself. But before I delve into the premise of the aforementioned, I will put my "alma mater-to be" at the top of my bi-monthly priority list.

For those of you cognizant of the controversy surrounding my initial column and its dare directed at President Edwards, get over it! With confident literacy skills, one could easily surmise that my poke was a merely a sharp edged warning that was missed or ignored and then countered by inaction. And some may be asking, "Who am I?" I'm older and more experienced—and on a deeper level, I'm a disgruntled government major, disturbed by unproductive leadership in America, both Democrat and Republican, which is usually most apparent to young idealistic students, but is obviously no concern to our SGA president. Imagine both society's and the media's reaction to the idea of President Bush bouncing a cabinet meeting to participate in, should I say, a more selfish act. Yeah, naturally, I'm disgusted; I am a student here and would like our President to place his people on a higher level than an activity that only affects himself—soccer practice. This is not too much to

ask since he was hardly thrown into the position, but instead competed for it against others.

An explanation is seemingly important since my first column made no attempt to attack the president but instead to motivate him. This column, so you know, is meant to attack him. Seemingly his actions, or should I say inaction, sets the precedence for how sets a precedence for how situations in the future could be handled. And those of you wondering as to how this correlates with culture; this is a perfect example of such—politicians who do nothing happen to be quite common in our society!

It can be cited that most students, or should I say most Americans, fail to take an active role in their government, which is initiated by not voting. This issue is most often ignored and/or displaced as unimportant; however, I find that our educational experience is one that should touch on all aspects of life. What I mean is, if government in school—high school, college, etc.—is placed

on the back burner to sports, music, drama, and/or other, normally, higher funded/placed activities, does it give the eventual civic responsibilities of real life a measure of impropriety? For example, is it no longer an attribute of child rearing to instill morals early on in life? We certainly have no problem giving our children lessons in materialism—or should I say lessons in how to become materialistic. Why is it so apparent that leadership can be found through athletics, but not through leadership focused organizations such as student government? If we believe that student government is moot, will it cause the commencement of real life to begin with an attitude that government, in general, is unimportant? Whether or not a true factual assessment of my question could ever reasonably be conducted, I find several home truths in the delineation of my thoughts. Basically, as I see it, we—the majority of society—have issues and concerns that we complain about on a daily

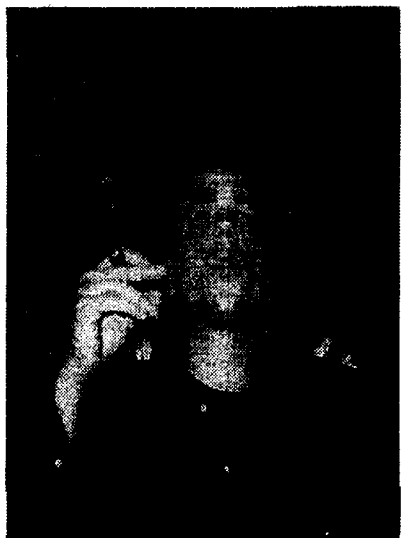
basis. We have systems that our—or someone's—forbearers created as to assure that these problems are accurately and justly addressed, but we seem to lack the motivation to keep these systems within our control. We do this by allowing our president to be elected by less than half of America's population, which is the most apparent voting issue among the enumerable types of elections in which voter apathy takes its toll.

We all realize these problems exist, but are befuddled when working to find a solution. Maybe if voting and citizenship was a top priority in school, the value would be instilled from childhood onward. We seemingly instill American pride, through saying the pledge and/or celebrating the Fourth of July, but has any thought been given to how we *instill* action. As we know, citizenship is not normally an intrinsic attribute of one's persona. Because of this, Americans must look at changing their priorities. This

can be done in the beginning, in school, with some of the most obvious methods. Making priority organizations that promote the values essential to living in and maintaining a great country would be a big step. While I have used Student Government as the premise of this column, my views represent all student organizations that prepare individuals for their upcoming real life situations.

