

opinion

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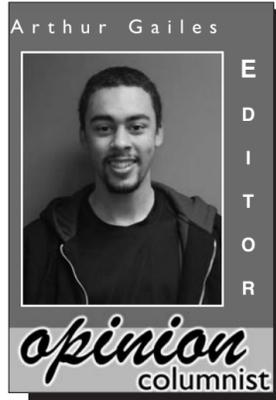
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The Democratic Party Has Failed Us



The Democratic Party has failed to fix anything during its two years in control of the Senate. After six years of Republican-controlled Legislative and Executive Branches, the American people stood up for a change in 2006 and put the Democratic Party in control of Congress in 2006. In exchange, they promised us that they would fight for us, that they would stop the Bush administration's infringement on our rights, and that they would stop using terrorism as an excuse for imperialism. The bailout is the latest failure to uphold that promise.

Not only does it specifically target the richest companies and individuals among us, but they used it as an excuse to sneak in specific measures that place the burden even more on the shoulders of the consumers. A little talked about aspect of the \$700 billion plan is that about \$150 billion of this goes to tax breaks to specific industries. This ranges from charging us roughly \$2 million for cheaper arrow shafts to giving an estimated \$478 million to the movie industry.

Rather than looking out for us, the entire congress has been using the bailout as an excuse to push their own agendas. They've held our struggles up as leverage, while looking out for their own constituents. This is exactly the type of behavior that we elected the Democratic Party to fix. Instead, it has proven to be just a different side of the same coin. The Democrats play the middle man in allowing big business to rob us as opposed to the Republicans allowing them to do it directly.

Even if we are to believe that a bailout is necessary, the bloated version that Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson and the Congress have given us is a disgrace, and the congressmen who allowed themselves to be

pressured into voting for it are as spineless as those who did the same with the war in Iraq. We've allowed ourselves to be bullied with the gloom-and-doom prophecies of both parties, while they and their friends laugh themselves to the bank.

The worst failure of this plan is that it does nothing to address the problems that created this mess in the first place. There is no proposal to fix our flawed regulatory policy. There is nothing put in place to keep banks from making the risky short-term loans that got them here—and then passing those loans off to another bank that can't cover them. They have done nothing to keep real-estate firms from preying on ignorant consumers with bad mortgages. They've treated a hemorrhage with a Band-Aid®.

And in the meantime, they've actually given these companies an incentive to keep up their current policies. Why not? If they make bad loans that only pay off in the short term, the government will just bail them out in the long term. We took our best chance to punish companies for their costly mistakes, and instead we've rewarded them for it.

To be fair, not all of the Democratic Party has left us behind. Senator Chris Dodd of Connecticut made vast

improvements to the initial proposal, giving equity to the tax-payer and adding protection for some mortgages. And there are some Democrats who stood against the bailout from the start and held strong throughout. Those few deserve praise for at least trying to stand up for those of us who can't afford lobbyists. But the rest of their party has signed off on a bill that robs us for the profit of corporations.

Many Democrats say that they're just waiting until after the bailout to fix regulation. It won't happen. Change like that happens when it's a pressing issue. After passing something as big as the bailout, politicians on both parties will feel less pressure to make the necessary changes and any proposed deal will fall apart.

The Democrats have blown their best chance to force their policy, consolidate their position, and most importantly, do what was right. Instead they've been the party behind a panicked and corrupted waste of \$700 billion dollars. They're the party of cowards who couldn't even stand up for their voters in the time where they had possibly the most leverage they'll ever see. It might not come to haunt them this November, but when 2010 comes, we will almost certainly see their day of reckoning.

Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down

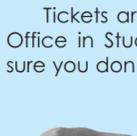


George Mason University wants you to be hired! Come join Career Services at the Job and Internship Fair Oct. 7 and 8. To find more information, visit their Web site, <http://careers.gmu.edu/jobfair>.



Lewis Black is coming to Mason on Saturday, Oct. 18.

Black, who is one of the funniest people in the country, will bring his sharp, witty, and often furious commentary to the Patriot Center.



Tickets are on sale now in the Student Activities Office in Student Union Building I room 101; make sure you don't miss the show!



Unfortunately, *Broadside* won't have an issue next week because of Columbus Day. We'll be back in full force on Oct. 20, giving you the inside scoop on news, events and opinions on campus!

DO YOU HAVE AN OPINION?

ABOUT THE BAILOUT, POLITICS & ANYTHING ELSE...

