

Eye On Community

Five Years in Post -9/11 World have Changed America

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Five years ago, one hundred and two minutes changed the world. How did the United States government respond after the worst terrorist attack in the nation's history? It launched two campaigns against the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Both regimes were disposed of quickly and decisively, but what they left behind were two chaotic nation-states.

Some good things have come out of those conflicts like the capture of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Skeikh Mohammed, and the recent death of Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. While Mohammed may be at Gitmo and Zarqawi may be dead, they are small tunas compared to the trout that is Osama bin Laden who is still at large.

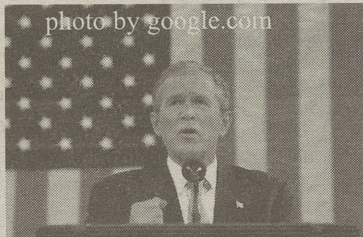
What's worse is that our own government seems to have fallen into a war of their own, the battle of ideologies, Republican vs. Democrat. Politics after 9/11 caused President George W. Bush to face off with prominent congressional leaders like Senator John McCain on the creation of the 9/11 Commission which became a year long struggle to determine "what was or was not in the best interest of the nation."

Despite the US lead coalition fighting for peace and democracy in the Middle East, terrorism continued. The Madrid and London bombings in March 04 and July of 05 roved Al Qaeda was still a force to be hunted down and destroyed. As it stands today: Bush is still President, bin Laden is still in hiding, the Taliban seem to be making a return in Afghanistan and the American people are losing confidence.

September 11 not only changed America, but it also proved to be a turning point in the practice of geopolitics as we found out with our government's aggressive foreign policy in the Middle East.

"9/11 reminded Americans that national security threats are preminent," says Dr. Stephen Cimbala, Delco's Professor of Political Science.

When asked why the main culprit in the attacks, Osama bin Laden, has yet to be apprehended, he theorized the Al Qaeda leader is most likely being protected by tribal allies in northern Pakistan.



"We can't get at these shadow networks without cooperation from other governments."

When it seemed that bin Laden escaped capture and no longer became a serious threat to national security the issue of Iraq suddenly materialized. Dr. Cimbala expressed his dismay over the choices of the Bush Administration.

"Saddam could have been contained, but after a successful ground campaign Phase IV or post reconstruction has become a total FUBAR," he said.

So if the Bush Administration made so many miscalculations why are they still in power?

"The fear factor card got Bush re-elected," Cimbala said.

Now U.S. citizens fast forward to present day where a duo of feature films were released that depict 9/11 as a day of death and chaos. However, they also showed us how heroic certain Americans were that day.

Universal's "United 93" told the story of the passengers of the fourth hijacked plane who successfully stopped the terrorists by making them crash the jet near a small town in western PA. Paramount's "World Trade Center" met much more criticism when it was announced that controversial director Oliver Stone was behind the project. Some feared another "JFK", but it turned out to be what some thought to be a wonderful tribute to the emergency services of New York City that saved many lives on 9/11.

Professor Cimbala was also critical of the so called "age of political correctness" where every film or documentary about 9/11 has to be what he called a "homage" or tribute to the victims of that horrible day.

"We unfortunately live in a narcissistic society," he added.

Americans may very well live in a "narcissistic society" but Cimbala is confident that everyone will still be observing Patriot Day in the twenty-second century just like people who live in this country remember every December 7, the start of America's involvement in the most destructive war in human history.

Joseph Biscontini, an instructor in Communications at Penn State Delco, pointed out in a recent interview that various growing mediums, such as television and radio, in this country contribute to the bitterness among the American people that increases in decibel level every day. He cites the New York Times' recent disclosure of the National Security Agency's (NSA) spy program

which monitors the international phone calls of certain "suspected people" as an example of how the media and government butt heads with each other on certain issues.

But at the same time Biscontini reminded us of why the Times' actions actually reaffirmed the original meaning of "Freedom of the Press".

"The news media are supposed to keep a watch on the government. If they don't, who will?" Biscontini said.

Before September 11, the 24/7 news channels had not defined their purpose. After five years of nothing but extensive coverage of the post-9/11 world which centers on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the meaning of "Breaking News" has been re-defined, and as Biscontini contends, the news is not always good and not always news.

"The twenty-hour news networks are not necessarily good because they're often under pressure to fill the hour with something... anything! They broadcast rumor and much less important news because all

the other networks are covering the same topic simultaneously."