On a more personal note, while I may seem very stuffy in my column, I am actually quite fun and entertaining. So those of you who wanna argue, party or just hang out feel free to e-mail me at odb102@psu.edu. Your thoughts on my column, whether you agree or disagree with my views would be very intriguing. And for those of you throwing parties or social events—do me a favor, shoot me an invite; I'm always looking for a cultural experience to contribute to my column and understanding of humanity.

Missing the mark From your president



Marko Primorac

By Marko Primorac
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Christopher Blazi's haughty response to my proposal in favor of a draft for mandatory governmental service is full of poor reasoning.

Blazi's assumption that military or governmental service (to which I proposed a one-year minimum) equals "a waste of a few years of education" is insulting to anyone who has served the U.S. military or government.

He misquotes the one and only humorous (or failed attempt to be) line, "Or party like rock stars," as

if it were the crux of my argument citing benefits of service.

Blazi argues that "it would cost us much more money to cover expenses for all of the military personnel and this would still not stop illegal immigration or terrorism. Remember Timothy McVeigh?" The Border Patrol is begging for more boots on the ground: my proposal would give them more (at a lower cost). Increased security saves lives and money in the long-term. Like Atta, Timothy McVeigh was a domestic terrorist. We may not have thwarted every illegal crossing or terrorist plot, but that doesn't mean we should stop trying.

He asks, "Who is going to search every container on every vessel in every port?" It is not possible, but more security could lessen the probability of more human trafficking or a port attack.

Blazi falsely claims that I paint "a rosy picture of the U.S. being the friendly rich country." I make no such assertion, but propose that a rich, friendlier U.S. should be a part of future policy.

Blazi states NGO's are already doing humanitarian work, but misses my point entirely: humanitarian missions are an investment in future democracies

and allies. NGO's (for all of their hard work) do not have the capital, manpower, or technological resources that the U.S. has.

He asserts that rich parents would "buy" their kids positions despite qualifications, as if there is no Affirmative Action or rule of law.

Blazi claims "we've become the wealthiest and strongest nation in the history of the world by a mostly volunteer military," proving his historical ignorance. World War II (won thanks only to a draft) and aggressive post-WWII policies (the Marshall Plan, NATO, etc.) facilitated our rise to global prominence. The draft did not end until the 1970s.

Blazi accuses me biased. While the background of *The Capital Times* Opinion page doesn't have the letters O P I N I O N in red ink in 72 font, the header Opinion implies that anything that appears on the Opinion page is exactly that: opinion. I didn't present my proposal as hard news. Blazi's suggestion that I should consider trying to "work for FOX News" (innuendo: ideological Conservative lacking journalistic integrity) shows both a "lack of deep thought" and "basic civility."



Michael Edwards

By Michael Edwards
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It may come as a shock to some but your Student Government President was caught participating in one of our new athletic teams. It is true; I, Mike Edwards, was found guilty of joining the men's soccer team at Penn State Harrisburg. Now this may seem like a devious act, but I view it differently.

This past semester, I got the great chance to participate in this year's men's soccer team. We had a great season and I could only wish it would have ended better. However, many students on campus do not know what its like to participate in events or programs this university has to offer.

As student leaders, we work hard to make sure you have the best experience on campus. All

of us, whether in SGA or not, take time out of our daily lives to participate in the enhancement of our university. We can only ask that you, as the students, respond to our hard work by attending the activities and being a part of your university.

Now I am not saying you are apathetic. In fact, I understand completely why the student body does not attend some of the events on campus. Apathy is just a label a student leader uses to call another student that does not attend their event. So save your breath, I do not intend to call this student body apathetic.

When you hear the cries from leaders stating that there is student apathy, take note that they are just saying that someone is not doing their job. They are right; someone is not doing their job. Who, you might ask? All sides are to blame for this "apathy" issue.

We, the student leaders, are not doing something right. Some of us believe we should gather students like cattle and force them to attend events, and while this may solve the problem, I do not think it is a solution. So if we can't rope in the cattle, then the problem does not lie within the way we solicit events to students but in the actual events.

The student leaders on campus are here to represent your voice, not to tell you what to do. In the end, it is the students who have the power on campus. If

you don't come to event, we know that the event we held was not something that interested the students.