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BROADSIDE

George Mason University's Student Newspaper

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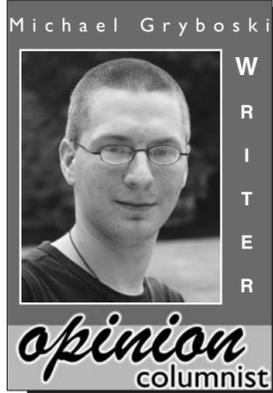
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An Effort at Community

Bridging the Diversity Gap on Cultural Fusion Day



Cultural Fusion Field Day will take place at George Mason University on Wednesday, Oct. 8. The event will be composed of numerous games from various cultures represented at Mason. There will be speakers from different departments across campus. Official sponsors include the University Scholars Office, the Office of Diversity Programs and Services and the Office of the Provost.

Despite the efforts at awareness via kiosks, flyers, and Facebook.com, many students going to their classes on that day will most likely see the event and wonder what the fuss is all about.

It's a demoralizing thought, but it would not be without precedent. Last semester, the Student Veterans Association held a 5K run along Patriot Circle, using the interior lane

for runners and joggers. The event had a sizable scale, with hundreds of runners, volunteers (including myself) and spectators in attendance. Even then, there was at least one instance in which a car turned into the lane that was being used for the runners, completely ignorant as to what was happening. I myself had to run up to their window, inform them of what was going on, and see to them turning off out of the way.

Back then, I wondered how anyone could be so lacking in their knowledge of campus events, but other examples abound. I have also known students at this university to be unaware of the existence of the International Dance Competition that hits every Spring semester.

This issue is not a matter of intelligence, but that of indifference. Now scores of works have been written in the past to talk about how Mason students do not care about extracurricular involvement, weakening campus life and so forth. The biggest reason cited is that it has to do with our commuter school status, as those who drive to and from campus are supposedly disconnected from university life. Having been both a commuter and residential student, I can say that not all commuters are this way, but when one is a commuter, it can be very easy to treat Mason as just another errand, especially if one is also working one or more

jobs, has a family, et cetera. The typical commuter only needs to park his or her car, go to class and leave.

But what perpetuates this indifference? Why the obliviousness of so many events? Not long ago Mason was identified as the second most diverse school in the country. It was also discovered that Mason was one of the unhappiest schools in the country. Maybe it is the ethnic and cultural diversity that drives the indifference and the unhappiness that is apparently very pervasive. All too often people want to be with their own kind, be it on a racial, class, national or ideological level. It's not racism, it's just comfort, the search for uniformity, and it happens everywhere. There will be exceptions, but in general, people keep to what they see as their own kind, even here. Instead of one Mason community, we have many Mason communities that oftentimes refuse to come together as a collective society.

If this is true, then it would mean that multiculturalism is not sufficient to create a modern society. Instead, it's a good way to increase division and subsequent indifference to the general happenings of campus. Assuming diversity is a good thing, and it can be, the situation can be remedied by going beyond multiculturalism: active multiculturalism. The mere presence of multiple cultures, nationalities and

ethnicities is not sufficient to make a functioning campus society. What is needed is for people from these various groups to be able to come together as one, even when the difference is obvious. But how, outside of basketball victories and classroom group activities can the many nations of Mason come together and grow together in community?

Cultural Fusion Field Day is a start. Already, various ethnic student organizations are involved in it, and it promises to be an excellent occasion for intercultural exchange and socializing amongst groups that often go their separate ways in the Johnson Center and Student Union Building I Lounge. Holiday Fest, an event sponsored by the Diversity Committee of our Student Government and scheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 3 of this year, is another.

Indifference is a demon to vanquish, but it is not impossible as these events shall hopefully testify to. Maybe on Wednesday, people will be more than oblivious.

Editor's note: Michael Gryboski is the vice chair of the Diversity and Multicultural Affairs Committee within Student Government

Quote



How long have I been at this, like, five weeks? So there hasn't been a whole lot that I've promised except to do what is right for the American people, put government back on the side of the American people, stop the greed and corruption on Wall Street.

--Sarah Palin, at the Vice Presidential Debate, Thursday, Oct. 2

Lower the Drinking Age

The Need to Focus on Education

SABRA HAYES
Staff Writer

The drinking age in this country is one of the oldest in the world and needs to be changed. The current U.S. legal drinking age is 21. Many of our citizens disagree with this age and believe that the age to legally be able to purchase, consume or possess alcohol should be 18.

When a citizen in the U.S. reaches the age of 18, he or she has gained access to new levels of responsibility, such as being able to vote, join the military and go to war. He or she can receive a notice for jury duty and can drive. An 18-year-old citizen is given all of these responsibilities, but still cannot drink in our country. The United States trusts the 18-year-olds enough to let them elect their leader and to serve their country in wars, but not enough to allow them to purchase, consume or possess alcohol until they are 21-years-old.

