

# OPINION

## CULTURALLY INEPT A BI-MONTHLY PONTIFICATION

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Being loosely raised Lutheran, I have never exactly dreaded religion. In fact, because the churches I attended were very indicative of the "let it be" philosophy and largely focused on the importance of faith, most of my religious endeavors have been positive.

Yet somehow, there have always been various cocksure individuals working to uproot my enthusiasm.

Have you ever met someone who was raised in a very strict atmosphere wherein every nuance of life's frivolities was outlawed by a religious rule and/or standard? In the same right, did you notice that such individuals were governed and, in most cases, suppressed by the use of such strictures?

Recently, I found myself becoming acquainted with a very mean spirited person who directed most of his negative energy at deriding religion. After some mild inquires, I learned that it was the harsh regulations of

his childhood that had propagated his outlook.

However, I couldn't understand how even the most fanatical upbringing could invoke such a torrid feeling of hate. Could my acquaintance not see that it was merely the people and not the doctrine that were inflicting such persecutions upon him?

This question lingered in my mind inconclusively, but around Christmas time it was finally answered.

For the longest time, my paternal grandmother had been complaining to me via phone about a particular (non-Lutheran) cousin of mine whom regularly opined her religious views to the point of futility. Until Christmas I had been ignoring my grandmother's complaints by letting them go in one ear and out the other.

In the midst of delightful holiday reunions, the opening of presents, and the stuffing of bellies, a favorite cousin and I were engaged in a delightful and frivolous conversation—about nothing, but yet everything—when her older sister approached me.

The look on her face provoked a rather sneaking presentiment. It should have prompted me to ignore her and continue my conversation, but instead, I paid heed to her interruption. "How is your relationship with Jesus Christ," she asked with what were seemingly the most piercing eyes she could muster. Suddenly, my notion to ignore was up seated by my other relatives who were surrounding us—because at the sound of her question, everyone quickly retreated from the area.

While desperately working to understand the implication of her interrogatory, I queried my mind for the most soothing answer, but instead, I popped-off with a rather incorrigible response. The words hadn't fully exited my lips when the regret of their indication started to bear on me. Unfortunately, my self-inflicted impact was nothing compared to the harangue I was about to receive.

I am the sort of person who has blind faith in God, one who happens to have been born into a nice, quiet religious sect, and most importantly

an individual who gives credit to all of those who believe in a higher power. Because of this, I sat for my cousin's verbal onslaught with tolerance in mind—the same tolerance that I later wished she would have granted me.

As I listened to her talk about her relationship with Christ, my turn down the wrong path and her firm belief that I should return to a virtuous life, she seemed to become more and more engaged, and with every word of her effrontery, I became all the more enraged. How dare she presume to know the density of my heart and for whom it is beating? And just then my mind was shifted to an even more inflammatory individual. If I couldn't even handle half an hour of my zealot-of-a-cousin, how could I blame my aforementioned acquaintance for his disdain after he had endured entire childhood of fanaticism?

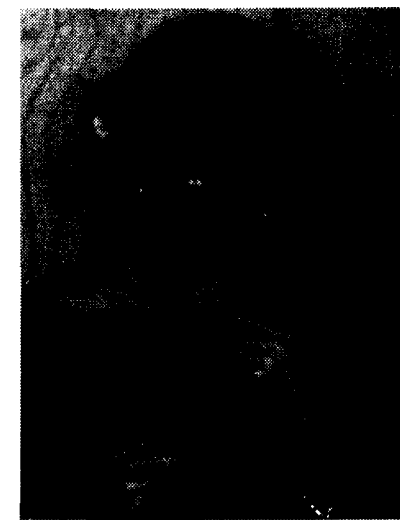
Even though my cousin was in no way perfect and had many past indiscretions to her credit—or should I say discredit, her lecture still left

me a little bit unsettled. I chose to cloak my anger, and eventually smile and nod. As she finished pontificating, she concluded by expressing her total fulfillment with life, a desire to perform mission work and a disinterest in worldly possessions. However, later that day, when my religious cousin was departing, I couldn't help but notice her swinging a Brighton bag over her shoulder. Instantly, I knew that her propensity was geared more towards being judgmental than it was for the missionary barrels.

After realizing the need for an attempt to empathize with someone before passing judgment, I decided to further my philosophy of life. Regardless of my cousin's views or those of my acquaintance, I became aware that of all cultures, the culture of religion is the one deserving of the utmost delicacy.

So with that said, I ask you, are we free thinking Americans really as accepting as we need to be; are we evolved beyond the futile attitudes of times past or are we still just as judgmental, but in a different way?

## President's Corner



By **ARIEL O'MALLEY**  
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Welcome back everyone. I hope you have all had a wonderful spring break and are ready to finish out the semester. This article is really important so please hang in there and read all the details before coming to a conclusion. Also please bear in mind that the following information is simply ideas in the works and not official as of yet.

Penn State Harrisburg is on its' way to formulating a new policy on smoking. This new policy will be a push for a "Tobacco Free Campus." Therefore there will be new rules on the smoking of not only cigarettes but all tobacco products.

