

opinion

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BROADSIDE

George Mason University's Student Newspaper

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LETTER FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Broadside Encourages Citizens to Vote

This year we have seen so many students make known what or whom they are passionate about in this upcoming election. We currently hold the number eight spot in the Princeton Review's "Most Politically Active College Campuses" list. There is such a strong political diversity on campus that has not gone unnoticed.

John Quincy Adams once said, "Always vote for principle, though you may vote alone, and you may cherish the sweetest reflection that your vote is never lost."

It is always so much easier not to do something. It is easy to feel discouraged,

however, the mentality that your one vote does not count leaves our country stagnant. If every person who thought their vote did not matter went out and voted, the outcome could be different. Politics may not be for everyone, but you are an active and present member of this country.

Many people are torn between the candidates and their generally opposing platforms, however, both are dedicated in helping our nation flourish and realize that a change must be made.

Broadside strongly encourages our readers to be responsible—inform

yourselves and cast your vote for the president who will lead our country in the direction you feel it needs to go in. Take advantage of our rights as individuals of the United States, and vote for what you feel passionate about, regardless of what friends, relatives or co-workers think. Just keep in mind to vote intelligently and to vote for our future on November 4.

Unsigned editorials represent the majority opinion of the Broadside Editorial Board.

Issues to Consider:

	Higher Education	Gay Rights	Abortion	Economy	Environment and Energy
John McCain (R-Ariz.)	Wants tax cuts for families with children in college; wants to modernize and improve colleges by eliminating the billions of dollars spent on earmarks; wants to reform the student lending programs.	Voted against the amendment for gay marriage, citing a belief that the states should decide for themselves.	Believes human life starts at conception, and Roe v. Wade should be overturned.	Opposed the Bush tax cuts for the mega-wealthy; calls for reduced taxes along with reduced government spending on social programs.	Voted against allowing drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge; supports a carbon trading system. Proposed the Lexington Plan, which will expand domestic oil exploration in order to lessen our foreign dependency; also wants to promote growth of clean nuclear power.
Barack Obama (D-Il.)	Wants to create a tax credit program that will ensure the first \$4000 of college is free for most Americans, will cover two-thirds the cost of tuition at most public colleges, and will make community college free for most students.	Opposed to gay marriage, but supports civil unions and same-sex couple benefits.	Very strong supporter of women's rights; voted against the banning of partial birth abortions.	Wants to repeal some of the Bush tax cuts; wants to raise taxes for the upper class (supports progressive tax rates).	Wants one million hybrids on the road by 2015; wants an economy-wide cap and trade program to reduce greenhouse emissions 80 percent by 2050. Wants to invest \$150 billion over the next 10 years to catalyze private efforts of building clean energy; wants to increase renewable energy use to 10% by 2012.

Above information compiled by Tierney Kain

Hating the Smoker

Students Chastise Campus Smokers

Scott Mason



W
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opinion
columnist

something needs to be done.

We all have our own character traits and personal life choices, including the way we display them and view what others do or think. I don't expect my friends to suffer from secondhand smoke inhalation, although I personally choose to smoke. I don't even expect people to stop telling me I shouldn't smoke, but what would go much further in actually making me quit than a ton of dirty looks every day is a bit of compassion and understanding. Take the time to know why smokers smoke, and a lot of the time it just may surprise you. There are reasons and stories behind the way everyone's lives are lived out.

Other personal issues such as religion, race, political stance, philosophy, sexual orientation and gender preference could all be treated in much the same way. Staring and funny looks never help anything; if anything, they strengthen the resolve of those being stared at. If you disagree with the way someone lives his or her life or you would like to learn more about how someone lives, then it is all right to ask questions. Then understanding will ensue, as long as an open mind is kept.

But also realize that sometimes that someone's personal information is just that, personal. Our own personal lives and lifestyle is part of our identity, so to always assume that you have the right to know everything about us is extremely overreaching. It seems oftentimes that people bury themselves in each other's business, and that tabs are constantly kept. We are

selflessly fascinated with each other's lives but at the same time we don't always want people prying into our own. It is a contradiction in a lot of ways, which might explain reality television, but that's another story. It is just strange how people can be so defensive about their own lives and views, but jump all over someone else's. I will admit that I act this way at times, and I believe that we all do. We all are imperfect with or without dirty looks, but the awareness of them can only help us to recognize our flaws and move towards being a little bit better.

