

OPINION

THE DAILY
Collegian

Elizabeth Murphy
Editor in Chief

Kelsey Thompson
Business Manager

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Letters

We want to hear your comments on our coverage, editorial decisions and the Penn State community.

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■ **Postal mail/In person**
123 S. Burrowes St.
University Park, PA 16801

Letters should be about 200 words. Student letters should include class year, major and campus. Letters from alumni should include year of graduation. All writers should provide their address and phone number for verification. Letters should be signed by no more than two people. Members of organizations must include their titles if the topic they write about is connected with the aim of their groups. The Collegian reserves the right to edit letters. The Collegian cannot guarantee publication of all letters it receives. Letters chosen also run on The Daily Collegian Online and

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CATA cutbacks reflect success

After being extended last spring, the White Loop's hours are being cut back — but only slightly. The bus now only runs until 4 a.m. Thursday through Saturday instead of the previous hours until 4:30 a.m. run time.

The extension program itself has shown great success.

The extended hours provide a safer environment for students staying out later than 2 a.m., and has eased crowding at bus

stops and combated behavioral issues.

The cutback now signals that the University Park Undergraduate Association has a firm handle on the use of its budget. CATA reported that very few people ride the bus after 4 a.m., so UPUA decided not to continue to fund that time slot. We commend UPUA for its efforts to ensure the extension program's effectiveness.

We are also glad to see

that the student leaders are going above and beyond through the ambassador program, and will continue to ride the buses to evaluate the effectiveness of the extension.

While still in the experimental stages, the continuation of extended White Loop hours can only be viewed as positive — at least until further information about ridership is released within the next year.



Beck rally channels Obama's vision

By Michael Oplinger

DURING the 2008 presidential campaign, Republican John McCain ran a series of negative ads, calling Barack Obama "the world's biggest celebrity," while juxtaposing images of Paris Hilton and Britney Spears with the Democrat.

Conservative pundits followed McCain's lead, saying that Obama could speak to huge crowds of supporters but that his popularity hurt his credibility as a leader. Obama was only a "rock star," not a man fit to lead the country.

Yet at least one conservative pundit seems to have reached "rock star" status.

He hosts his own incredibly popular radio and TV shows. He's authored multiple New York Times Bestsellers. His live shows sell out theaters across the country.

And on Saturday, he held a rally in Washington, D.C., that drew hundreds of thousands of fans.

That man, of course, is Glenn Beck who held his "Restoring Honor" rally on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and who may have more in common with the current president than he thinks.

Beck and Obama couldn't be much further apart ideologically, but Beck's rally showed a few similarities

between the two men.

Over the past few years, both have seen an unexpected meteoric rise to fame. Obama used to be "that Senator from Illinois with an interesting name who gave a rousing speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention." Then he became "that guy who's running for president against the more well-known Hillary Clinton." Then he became president.

Beck used to be "that guy on CNN who had a show that was on before that crazy blonde lady with the Southern accent." Then he moved to Fox News and became "that guy on before Hannity and O'Reilly." But add a chalkboard, a few conspiracy theories and some tears and Beck became one of the most popular commentators on TV.

As gifted speakers, both Beck and Obama use convincing rhetoric to gather hordes of devoted followers. At its roots, their rhetoric is surprisingly similar.

Beck's main solution to restoring honor in America is to focus on faith, hope and charity. He said hope was not the same thing as "empty dreams" and that Americans can achieve anything if they believe in themselves. While using religion to back most of his points, Beck urged Americans to help each other through tough times — financial, personal or otherwise.

The message is remarkably similar to Obama's campaign language when he constantly urged Americans to hope for a better tomorrow. During his candidacy, Obama also advocated helping neighbors for the benefit of the entire community.

But a main criticism of Obama deals with his ability to motivate with his words, but inability to facilitate action. His words can only go so far to aid with actual progress.

Beck now faces the same dilemma in his mission to "restore honor" to America. While mainly avoiding politics, as promised, and focusing more on faith, Beck dealt in intangible ideas and offered few real solutions.

Throughout the rally, Beck referred to honor as "doing the right thing, the hard thing." He talked about needing a culture of love, not continuing the growing culture of hatred.