There will no longer be any smoking in front of the Olmsted building, or any other building on campus. The main reason for this is because it is a health problem for students, faculty, staff, and anyone else to be walking through the smoke. Then there is the simple fact that if one has chosen not to smoke, there is no reason for them to have to constantly walk through and deal with the smoke.

Since there will no longer be any smoking allowed in front of the buildings there will have to be "designated smoking areas." These areas, and these areas only, will be the locations that one may smoke in. There have been various ideas proposed as to where these locations will be. The most popular idea was to park these areas in the parking lots.

Another step associated with this issue is when the new policy will be instated. The most agreed upon idea for this is to instate the new policy when the construction on the front of the Olmsted building begins. Because the construction will be underway the front of the building will be closed off and those who smoke would have to find a new location to do so anyways. Therefore what better time to designate specific areas for the smokers to use, than when they are forced to move anyways?

There is also an idea being tossed around about having a drive to help those who smoke on campus, quit. The campus is prepared to have support groups for those who are quitting, as well as information about the best ways to quit. There will also be information available about funding for products that aid in the quitting of smoking such as Nicorette and similar products.

Now that I have tried to give you the general idea I would love to hear your feedback on the issue so that I may pass your feelings onto the group that is making decisions on this issue. If you have any questions, feel free to e-mail me (aao5002@psu.edu) or stop by my office (E136).

While I have your attention I would like to do two things. One, I would like to wish you all luck in finishing up this semester. I know how hard it is to stick it out and go to class once it becomes gorgeous out, but we'll all get through it together. Two, I would like to invite you all the greatest week of events this campus has ever seen!! Rites of Spring 2007 (April 16<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>) promises to be a wonderful week, I hope to see you all there!!

## Celebrate Life

By **HILLARY ISLEB**  
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Every morning on my way to work at the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, I used to cross the pedestrian bridge from City Island to the capitol, casually watching the Susquehanna River travel beneath my feet.

Sometimes the river was dark and frantic and sometimes the river might be as light and serene as a cloud. Yet, no matter how the river made its way, the water always flowed in the path of least resistance.

I was thinking about the Susquehanna River during my long Saturday run. I am training with an organization called Team in Training to run a half marathon to raise \$4000 for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. During my team's Saturday run, I was struggling to make my way up a particularly daunting hill. I could feel my form slipping and everything getting heavier. Bowing my head to avoid looking at the distance yet to be run, I cursed the hill under my breath.

My Team in Training Coach, Brett, ran up from behind me.

"Just take it easy." He said.  
"There's no hurry to get up this hill; you'll get there when you get there."  
Once I finally crested the hill and

could think about something other than running, I realized how much harder I was making everything (running included) on myself. I thought about how often I wait until the last minute to do schoolwork or how I take on too many responsibilities at the same time, or how I love to be in control and fight to stay in control—losing precious energy all the while. Relaxing a little, I finished my personal distance best of 5 miles and decided I had to make a few changes in my life or I would always be fighting uphill battles.

So, I decided to change from running the Country Music Half Marathon to the Rock 'N' Roll Half Marathon in San Diego, California on June 3. The change allows a little more training time, and most importantly, allows me to raise more money to fight leukemia and lymphoma. Besides, it's just like Coach Brett said, it's okay to take things a little easier; I'll run my race when I'm ready to run my race. Fighting against a hill or any other challenge won't help me get through any easier.

Ten miles and a week later, I'm still running strong! But, the fundraising has been the best surprise. Feeling discouraged, I complained to one of my teammates during a run together that I hadn't gotten many hits on my fundraising website. After we

finished a strong three miles, I gave her a high-five and returned home where I found that a friend I hadn't seen since my freshman year of college had donated \$10. I am still amazed how just \$10 can change so much for someone. Running seems so easy when I know that so many generous people are supporting this cause.

Every dollar makes such a difference to save lives from blood cancers. I can train to run a million miles, but what saves the lives of cancer patients is the financial support from sponsors like you. So, please make a donation on my secure website at <<http://www.active.com/donate/tntva/tntvaHISleib>>.

I'm in this race for the long run. By the time race day rolls around, I'll have run close to 250 more miles, some uphill and some downhill. But now, when I run up hills, I'm not afraid to see how much further I have left to go. I keep my eyes intensely focused on the top of the hill—my goal. The same goes for fundraising. I won't stop until I've reached \$4000. Now I know, however, that I don't have to fight for all my goals at once. Perseverance isn't about speed or control; it's about consistency. And, with your support, a little time, a lot of faith and generosity, together we can celebrate life and help fight cancer!

## Student questions racial profiling in Harrisburg

By **JOHN FOX**  
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During the winter of 2006, I decided to conduct an anecdotal social science experiment. The focus of my study was Muslim discrimination in the city of Harrisburg.

I consulted with several Muslim friends and acquaintances and they all gave me their blessing. Therefore, I dusted off my copy of the Qur'an, brushed up on Islamic language, donned a kufi, and walked the streets of mid-town and downtown Harrisburg as a white Muslim.