The stereotypical view of college is that it is filled with over-drinking and wild alcohol parties. However, the restriction on the age of which alcohol can be consumed is only facilitating this stereotype. The drinking age needs to be changed to 18 so that colleges can create a system that helps regulate alcohol use. Students who are drinking under the age of 21 do not have the appropriate experiences

when learning to deal with alcohol, strictly because of this age restriction.

When the U.S. government increased the drinking age in 1986 as a result of drunk driving, it took away the security involved with drinking. When most people drink, it is in a public place, whether it is a bar or a restaurant. However, the shift in age has eliminated this atmosphere that was presided over by licensed adults and moved it to a much more dangerous place. Now people are drinking in secret, nervous that they will get caught for drinking under age.

"The 21-year drinking age has not reduced drinking on campuses, it has probably increased it," said Middlebury College President John McCardell. "Society expects us to graduate students who have been educated to drink responsibly. But society has severely circumscribed our ability to do that."

When a student leaves home and goes to college, a new sense of freedom is born. This freedom breeds the excuse to try alcohol before most people's 21st birthday. Alcohol is a substance that needs to be taught how to use and due to people finding out on their own instead of with their parents, many lives have been lost.

Alcohol needs to return to being that substance that one learns to control from his or her parents. It is currently being

viewed as this symbol, this forbidden fruit of the adult world. This law is not encouraging people not to drink because they are not of age. It is in fact causing many to learn to drink underground, which is a crime in itself. Many have never learned their limits in a safe and controlled environment, which is a danger to their health and the safety of people around them.

The time has come for a change in this policy that is prejudiced against this country's younger voting generation. The importance of picking our political official holds less precedence over being able to drink alcohol. After reaching the age of 18, someone can join the military, go off to war and die without ever experiencing the freedom we are denying those under 21.

As with driving a car, that duty should be left to the parents or guardians to teach responsible drinking habits. It is time to return control to us and put an end to these times, where students and voting citizens are learning to drink in this dangerous fashion. The government needs to return the rights of the younger voting citizens to their full extent and lower the drinking age back to 18.

Using Freedom of Speech the Right Way



really affects us is how we use and react to the Freedom of Speech that has been endowed to us by numerous state constitutions as well as the United States Bill of Rights. For example, the Ku Klux Klan used to hold meetings on the steps of my county's courthouse in

Florida. They are given the right to demonstrate and rally there, as long as they don't start or instill violence in the crowd. However, my high school history teacher decided it would be an absolutely brilliant idea to go down and heckle the Klan during a rally. He was then chased away, with the violence of the Klansmen deterring any hope of repeating his moment of bravery and stupidity. In cases like this or the instance of the preacher, who has been coming to campus lately, we need to realize that although we, as observers may not be the violent ones, sometimes the speakers only need a light breeze to turn a candle into a forest fire. Intolerant people will say what they will. We can't stop them. We can't refuse to publish negative opinions about LGBTQ issues, because even if we did take away their right to be published, they could just go blog about it instead. What we need is to write, or speak in

opposition to these quagmires of intolerance with succinctness. To clearly and rightly respond in ways that make a statement no matter what the degree of disagreement is. The Cru people had a couch out on the North Plaza during all of the hoopla with the preacher. They had a white board stating "Tired of being yelled at? Come talk to us." This is what we need—fewer screaming responses and more rational dialogue between forces. We have a responsibility to give each other the benefit of the doubt that all points are valid at first, then we are welcome to disagree. We also have a duty to think before we speak. The old adage states "it is better not to speak and be thought to be wise, than it is to speak and be thought a fool." So, I may be free to speak, but I know that I am held accountable for all that I produce. I know that there are people who will say I am wrong, and if I truly am then I have no problem admitting it. And I would rather sit silently than offer criticism on a subject I know nothing about. Freedom of speech does not mean you must speak free of thought and thorough examination. The American ideal of freedom of speech is different than around the world. Other places believe in complete freedom, and others construe their idea of freedom of speech to mean the free dispersal of government

messages or free speech of those who agree with their awesome leader. There are many different views in this country of what the freedom of speech means, and even on this campus a plethora astounds. Irrational demands made by students marching into the *Broadside* office, the Provost's office, or President Merten's office are not the answer. Neither is screaming back at the man professing his hate behind our beloved statue of George. The answer is setting up that symbolic couch and inviting people to have a seat and talk. Respect is required in dealing with the despised. Poise will win over profanity. And great ideas, noble ideas sound ignorant and blunt when coming through a bullhorn. Step above the fray and let your ideas shine, and undoubtedly people will see the light. Please take head when you disagree with your friends over political issues as we draw closer to the election. You just might soften a heart, change a mind or alter an election. Happy debating everyone.

