

OPINION

National Insecurity: a writer's opinion

By **MARTY SANTALUCIA**
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There will be plenty of time for unprovoked *ad hominem* attacks on unsuspecting victims and aggressively un-backed controversial opinions in the upcoming months, and possibly years, of my tenure with The Capitol Times. In this first editorial, however, I would like to look at America's national insecurity and why it seems like no one cares anymore.

When talking about modern politics, many (who do not just put down their paper and walked away, thank you) describe their distaste for the negativity in political campaigns. The truth of the matter is that politics have never been "clean." Attempting to sway the opinion of an entire nation is going to require bringing into question the motives and character of your opponent. Both of these aspects are important to the public when choosing a leader and one can not count on a candidate to stand up and list their faults in alphabetical order. Negativity in politics has been around since the beginning.

For example, the smear campaign

ran by Grover Cleveland supporters in 1884: "Blaine, Blaine, James G. Blaine. Continental Liar from the state of Maine".

In the more recent (and I use the term loosely) 1964 election, L.B.J. launched his infamous "Daisy" ad. The commercial featured a little girl being nuked while counting flower pedals in the middle of a field. Concluding the ad was the L.B.J. slogan "The stakes are too high for you to stay home." L.B.J.'s message was clear: vote for his opponent and your daughter will be vaporized. That's the kind of warm, fuzzy feeling one can only get within the blast radius of a Soviet ICBM. While the ad itself was only aired once, the media attention alone made it a hallmark of the election.

Even with a negative image as strong as a mushroom cloud in the average American's backyard, a little over 69 percent of the voting-aged population turned out in 1964, according to the US Census Bureau. Compare this to the 58 percent that turned out in 2004 or even the 55 percent in 2000. Something more than negative campaigning is driving people away from the polls. One of the largest differences then and now is how Americans get information.

The news can be very depressing. Too many Iraq War death counts or the ongoing chaos in D.C. can really start to affect a person.

To alleviate the strain, I will occasionally turn on FOX news for a laugh – more specifically, Bill O'Reilly's "The O'Reilly Factor." In watching "The Factor", it occurred to me that people like O'Reilly and shows like his are a large contributor to maintaining the current political polarization in our country. While there were televised news programs that reported on political situations 40 years ago, none existed for the sole purpose of dividing their audience – the American people.

I would like to note here that no matter what Bill O'Reilly believes, he cannot possibly be the only reason the US is divided. There are plenty of examples from the left and the right. O'Reilly sticks out to me simply because he says more stupid things, louder.

The past week's "Talking Points" have focused on an ad placed in The New York Times referring to General David Petraeus as "General Betray Us." O'Reilly has used the incident as a jumping off point for claiming that MoveOn.org (the far left organization that

actually bought the ad) owns the Democratic Party and all of the Democratic candidates for President. His reasoning is that Hillary Clinton voted against a measure to symbolically condemn MoveOn.org, and Barack Obama did not vote on the issue. Both, however, voted for a different amendment condemning a broader assortment of attacks on *anyone* who has served. Every part of that day's circus was a politically charged waste of time and money as both amendments did not actually do anything. Regardless, I have diverged.

O'Reilly's comments are especially damaging to the American public because of the way every issue is presented as clean split between good and evil. In the case of the Petraeus ad, one is either with the Democrats, who he has ideologically and financially connected to MoveOn.org, or you are against MoveOn.org and therefore with the Republicans. The danger in this lies in the fact that Americans are being told to see their fellow citizens as the enemy. When Election Day comes, armies of voters are sent out to counter the votes of their "bad" neighbors rather than elect a candidate

that reflects their own views. Break out the aircraft carrier and enhancing jumpsuit. Polarization accomplished.

Unfortunately for those that do not feel they fit perfectly into one of the two major parties, there has been little gray middle-ground left to occupy. This August, The Gallup Poll reported that the number of Americans who identify themselves as independents has seen a "small -- but significant increase in 2007." As a result, more and more moderates find themselves faced with two candidates who have been groomed and polished by one side or the other. Seeing that there is no longer a candidate that represents their varied positions they choose not to vote.

The portrayals of political events by Bill O'Reilly and those like him are the reason Americans are less interested in and more alienated by their own government. I don't want to see Rudy Giuliani or Hillary Clinton as President. Both of them have far too much practice and their parties are too involved with them. What our system needs is new, "un-groomed" thinking. I want to see the nut-case on the corner have a go at it, just to mix things up.

Mike Gravel for President.

President's Corner



By **SAHAR SAFAEI**
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What's up Penn State!

Let me tell you a little about myself. My name is Sahar Safaei I am the Vice president of student government and a junior majoring in Environmental Engineering and Pre-med. I play on the girl's soccer team and am a member of the International Affairs Association, Math Club (so cool... remember math 24), Society of Environmental Engineering, the Spanish club and Thon.

Now as we roll into the second month of school, I hope that you're not going crazy with the tons of work you have to do. I would like to say that it will get better, but I can't. All I can say is good luck! Just wait until finals.

To the freshman this year, enjoy your classes. They will not get easier than this – just kidding! For the rest of you, I hope you enjoy your classes because this is what your future will be based on. Isn't that a morbid thought? Again, just kidding.