Following his own plan, Beck's first course of action should be to change the discourse of his radio and TV programs.

He could end the crazy conspiracy theories and the "Apocalypse is coming" idea. He could start to advocate for the right of everyone to marry freely, regardless of orientation. He could admonish those who paint cultures and communities with one broad hateful stroke. He could welcome immigrants to this country with open arms and encourage them to share the same freedoms all Americans enjoy.

Then he could do "the hard thing" — walk down the hall and encourage his colleagues at Fox News to do the same.

That would be honorable.

Michael Oplinger is a senior majoring in media studies and is the Collegian's Tuesday columnist. His email is mjo5071@psu.edu

THON needs the competition to support Hershey and kids

As an alumnus who was involved in THON for all of my four years at Penn State, as a committee member, a dancer and a captain, I have heard many times that THON is not about the competition. I have also heard many times that THON is not about the money.

I respectfully disagree. Yes, THON is all about the kids. But we have to remember that without the money, we wouldn't have the kids.

The money pays for everything from treatments and meal vouchers to doctors' salaries and new hospital wings. Everyone involved in THON knows this. It is even more apparent when visiting Hershey Medical Center, where researchers, doctors and parents thank you for the money you raise for the kids. And honestly, what is so wrong with student organizations competing to raise more money for kids with cancer?

The support we provide for the families and kids is obviously vital to THON. But it's not like we have to choose between supporting the kids and competing to raise money for them. We have been doing both, quite successfully, since THON started — and it seems to be working. Each year, we raise more money in hopes to eradicate pediatric cancer, and each year, we support more families and kids.

If it ain't broke, don't fix it!

I suggest, rather than trying to eliminate the competition that helps THON thrive, that the overall committee put its efforts into finding new and different ways to get students involved with the kids. Organizing more Hershey trips would be a great place to start. There is nothing like seeing where the money goes to motivate you to spend a cold weekend canning FTK.

Elizabeth Collins
Class of 2008

Mosque debate sparked by extremists rather than locals

I was pleased to read Mr. Christina's letter on Monday, "Mosque would affect grievous," in which he acknowledges that he has no ill will towards Muslims and respects the right of the developers of the Ground Zero mosque to proceed with their project. Unfortunately, such concessions to human decency and the constitution are too much to expect from many extremists who have come out against the project.

I disagree with him, however, when he asserts that "respecting the grief and anguish" of the families of the Sept. 11 victims suggests that the mosque should be moved. The faulty premise is that those attacks were representative of Islam.

The national outrage over the mosque has been fabricated for the most part by right-wing extremists. This can be seen when considering that opposition to the mosque is at its lowest levels among Manhattan residents. While the families of the victims are divided on the issue, there is a very clear faction that has always stood by the project. So have Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the local community board, contending that not only do the developers have a right to build, but that a mosque at the site would be an appropriate testament to the values we stand for as a nation.

Who decides how we honor the memory of the victims of Sept. 11? Is it xenophobes who foam at the mouth with their Islamophobic, anti-Semitic and racist rhetoric — most of whom have no tangible connection to New York City? Or do we trust New York's elected representatives and the residents of the neighborhoods adjoining Ground Zero? Should we allow our society to be defined by fear and intolerance? Or should we take the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to our values as a free and open society?

Hamdan Azhar
Class of 2007

blog lines

SNAP, CRACKLE, POP

Music acts as gym motivator

Over the summer, while I was using my three-month membership at the gym near my house, I realized something: Music is my workout motivator. Some people are lucky enough that they can just leap into exercise; others look at pictures of celebrity physiques they admire. But for me neither of those things do much...

Hannah Rishel
Performing Arts reporter

Brian Selznick novel review

I love, love, love this book. It's like nothing else, and I must recommend it.

And yes, I know it's a children's book. But I can love this book despite its age inappropriateness for several reasons:

- A. It has gorgeous illustrations.
- B. It is similar in size and weight to my Collected Works of Shakespeare.
- C. The plot is good and the writing isn't condescending to its readers...

Sky Friedlander
Books reporter

FOOTBLOG

Preseason podcast

Penn State football historian Lou Prato joins AJ Cassavell on the daily Penn State football podcast...

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