The most obvious rivalry between the news networks is MSNBC and FOX News. Biscontini says the competition isn't such a big deal if people read and watch multiple sources of news. In fact, he's much in favor of it. However, he also said the bias is "unhealthy", and "know it all" people like Bill O'Reilly bother him.

"Bill O'Reilly is nothing more than an entertainer. FOX News says their 'fair and balanced.' They're not. They've become apologists for the Bush Administration," he said.

Biscontini went on to say that he believes the media is supposed to represent all sides of a story but Time magazine for example could choose not to use a 'letter to the editor' if it doesn't agree with their point of view.

"It's called cognitive dissonance," Biscontini added. By that, he means we seek support for what we really believe.

This is a scary time for America when its government and citizens are drifting apart from each other. Right after 9/11, the nation came together under the banner "United We Stand". That doesn't seem to be the case five years later. It just goes to show how vulnerable we still are, perhaps not from more attacks but from our own innocence. Only time will tell.



SGA Plans Changes, Events for 2006-07

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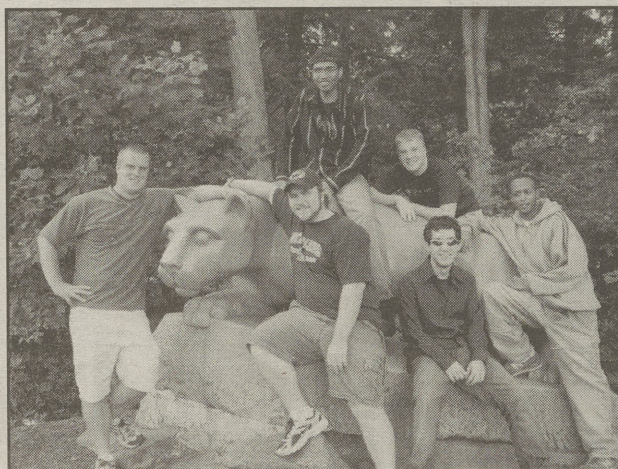
It is only a month into the new school year, but already the Student Government Association (SGA) is working hard to change Penn State Delco for the better.

The SGA is a group of students who represent the entire student body. "Our main goal is student advocacy," says Junior Paul Hurych, president of the SGA and an Information Sciences and Technology major. He explains that the SGA "wants to make sure students have everything they need and want for a successful college career."

Although, the students ultimately have the final word when it comes to decision-making in the SGA, Hurych praises the contribution of their faculty advisor and Director for Student Affairs, Chris Coia. "Chris is a great resource; he gives us guidance and keeps us up to date on Penn State regulations."

With the advice of Coia, the SGA has already tackled some major projects with many more in the works.

"Our biggest project right now," says Hurych, "is the repairing of the campus walkways." The sloped and weather-beaten paths have been deteriorating for several years and pose as a potential danger, especially during



SGA members from left to right: Sean Reilly, Tray Herman, Paul Hurych, Sean Nichols, Devin Zuczek, Charlie Harrison.

the winter when the campus grounds are littered with ice and snow. "I'm happy to announce that the campus walkways will, by the end of the year, be repaired," Hurych said.

According to Hurych, the SGA would also like to start some new Penn State Delco traditions to unite the student body. They have taken note that some students feel a bit disconnected from campus activities due to the fact that Penn State Delaware County is a commuter campus.

Various events ranging from karaoke to open mic sessions will be held every Friday. "It's a way for the student body to come together, unwind and prepare for the weekend," says Hurych.

Other possible projects hosted by the SGA include trying to attain a big-screen cable television for the Lion's Den and working on the campus communication infrastructure with hopes to improve the way information is sent and received by Penn State Delco students.

Hurych was tight-lipped about other upcoming projects but promised that the SGA is hard at work to improve the quality of life on campus.

Earlier this semester, the SGA took part in a campus barbeque and club rush. The event gave incoming freshmen and returning Penn Staters an opportunity to enjoy some free food and sign up for clubs on campus. Although the event was moved to the gym due to inclement weather, Hurych says they had a "great turnout."

If you're interested in joining the SGA, open meetings are held in the Classroom Building Lounge, usually every third Tuesday of the month. Emails detailing the meetings are sent out beforehand, but specific dates and times for the club gatherings can be found in the Penn State student planners.