

OPINION

National Insecurities: The distraction of who said Hussein

By **MARTY SANTALUCCIA**
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Many, if not all, elections have distracting factors. These gaffs, politically charged issues and general wastes of time are often strategically thrown in a candidates face to get them off 'message' and open them up for much more devastating blows.

Distractions can also be used on voters through creative methods such as ballot baiting. This technique, which was arguably successful in eleven 2004 Presidential races is a technique pulled directly from Karl Rove's own festering playbook. The ingredients are simple and easy to find.

All that is required is a socially divisive issue and an area that feels deeply for/against it. In the 2004 election, eleven states proposed gay marriage bans in the form of state constitutional amendments that needed to be voted on by the people of each respective state.

The issue brought out the far religious right and socially conservative like only a good round of queer-hating can. While these overwhelmingly republican groups were voting down the amendments, they took the extra second to instinctively pull the Republican lever and thus vote for George W. Bush whose re-election happened to top their ballots.

This sudden burst of republican votes in the rural areas and other Republican strong holds of states such as Ohio made a Democratic victory difficult if not impossible in several states and because of that, on a national level. Genius really.

An equally slimy, yet more discrete way of turning an election to your favor is called push polling. This method is more of a direct

attack on your opponent executed by asking a guided set of questions, which eventually will lead the voter to believe something is as unfavorable as it is untrue.

For an example, I call your attention to the 2000 South Carolina Republican primary in which John McCain was running against fellow hopeful George W. Bush (he seems to be a common character in these questionable situations).

After losses in both the Iowa Caucus and New Hampshire Primary, George Bush needed a win if he was going to have any chance at taking the Republican nomination. South Carolina provided the best opportunity for this victory, but they were going to have to take it by force.

Polling questions began going out to likely voters asking if they would be "more likely or less likely to vote for John McCain for president if [they] knew he had fathered an illegitimate black child?"

The magic doesn't happen until the pollster hangs up the phone and leaves the voter wondering why anyone would ask such a strange question.

Could they have found something? Could it be true? Then, to be safe, they don't vote for John McCain. Now look at the mess we're in.

Fortunately, I'm long over any real bitterness which resulted from the 2004 and 2000 elections. My reason for instructing you all on how to effectively win any election on a Republican ticket is because these methods which go to defeat the democratic process are starting to rear their ugly heads yet again. Because of Barack Obama's rise and now current frontrunner position, he has been the target of the majority of underhanded attacks from the Republican side.

The most recent of these less than favorable tactics have come in the form of outright attacks or strategic mentioning of his middle name. For those who are unaware of Obama's full name, it is Barack Hussein Obama. Hussein, as in Saddam

— but not. Last week, Bill Cunningham, a conservative radio commentator from the ranks of Bill O'Reilly and Rush Limbaugh repeatedly screamed "Barack Hussein Obama" at an energized crowd of McCain supporters. Cunningham's intent was obvious, he wanted to invoke

the name of Saddam Hussein and then connect Barack to him. McCain quickly apologized for the comments but the real issue of why his name entered into the equation at all remained.

Here this piece becomes less an opinion piece and more of an observation in the sense that after eight years of corrupt politics in which the goals of our leaders were to throw us off the trail of everything they did with petty smoke screens we find ourselves possibly looking down the barrel of yet another four years (at least) of the same deception and misdirection.

A name should be a name and the next President of the United States should be chosen for their policies and stances not something as superficial as which terrorist critics like to phonetically revert to rather than take a critical stance. Keep this in mind as our state, Pennsylvania comes into play in the Democratic primary.

Vote for policies, not gender, not skin color, not name — no matter what Ed Rendell thinks.

Author's Note: I placed this note at the bottom of my piece because only those who typically read this far into my article will be affected (although that may be an overly strong word choice) by this announcement. First a correction: due to my over-crowded schedule this semester I have been rushing to get these pieces done and to the Cap. Times office before Marin hits/pinches/slaps or otherwise harms me in any truly damaging way.

Because of this, I let slip a portion of a sentence in which I had mistakenly reported Mitt Romney as a one time Democratic candidate. This was wrong. Mitt Romney is and always has been a Republican and I am sorry for the oversight.

Secondly, this will be my final National Insecurity for two or three issues. As of last week I have officially announced my candidacy for President of the SGA and in an effort to run a fair, clean race I am temporarily resigning my position until after the elections are over. If you need your biweekly dose of my leftist ramblings you are more than welcome to join me online at <http://nationalinsecuritypsu.blogspot.com> or my Facebook group named National Insecurity.

Thank you to all my loyal readers.

The tough questions

By **MIKE PIERCE**
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While reading the last issue of the Capital Times, I found myself thinking many thoughts. I asked myself if common hour would return to campus, whether books would be less expensive in the fall, and how would the dry campus affect the overall student life?

My own answers were only barely educated guesses.

I have no idea what goes on in the heads of other students and policy-makers, so I can only go off my own experience with humanity. Not immediately, some, but not all, and not as much as we might think, because people are able to adapt.

