

Amish teachings are to forgive but never forget

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Ever heard the saying "Revenge is a dish best served cold"? This old Klingon proverb is quoted in movie hits such as Kill Bill and Man on Fire.

In Webster's dictionary, revenge is defined as "retaliation on another because of wrongs they committed." Revenge is a popular theme in which movie makers attempt to convince the audience payback was justified.

On Oct. 2 32-year-old milk-truck driver, Charles C. Roberts IV entered a Lancaster County Amish schoolhouse; shot 10 girls, killing 5, and then committed suicide. The shooting shocked the nation and people around the world.

Lancaster County resident and Penn State Harrisburg junior, Christopher Kantz was "appalled" and "confused as to what would drive a person to do such a thing."

The Amish are a Christian denomination also known as Anabaptists. They base their lives on faith and are committed to peace. Roberts did not live to see the Amish's response to his actions.

Despite the public's distaste towards him, Amish leaders asked the community for their prayers and willingness to forgive, just as they already had. Kantz was touched by their compassion and realized one can not live with hatred of another.

Elizabeth "Libby" Tisdell, is co-chair of the Outreach Subcommittee of the Diveristy and Educational Equity Committee at PSH. Tisdell

wanted the university to reach out to the Amish, and at the same time respect their need for prayers and privacy.

"They had been so harassed by the media; we wanted to make clear that our invitation was an act of solidarity with them as neighbors in Pennsylvania. We wanted to learn from them," she said. While she was horrified by the shooting, Tisdell found the Amish way of forgiveness both admirable and inspiring. She then contacted Dr. Richard Amonn, a Penn State retiree with friends in the Amish community.

He believed the public could learn from their response to the tragedy.



Photo courtesy of Google Images

Amish historian Sam Stoltzfus spoke to interested students at Penn State Harrisburg about the recent Amish tragedy in Lancaster, and how the Amish believe in forgiveness, not revenge. He mentioned how important it is to forgive in order to be forgiven.

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement where Jews devote themselves to confession of sins and reconciliation with God. He said, "People have forgotten about forgiveness. If we don't forgive, we won't be forgiven. We all want to go to heaven so we need to forgive."

He adds by saying it is part of their history and common lifestyle. "In the past, the U.S. has demonstrated its forgiveness when they helped rebuild Germany and Japan in World Wars I and II, as well as present day Iraq," he said. Forgiveness is mentioned over fifty times in the Bible.

When asked for his definition of the word, he said "love and grace." Amonn said the lecture was well received. Even though "we find it difficult to comprehend, we simply need to practice forgiveness."

Democrats usurp Republican seats in both House and Senate

By **MARIAM ELHADRI**
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A sigh of relief could be heard around the world, or at least the country, for constituents and the members of both parties after the U.S. gubernatorial elections of 2006. This year marked one of the most controversial and hard-fought campaign seasons and elections in history.

It also marked an election that clearly portrayed the beauty of democracy being carried out with each and every vote carrying an individual, substantial weight.

On Election Day, November 7, 2006, the Democratic party clearly "took it to the House", and the Senate, for that matter.

What started out as a nasty, campaigning battle fought between slandering messages, mudslinging, and negative, political ads for House, Senate, and governor positions, became a struggle for every vote on

election day. Winners were often uncertain in many races until the polls were closed.

If one thing was certain enough, it was the message of the American people. It was clear the citizens of this country believed there needed to be a major change in the way this nation was being governed.

Almost 79 million Americans voted in Tuesday's election. According to the director of American University's Center for the Study of the American Electorate, the overall turnout rate of eligible voters, reflecting a percentage of voting age population, was 40.4 percent, the best turnout since the 1990 elections.

By a direct decision of the American people, Democrats took the majority of the House gaining control of 229 seats compared to the Republican, 196 seats. In addition, democrats added a notable part to history by electing the first female Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi. Soon after, by razor-thin margins, the Democratic

Party claimed victory of the 51-seat majority in the Senate.

Pennsylvania held a key race in this year's election with its influential nominees. It was one of many states that were not guaranteed a side until voted on. Bob Casey replaced incumbent Rick Santorum in the Senate race; and Ed Rendell held his position as governor for another term against Lynn Swann.

The significance of this midterm election was visible in many states showing rates substantially higher than ever before. Turnout was drastically higher in Montana, Michigan, Missouri, and Connecticut. In Delaware and Kentucky, voter attendance increased. Ohio and Virginia showed record numbers in these elections, which resulted in such a tight race.

President of the College Democrats and Penn State Harrisburg, Hilary Isleib, called this election a "recipe for change." She said, "Whether you are a Republican who wished the majority

had gone the other way or a Democrat who is celebrating victory, the beauty of the American government is that when the majority of American people were unhappy with the current policies of government, the people used their votes to effect change in the government."

It was no doubt voters headed to the polls on Election Day with numerous issues on their minds. War, abortion, same-sex marriage, and stem-cell research topped many concerns of the constituents this election. Wedge issues were more than enough to tip the scale for many key races. More importantly though, was the public's awareness to how the existing Republican Congress had become too complacent when the people were not.

Political scientist and professor at Penn State Harrisburg, Dr. Matthew Woessner, plotted out why such patterns occur. He said, "There was obviously a great deal of dissatisfaction with the Congressional leadership in Washington. Part of the electorate's

concerns centered on Iraq, but the reasons for the Republican losses can also be traced to an outbreak of Congressional scandals, high-energy prices, concerns over illegal immigration, and seemingly, out of control spending in Washington. Yet, however one may feel about the outcome of the elections, there is wonderful about watching citizens go to the polls and select for themselves the people who will represent them in government."

These elections did prove to be a wake up call warning all government officials how powerful a vote can be. As Isleib explained it, "The majority of the Americans are paying attention to what happens in Washington. To be successful policy makers, both parties need to pay attention to each other and to the voters."

Now that Democrats have retaken Congress for the first time in twelve years, what lies ahead can barely be based on precedent. Can this power shift be temporary?

It all depends on how the Democrats take advantage of their recent victories. Their success will only come if they learn from history. They need to govern unified, showing discipline in the party.


Division would only show weakness and lead to disagreement between authorities. The filibuster and veto could be the two ways George W. Bush can define his power in his remaining two years as president. But it may take more than a power swing to get the American people satisfied.

Tuesday's results not only will shape how the 2008 Presidential campaign season will unravel, but will influence patterns of government in the grander scheme for the future.


The results of these midterm elections portray what government was designed to do. Isleib coincided, "It is flexible enough to allow the citizens of the country to voice their opinions and use their vote as a tool to remind the government that it serves the people."

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