However, we as leaders can only so do much as far as getting the perfect events on campus for you. You must voice your opinions and you must tell us what types of events you want on campus. This is the job that you as students are failing at.

We need your help and advice; we need to know how we can best represent you. Every week SGA holds a meeting on Thursdays at 12:30 in room TL118 and every week there are only 2 people in the gallery. Every week I ask, "are there any public comments?" and guess what? I can barely get one. All we ask of the student body is just to come to our forty-minute meetings and voice your concerns. That's all it takes, forty minutes. Many of you spend forty minutes on facebook, watching your profile.

I urge you to come to our meeting each week and demand your way. You as students should take pride in your campus and come to the activities that you wanted, that you asked for. We will do our best to represent you and let you know what events are going on around campus. However, in the end it's up to you. You have the power, you have the voice. Let your ideas be heard. Otherwise just stay at home in your room and do not complain!

Voter turn out low among 18 to 24-year-olds

By Brian J. Williams
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Voters between the ages of 18 and 24 remain at the bottom of the voter turn out list, despite a boost from the 2000 election. According to the U.S. Census bureau, only 46.7 percent of the citizen population between the ages of 18 to 24 turned out to vote in the 2004 election. This is the lowest turnout among the six age groups. This number is still low, although it is 5 million more than turned out in the 2000 election according to Harvard University professor Thomas E. Patterson. Apparently some of the 18 to 24-year-old age bracket learned their lesson from the debacle in 2000 that ultimately led to the Supreme Court deciding the outcome.

Many people take for granted the right to vote. In a perfect world,

everyone would exercise their right that our founding fathers fought so hard for us to have. In some foreign countries, people risk their lives walking many miles only to wait in line for hours before casting their vote. Being a resident of the United States affords us many luxuries when it comes to voting, including the convenient location of polling stations that are simply a car ride away.

Why is it important for 18 to 24-year-olds to vote? The answer is many reasons. 18 to 24-year-olds and generations to come will have to fix the many problems our parents and older generations have created. The Social Security fund is expected to go bankrupt if taxes are not increased or if the government doesn't bail it out. There is a multi-million dollar trade deficit with China, and also a multi-million dollar loan from

China that must be repaid at some point.

If the war goes on, and it looks like it isn't ending anytime soon, a draft could be reinstated, and 18 to 24-year-old men would be the primary target. Natural disasters have increased over the past decade largely in part to global warming and the destruction of our environment. Tuition has increased steadily over the past few years and it appears that it has become a trend.

If more 18 to 24-year-olds voted, we could encourage our legislatures to spend more money on education and the increasing costs of health care. In Pennsylvania, legislators voted to increase their pay, while the minimum wage remains the same, and tuition at the State System of Higher Education Universities will rise again this year.

If these aren't good enough

reasons to encourage younger adults to vote, then I don't know what is.

The highest voter turn out in the 2004 election was in the 65 to 74 age range. Many candidates are smart and reach out to this age range and make promises in exchange for votes. If we could get more voters in the 18 to 24 age range to turn out, we would receive more attention from the candidates running for election. 18 to 24-year-olds need to get smart and start exercising their right to vote if they want to see any changes in the near future. If we continue to be the least represented body of people at the voting booth we will continue to be the last on the agenda of our elected officials.

How can we increase turnout? I suggest possibly extending the voting period from one day to several days. This may

increase turnout, especially for voters between the ages of 18 to 24, who are usually juggling work, school and perhaps a family. Become informed on whom you are voting for. Many young voters don't know who their senators, representatives or local officials are. Learn who is running and what they stand for. If you are a student who goes away to college, try to fill out an absentee ballot because every vote matters. Finally, read up on the current events that are going on in this country. If you don't like the way things are going, register to vote and take action to improve them. You can download an application at:

http://www.dos.state.pa.us/voting/lib/voting/02_voter_registration_applications/online_english/VoterRegistrationApp2.html

Have an opinion you would like to share? Feel free to e-mail a letter to the editor at captimes@psu.edu It's your voice, use it.