I also found myself asking some questions that we don't really ask ourselves. I asked myself what I was sorry for, where I was in life, and where I wanted to go. These are just some of the tough questions in life that we don't ask ourselves. Not the philosophical, Descartes and Plato type questions, but answerable ones, given enough time and thought.

The first question, what am I sorry for? In the past few years, I leaned toward the answer that I wasn't sorry for anything that I did, but that I was usually regretful for things that I didn't do. The usual things like never asking out that one girl in high school, or not taking that one chance to be famous that comes once in a lifetime.

My true answer to the question is that I'm sorry for the people I've hurt in the past few years. I never thought I would be in the position that I found myself in, and it happened more than once.

As to the second question, where am I in life? I find myself in a strange position in life and

in school. I'm old enough to be considered an adult student yet, I'm not as old as that would imply. Where the bulk of stereotypical students graduate with a Bachelor's at 22 years of age, I started college at the age of 23, and I'll finish this coming fall, at 27.

That was the easy part of the answer. The tough part is what does that mean I have done? I do have an apartment, I have traveled, and I've lived in other states and even in a country on the other side of the globe.

I have experience in doing what I like to do and what I want to do. I have made strong strides in coming here to learn how to do just that. I've made connections so that I'll have something for me that will be already in the works when I graduate.

Where do I want to go in life? This is possibly the toughest of the three for me because I have a general answer, but no real route.

If you don't know what it is you want to do, that's fine, you still have time. I know that I want to have fun.

I believe it's good to ask yourself the tough questions once in a while to examine your life.

It's too easy to get caught up living day to day or week to week in an environment like college, where you're worried about a paper or a project due the next day in a class you may never have thought enough about because you just took a test. It's important to enjoy life and have something to be thankful for, no matter what it is you do.

If you find yourself with something to be sorry for, then be sorry for it, but keep on going. There is plenty of life out there, if you know where to go and what to look for.

Go ahead and ask yourself some of the tough questions, but don't be too hard on yourself.

President's Corner



By **SAHAR SAFAE**
SGA President
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Hello Again Penn State! Exciting news is filling the air! This wonderful campus is going through an election, the Student Government election to be more precise. This is awesome because this means: new ideas, greater change, and hopefully a very optimistic outlook. Many of you have expressed strong opinions regarding changes you would like to see on this campus! Now it is the time for you to make that happen. Elections are going to be held in March!!! So get ready to vote for a student-centered Student Government. VOTE MARTY SANTALUCIA for Student Government President! All the productive things that the Student Government Association has been doing on this campus have a major part to do with Marty's leadership skills. He has been a great addition to the Student Government and I know that he would make a great President for the 2008-2009 academic year! As our national government is also going through a presidential election, Penn State is hosting a multitude of events that have to do with politics or political awareness. So WAKE UP AND LISTEN!

On March 3rd at 7 p.m. Student Activities will be holding ROCK THE VOTE with Speaker Lindsey Berman. What is ROCK THE VOTE, and why should you attend? Well, Rock the Vote has been at the forefront of the youth vote movement, registering over 1.4 million young people in 2004 and tens of thousands more in 2006. Rock the Vote, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization is here to help protect freedom of expression by empowering young people to create change. Go to www.rockthevote.com to learn more about this organization.

"This is an event of a life time... *endorsed by Micah Victoria*" Organized by Marty Santalucia and the Student Government Association, on March 18th there will be an open forum with the Senators and Representatives from the Capital who will be attending the Harrisburg Campus to Discuss appropriations, Penn State, and the common wealth government. On that note, on April 2nd at 1 p.m. in the AUDITORIUM Penn State will be attending the annual Rally at the Rotunda; this will show support to increase appropriations for Penn State, which will help cap (and may help lower) the tuition cost. Sign up in the Student Activities office! The more support we have the better our chances are for a difference.

To end April with awesomeness there will be a Charity Concert ROCK FOR CHANGE on April 11th, which supports Invisible Children: Schools for Schools! We are hoping to bring back some of Penn State Harrisburg's When PSU ROCKED vibe. IF YOU ARE IN A BAND and would like to play in the concert please email svs5033@psu.edu; also join the Facebook group ROCK FOR CHANGE.

And to END off our fabulous semester Student Government will be hosting the awesome RITES OF SPRINGS in April. It is going to be filled with carnival-like events. So come out with your friends and cross your fingers that it does not rain!

GOOD luck with the rest of your semester, good luck on your tests and get some SLEEP! AND ABOVE ALL ENJOY YOUR SPRING BREAK!! Peace.

Letter to the editor

By **MAURICE J. BLACKMON**
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Dear Editor:

It is my understanding that the Capital Times is the voice of the Penn State Harrisburg students. Therefore, I feel it my obligation and duty, as a student leader, to voice my concern, and some concerns that other have voiced to me.

On the weekend of February 22-24, about 30 Penn State Harrisburg traveled up, in terrible weather, to University Park to partake in THON 2008. These were all students who helped raise money for THON, and deserved to be there to celebrate Penn State's \$6.6 million victory. Since Penn State Harrisburg had a THON Committee at the time, one would have assumed that lodging and carpooling would have been strategically arranged, well before THON weekend.