Caution is key when it comes to approaching someone's personal life and thoughts; as is good judgment when it comes to all of this as well. Knowing when it's all right and when it's not all right to ask questions. Understanding that we are in college means there will be things we don't agree with going on possibly in the other bed in the room you share is something we all must come to accept. We must also realize that the dirty looks we give from time to time are rude. All they do is make people feel bad or think you are crazy, especially if they catch you staring. Either way the outcome is negative and does not improve any part of the disagreement. So whether it is smoking, relationships or whatever else we do, some courtesy will go a long way in making friends, and maybe coming to some common ground and stop worrying and improve everyone's psyche for the better

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Fighting Modern Slavery



several disturbing numbers: as many as 27 million people today are trafficked around the world, human slavery is the world's third largest criminal industry, behind the drug trade and arms dealing, and 80 percent of those trafficked are women and children. Another topic for discussion was a law called the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Enacted in 2000, the TVPA has been renewed in 2003 and 2005, and is set for renewal this year. Maybe because of the oncoming November

Project detail the nightmare scenarios that often play out in the United States, as slaves are sought for two major purposes, manual labor and sexual exploitation. "Domestic sex traffickers, commonly referred to as pimps, particularly target vulnerable youth, such as runaway and homeless youth, and reinforce the reality that the average age of entry into prostitution is 12 to 13 years old in the U.S.," says the Project, which also states on their Web site that, "recent cases have also demonstrated that labor trafficking of U.S. citizens occurs in locations such as restaurants, the agricultural industry, traveling carnivals, peddling/begging rings, and in traveling sales crews."

Enacted in 2000, the TVPA has been renewed in 2003 and 2005, and is set for renewal this year. Maybe because of the oncoming November Election, Congress has not renewed it yet. This is something Congress should not overlook and should see to reauthorizing immediately. The TVPA does many things to go after human trafficking, including measures against both domestic and international human trafficking, with the 2005 reauthorized version ensuring trafficking prevention along with post-conflict and humanitarian emergency assistance, efforts to monitor and combat child labor as well as forced labor, and establishing grant programs to develop, expand, and empower assistance programs for certain victims of trafficking amongst other things. As reported by Civil Rights Attorney Bharathi A. Venkatraman in Police Chief Magazine, "The TVPA works to protect victims of human trafficking from prosecution for the crimes they committed under duress, such as prostitution."

According to Smith's congressional Web site, from 2000 to 2002 TVPA authorized \$98 million to fight human trafficking, a morally reprehensible criminal industry whose activities are not only found abroad but here as well. Despite our laws, the staunch hatred of slavery instilled in us from the 13th Amendment and present-day media depictions of the antebellum South, it still exists in America. Groups like the Polaris

It is hard to fathom that slavery still exists. Wars have been fought to quell it, laws and amendments are on the books in several nations banning it, and yet in today's world slavery remains. Last Monday, Oct. 20, the George Mason University chapter of Amnesty International held an event in Dewberry Hall, putting a focus on the human trafficking industry, showing a documentary entitled *Dreams Die Hard*.

Following the documentary, there was a presentation by two speakers from the Polaris Project, an organization that seeks to have a world without slavery, which has been present in human civilization at least since the days of the Old Testament. Part of their presentation showcased

Expanding STI Testing

SABRA HAYES
Staff Writer

Due to our current STI epidemic, a blood test should be required of all citizens over the age of 18, before they enter college. Many states require a blood test before marriage to check for STIs like HPV. This blood test would help notify those who may have an infection and not realize it, which would keep it from spreading. This test should strictly be used as a self-knowledge system and not as a means of alienation.

The reason for this law is evident in the recent studies that have linked oral sex to throat cancer. This link is the most common sexually transmitted infection, human papillomavirus virus. These strains of HPV are not only hazardous for women, but for men as well. HPV is one of the most widespread virus groups in the world to affect the skin and mucosal areas of the body. Over 80 types of HPV have been identified. Different types of the HPV strain are known to infect different parts of the body to include all areas covered by or mucosa such as the mouth, throat, tongue, tonsils, vagina, penis, and anus.