One of my first observations was that white people seemed to be frightened of me. I could smell the fear. It was as if they wanted to cross the street to avoid me. On the other hand, I felt embraced by the African-Americans in which I encountered.

Now imagine this: a white Muslim walking the streets of Harrisburg, kufi on head, backpack over shoulder and speaking the words of Allah as handed down to the Prophet Muhammad (praise be unto him).

I spent a great deal of time around the federal buildings, the Capital complex, and the state library during this experiment. Approximately three weeks into my experiment, an SUV pulled up beside me somewhere on 6<sup>th</sup> street. An FBI special agent from the Harrisburg field office (whose

name is being withheld for my own protection) as well as an unidentified State Cop jumped out of the SUV.

The FBI special agent called out to me, "John Fox?" I said, "Yeah, that's me." The FBI agent then ordered me into the SUV. The two of them began grilling me about a bomb-threat, which they claimed was called in from a pay phone at Strawberry Square. I had no knowledge of such an incident, so I had no qualms with cooperating. I was scared out of my wits that I was being tracked down and questioned by an FBI special agent.

I was told someone that looked like me called in said bomb-threat. They proceeded to take me to the FBI field office in Harrisburg. Upon arrival, I was escorted to the Federal Marshals office where they took my palm prints in the old-fashioned ink and roller pin style. They then dropped me off somewhere in mid-town Harrisburg. The special agent gave me his card and said he would be in touch.

He never called and I was charged with nothing. Do you know why? Because there was no bomb-threat. The FBI simply wanted a file on me because they had been observing a Muslim walking the streets of Harrisburg. Can you say PROFILING? All this proved my hypothesis that Muslim prejudice is alive and well in the city of Harrisburg. In spite of religious discrimination, stand strong and be proud. Assal'mu 'Alaikum.

## A reflection on a life lived and now gone

By **RYNE CRABB**  
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Historically, this space has been dedicated to the writers of the Capital Times standing on their soapbox, preaching their opinions to a typically uninterested choir. Instead of complaining about campus life, forcing liberal beliefs upon the student body, or some generic battle of the sexes article, I chose to take my first, and probably only, opportunity to write about Lyndi Starr.

Lyndi passed away on March 20, 2007 from complications that arose from the birth of her first child on March 10. She was 23 years old. I could write another 1,000 words contemplating the reason or greater purpose the un-measurable loss suffered by so many, but since

I'm limited to 650, I wouldn't accomplish my goal by doing so. I'd rather go on about why you should celebrate the life of an amazing person.

If you graduated from Middletown, you probably knew Lyndi. If you went to school here at Penn State Harrisburg when the cafeteria was the Lion's Den, you probably know her mom, Sherry, from her bartending days at Mid-Town Pizza or Shakey's Bar and Grill. Maybe you don't fit in either category, and you were just a listener to Lyndi's show on 105.7 The X on Saturday nights from 6pm till midnight. Either way, I'd bet my first year's salary if you met Sherry or Lyndi, you remember them.

The world we live in has a wide variety of people; some are square pegs trying to fit into round holes,

and some can be grouped together in harsh but true stereotypes. These stereotypes can cause arguments, hate crimes, or even wars. However, no matter what your political or personal beliefs, there is a certain "type" of person that everyone appreciates. Sherry and Lyndi are those types of people. If you are having a bad day, they are the type of person you want to be around. Surrounded with their company, you were amazed to find out they were mother and daughter, not just because of Sherry's youthful look but because of their sister-like relationship. They were two of one of a kind: unashamedly optimistic and unbelievably charismatic.

You might know somebody like Lyndi. Think of the first person you call when something goes wrong, the one who is always the life of any

social setting, or the excitement that is always missing in your life when they're not around. You might know this person by their smile, their laugh, or their enthusiastic reaction to anything you say, no matter how boring it might actually be. Those traits are three of many reasons why I know I'll never forget Lyndi.

I wish I could finish this article gushing about the personalities of Sherry and Lyndi, because I haven't said near enough for anyone to appreciate how much the world needs more people like them. I can't imagine the pain Sherry is going through, having to raise her grandchild without its mother, her daughter. I think of the family I hope to be starting soon with my girlfriend, who will be about Lyndi's age, and the shell of my uber-tough guy image breaks down. I'll pray for

Sherry, because even the strongest person in the world needs a little help in situations like this. And I'll pray for Lyndi's child. I pray that she'll realize how great her mother was, and how great her grandmother was, and I pray that the DNA of Lyndi's charisma and caring soul are infused within her child. Finally, I pray that she is able to touch as many people in her healthy and long-lasting life as her mother was able to do in twenty-three short years. I hate to end such an article with a borderline clichéd quote, but it seems appropriate to remember, that one's life isn't measured in how many breaths you take, but by how many breaths you have taken away. Lyndi lived 23 breath-taking years, and I was honored to have a few minutes of my life be part of hers.