That was not the case. Since 25 Lion Ambassadors went canning, and since the club raised over \$350 for THON this year, I felt it only fair to let them attend THON and stay in Penn State-provided hotel rooms. I attempted to reach out to the THON Committee Chair on several occasions about rooms with no success. This was shocking to me. SAF granted funds to the THON Committee for 20 hotel rooms for THON weekend, yet when clubs went to the committee to see about THON weekend lodging, they were ignored.

Upon arriving at University Park, and entering the BJC, there was confusion as to where the Penn State Harrisburg students would sit. It seemed as if there were two separate groups. My goal was to see to it that all of the people that came with me stayed with the rest of the Penn State Harrisburg group, so we could all be unified for the weekend, like the other campuses.

There was no unity. Many of us desired to go onto the floor to support our dancers, who by the way were incredible throughout the entire weekend. We were told when we could and couldn't go onto the floor

by various people. We sent in our information just like everyone else did to go onto the floor. Yet, when we desired to go onto the floor, 9 times out of 10, we were denied that privilege.

The climax of most of the students' frustration was on the last day of THON, the most intense day of THON. The last day is when the families speak to the dancers and audience. It is usually the most energetic and fun day of THON. When the 20 of us who drove up together arrived at the BJC, we immediately made our way to the Penn State Harrisburg section. To our disappointment, there were no seats saved for us. Throughout the weekend, the various campuses, clubs, and frats saved entire sections for all of their members. Our own fellow Penn State Harrisburg students did not do this for us. We have to go up a level, where things were not as energetic and fun.

Most of the other group of Penn State Harrisburg students didn't even acknowledge us on the last day.

The point of THON is raise money FOR THE KIDS. If this is the central focus of the entire THON campaign, negative things like this should never be an issue. I now see why THON was moved back to SGA.

When we begin making THON weekend about ourselves, and take the focus off of the kids, this is what happens to us.

Let me make it known that I had no issues with any groups, clubs, or frats. My issues, along with many others who were with me, were with individuals. Also, this letter, in now way, is aimed at our dancers. Our dancers demonstrated incredible strength and durability throughout the weekend.

I will not be at Penn State Harrisburg next year, but nothing would make me happier than to see the THON leadership of this campus find a way to adopt a child again, to raise as much as the smaller campuses raised, and to organize and positive and productive THON campaign on a campus-level.

To the THON dancers

By **ADAM PORTER**
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Dear Dancers,

A few nights ago the fortune cookie that came with some Chinese takeout I ordered said, "You believe in the goodness of mankind," and while not much of a fortune, I gave it some thought. It told me something I intuitively knew yet never recognized quite so plainly. Even in the most difficult of interpersonal situations, I've always tried to believe that everyone is, at their core, a good person. Call it idealistic or naïve, but when you saw the BJC this weekend, I hope you better understand why I so wholeheartedly agree with that omniscient confection. And given that THON '08 has now passed, I feel compelled to write.

This weekend we had the opportunity of a lifetime; a chance to take that which we hold most treasured—these kids, our future doctors and engineers and teachers—and show each one of them what it means to be a kid. There is no higher calling that we could face in life than giving of yourself that you can make a

positive, lasting impact on the world.

The events in my life of the past year have made me realize this more than I ever wanted to. Looking back at how scared, confused and worried I was when my mom said she had cancer, I can now only imagine what would've been had the diagnosis been mine. Oh, how priorities shift when your lifelong best friend is facing a life threatening disease.

Because of you these fantastic kids, our heroes, had the chance to make so many new best friends.

No medicine can get a person through such a terrifying experience like the unconditional support and love of people who truly care. Our refrigerator is plastered with Get Well cards, and I wouldn't have it any other way. I believe that each one of you, and any other person who had the pleasure of being in Happy Valley this weekend, can be a friend. I believe in your goodness that can help kids who need nothing more than a smile and even just a few minutes of fun.

I was fortunate enough to meet a new friend this weekend, Mitchell. I was with my fellow dancers, and he walked up to us with a confident smile and simply said, "Thank you

for dancing." If ever I had a doubt of, "Can I do this? Should I quit?" I knew right then the only answer. Seeing a child that has been poked, prodded, and poisoned yet can still smile and find pleasure and joy in life is all the inspiration I needed.

A wish of mine also came true this weekend that only reinforced what that cookie had to say. On the dancer survey each of us filled out, the question "If you could have one feasible wish during THON, what would it be?" prompted me to answer, "To see a '6' in the millions column when the total is raised." I got my wish.

Because of your selfless devotion and that of thousands of Penn State students and supporters, the Four Diamonds Fund will now be able to help more families than ever before.

A father of a Four Diamonds Child that was standing with us the last hour or so said, "If anyone is going to cure cancer, it's you guys. Look at the energy in this room; how could it not happen?"

So this weekend when you were wondering why you're doing this goofy line dance, or why any sane person would think two days of sleeplessness is a good idea, just remember the answer to all things THON—"FTK, that's why."