But if you do feel you are having some trouble in class, there is hope! Talk to your professor about finding a tutor or go to the Learning Center and sign up to be tutored.

On a happier note, if you feel like you're going crazy, just attend one of the many events on campus. I promise you will feel a lot better after you shut your brain off for an hour or so.

I bet you're wondering what events are being hosted on campus. Well, just look on the bulletin boards around campus or stop by the student government office and ask one of the members. Those of you who don't feel like walking around to find out what events are going on can just turn on your computer and check your emails. There is always something going on!

If you are an athletic type, stop by the CUB and play some racquet ball or go swimming in the awesome and amazing indoor pool. (Sweet!)

Also, for all you DDR lovers, go practice your footwork on the second floor of the CUB.

If you want to get active within the school, just join a club. Joining a club is one of the best ways to meet new and likeminded people. We have something for everyone. But if we don't have what you're looking for, create a club!

Now let's get back to the real issues. If you have been walking around campus, you may have seen the no smoking signs posted. Please be considerate of others and smoke in the designated areas. Thanks a bunch!

As a student of Penn State Harrisburg, I like to be well-rounded, so I try to read to the news and be up to date with current politics. As I was reading an article on the NPR website, I found out that Senator Chambers is suing God. He tried to summon God by calling out, "Come out, come out, wherever you are." Then God responded by striking him down with lightning – just kidding!

Let me end with two things, one being an inspirational quote from Captain Planet to get you through your tough times: "...The power is yours!"

Iranian president visits University, stirs emotion

By **AMANDA NACE**
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Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stirs very strong emotions in those familiar with his doings and his visit to Columbia University was no less stirring.

Ahmadinejad was greeted by protesters and supporters alike. According to the New York Times, over 2,000 people showed up to listen to the Iranian president.

There are some who were raging mad that Ahmadinejad would be allowed on American soil, let alone be invited to speak to college students at Columbia University in New York City, but on the other hand there were some who were alright with it.

Then there is Lee Bollinger, president of Columbia University,

who did the inviting, but don't get him wrong, he wasn't happy about it either. "Mr. President, you exhibit all the signs of a petty and cruel dictator," said Bollinger during his opening speech.

Much of Ahmadinejad's speech consisted of decrying material and selfish interests and encouraging things like purity and spiritual knowledge.

This, coming from a man who moments before was spoken of as a "petty and cruel dictator," by Bollinger, didn't seem that outrageous. I was expecting something a little more in left field.

Then it started. "If, given that the holocaust is a present reality of our time...why is there not sufficient research that can approach the topic from different perspectives," said Ahmadinejad.

The president of Iran is

questioning one of the most well documented historical atrocities of our time.

Later, during the question and answer session Ahmadinejad was asked about the treatment of women and homosexuals in Iran which has sometimes lead to executions.

He neatly sidestepped the question by defending capital punishment in order to punish murderers and drug dealers.

I'm not one to side with murderers or drug dealers either, but what does this have to do with women and homosexuals? President Ahmadinejad had a simple answer for that. "In Iran we don't have homosexuals like in your country," he said.

"In Iran we don't have this phenomenon. I do not know who has told you we have it," said

Ahmadinejad. His response evoked laughter from the students.

He said it as if homosexuality is a disease. Then he went on to note that being a woman is not a crime. No kidding!

So by now you have probably guessed that I am not pro-Ahmadinejad. I am probably the farthest from it, but I thought it was interesting that an American university opened its doors to freely allow Ahmadinejad to speak to college students, faculty, and, thanks to technology, anybody who had a television, or youtube.com.

Ahmadinejad claimed our freedom of speech wasn't very free and he wasn't shown the respect of free speech because he wasn't given enough time for his speech.

Some were angry that a president of an esteemed University should invite Ahmadinejad, a man in

charge of an oppressive society, to speak to his college students, but I say why not?

If a scholar is lead to feel he cannot invite a controversial speaker to his University, a place meant to be free for ideas, then he or she does not live in a free society.

I do not think there is such a thing as a free society, but there are certain humanitarian freedoms upheld in American society that I think we sometimes take for granted.

I am proud that I live in a country that allows a University to have someone such as Ahmadinejad share his thoughts, whether or not they were believable or agreeable.

As the famous French philosopher, Voltaire, once said, "I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend to the death, your right to say it."



Come listen to Sonia Nazario

Monday, October 8, 2007

1pm and 7pm

Student center, CUB

Open to the campus community as well and the general public

ENRIQUE'S JOURNEY

THE STORY OF A BOY'S DANGEROUS ODYSSEY TO REUNITE WITH HIS MOTHER

by Sonia Nazario

"This is a twenty-first-century *Odyssey*. Nazario's powerful writing illuminates one of the darkest stories in our country. This is outstanding journalism. If you are going to read only one non-fiction book this year, it has to be this one, because you know these young heroes. They live next door...."

—Isabel Allende

Pulitzer Prize winning Sonia Nazario is coming to Penn State Harrisburg. She wrote *Enrique's Journey*, a story about a boy who journeys to the United States aboard train rooftops. She has also won awards for international reporting, and overall excellence. She is a graduate of Williams College and Berkely and has reported for the Los Angeles Times.