The Merits of Bringing Debates to Campus

JOHN KOBLAN
Broadside Correspondent

The current political buzz has rightfully been about the presidential debates. The first presidential debate was pretty even between Senator John McCain and Senator Barack Obama. Both had their moments, but there was no breakout moment for either, like Ronald Reagan saying "there you go again" to President Jimmy Carter in 1980. However, the debate locations leave much to be desired.

The first debate was at the University of Mississippi. Mississippi is not a swing state at all. Mississippi last voted for a Democrat for president with Carter in 1976. In the last two presidential elections, Mississippi voted overwhelmingly for President George Bush with 57 percent in 2000 and 59 percent in 2004. According to Pollster.com, McCain currently leads Obama 53 to 41 percent in Mississippi. Mississippi is clearly a safe Republican bastion.

The second debate will be at Belmont University in Tennessee. Tennessee, especially in the east, is strongly Republican. Consider this: since 1881, Tennessee's first and second Congressional districts have sent Republicans to Washington. Tennessee last went for a Democrat for president in 1996, and Al Gore didn't even win his home state in 2000. According to Pollster.com, McCain leads Obama 55 to 36 percent in Tennessee. The volunteer state is clearly a Republican bastion.

The final debate will be at Hofstra University in New York, which is strongly Democrat.

Sure it'll elect a George Pataki or a Rudy Giuliani once in a while. However, the empire state last voted Republican in 1984. According to Pollster.com, Obama leads McCain 55 to 37 percent there.

The debates should be held in the swing states. None of the three states above are swing states, nor will they be anytime soon. A presidential debate in a swing state might actually up the ante as opposed to having the debate in a republican bastion like

Mississippi, where it won't make a difference on the outcome. Virginia has become a swing state recently. We voted for Bush in 2004, but sent Democrat Jim Webb to the United States Senate. Pollster.com has Obama at 47.8 percent and McCain at 47.6 percent. The last Presidential debate in Virginia was in 1992 at the University of Richmond.

I propose a challenge to George Mason University President Alan Merten. Virginia will probably be a swing state in 2012. The Mason Votes campaign has generated some buzz and political awareness on campus. However, a presidential debate would give us great exposure as a national university. It would build on our recent ranking as the number one school to watch and the success of our basketball team. According to a recent *Newsday* article, Wake Forest University and the University of Richmond reported a 10 to 20 percent spike in applications or donations after hosting a presidential debate.

The requirements would be a debate hall of 17,000 square feet, a ceiling height of 35 feet and a floor depth of 140 feet. The 2008 sites had to submit a non-refundable application fee of \$7,500. The selected sites had to pay \$1,350,000 to the Commission on Presidential Debates to cover the production costs of a single debate. Mason has great facilities, like the Center for the Arts and the Patriot Center. We have hosted Barack Obama, Bill Clinton and *Hardball* with Chris Matthews. We are in a prime location, unlike the decaying dump that is Richmond. This would be an event that engages the student body and the local Fairfax community.

This would be a bold move and would pay off in spades with millions of free media and advertising for Mason. It would illustrate that we are a national university and one to watch. Our administration has to seriously think about getting the ball rolling on this (we all know it takes time for a big project to navigate the Mason administration). We have little to lose and the world to gain.

LETTER FROM YOUR STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT

What Southside Means For Mason



PHOTO BY COURTNEY ERLAND | PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

This week we will have something to celebrate at George Mason University—the opening of Southside Dining. Many times, as students, we point out what we dislike about our university, and not enough about what we like. Southside not only represents how far Mason has come in so few years, but also how much of an impact student input can have on the projects taking place at Mason.

Throughout the process of planning Southside, our administrators in University Services sought input from everyone in our university community—especially students. Through Student Government, students were able to have their voices heard in everything from food selection to the type of dishes to hours. As a result, we have a final product that should satisfy the needs of everyone at Mason.

Getting input from students on university projects and initiatives is actually very common. Students from Student Government, as well as other student organizations and groups are on committees that are planning how our student space will be reorganized and how our university will prepare for the influx of residential students in the coming years, just to name a few.

Students really do have an impact on the direction of our university when we choose to.

In Student Government, we hope that students realize their elected student leaders can have an impact on the direction of Mason and its policies. We do our best to advocate for students, but this task is always easier when we hear what is on everyone's mind.

There are several ways to communicate your ideas and concerns to your Student Government. First, we have monthly town hall meetings on the first Wednesday of every month. Another way is to email myself, Claire Forman, or any of the student senators with your input. Finally, feel free to stop by our offices to talk to someone. We are located in the Johnson Center, next door to the library in Room 133. I hope to hear from many of you soon, and I hope that you are able to see the student input in Southside.



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