People who have had one to five oral sex partners in their lifetime have doubled their risk of developing throat cancer compared to those who have never engaged in this activity, according to the study. Infection with the virus occurs when these areas come into contact with a virus through a sexual act, such as oral sex. The danger does not lie in the action of oral sex, but in the person being unaware that he or she carries the HPV strain that could cause the cancer. Over 20 million sexually active people are currently infected with the virus, but 50 to 75 percent of the sexually active population has come into contact with HPV without ever knowing.

Schools across the country have already begun requiring the HPV vaccine for any girl over the age of 12. This shot has been proven to save the lives of women by helping prevent cancer that is caused by HPV. However, there is still the issue of those who are infected while spreading the disease unknowingly and men who have been infected by the disease. There is an HPV shot currently being

made to help prevention for men. The time has come for equality in regard to sex lives for those who have had the shot and for those who have not. Girls who may not have had sex are still going to be required to get the HPV shot to be in school according to Senate Bill 660 and House Bill 561. Therefore, in order to protect everyone, both males and females should be required to get an STI test once they turn 18. This will allow for those infected to be given treatment and an education on how to protect themselves and others from spreading the infection. Together with the shot, this requirement of an STI test will be the only chance to protect our bodies against these cancer-causing strains of HPV.

By creating a law to help STI prevention, the U.S. can begin to help control its increasing STI epidemic. Nearly one-fourth of the people infected with an STI are teenagers. Every year the government is estimated to spend at least 10 billion dollars on STIs, which does not include the costs for those infected with HIV. These costs will increase as the infections spread, which is why there needs to be an established law for every citizen to be tested, to protect themselves and others.

The role of this law in preventing and controlling STI and HIV would impact the entire country. People living with the diseases already would be notified and could get proper treatment; while public awareness of the testing would give a higher educated understanding of how to take care of one's self and how to be more open minded about the diseases.

It is the duty of the U.S. Government to help protect its citizens from all types of attacks. The attack on our bodies from this virus needs be addressed by establishing a requirement for all citizens over the age of 18 to have a STI test. This would help control the HPV epidemic that is already plaguing our country and will also give out the knowledge on how to protect ourselves and others from this cancer causing STI. Together this proposal with the already developed HPV vaccine can save countless lives by educating and helping develop an understanding of these life taking STIs.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Money Election

Sen. Barack Obama's, D-Ill., campaign raised a record \$150 million in September, and has spent about \$185 million in advertising so far, according to *The New York Times*. Jim Rutenberg reports that the Obama campaign is "set to break the advertising record established by President George W. Bush's 2004 campaign." Obama is breaking records with the amount of money he is raising and spending in his bid for the White House. The previous record was held by Bush's campaign, which went on to win the election. What can we draw from this? Whoever has the most money to burn in order to further his/her goals is likely to succeed.

The amount of money the Obama campaign spent on advertisements coupled with the negativity of stories that cover Sen. John McCain's, R-Ariz., campaign show how elections can be won. Of course, that is if Obama is victorious in November, which he is likely to be if national polls are accurate—showing Obama is up by seven points. Howard Kurtz reports that a recent study found 57 percent of "print and broadcast stories about [McCain] have been decidedly negative." On top of this, only 14 percent of stories about the Republican Party have been positive. So why is it that McCain is continually coming across to the American public as negative?

Perhaps that has something to do with the nearly record-breaking amount Obama's campaign has spent on ads attacking McCain. In Virginia, there are reports of Obama having three campaign offices compared to McCain's one. In

the past few weeks, Obama's ads criticizing McCain have dominated local TV channels. The Obama campaign has clearly made and spent more money than the McCain campaign, and has something to show for the investment—Obama's popularity in the polls.

The media coverage on Obama was said to be more balanced, with 36 percent of stories being positive and 29 percent negative according to Kurtz's report. We can all agree that the overall goals of the two presidential candidates are the same—to better this country. Generally speaking, there isn't a lot of difference on the issues between the candidates. Both want to end the war in Iraq "responsibly" now. Both agreed upon the recent bailout bill. Both want to invest in renewable energy sources. Both want changes to the tax system and health care. But with all of the negative coverage on McCain, one has to wonder whether the \$185 million in ads purchased by Obama's campaign had any effect on the media's zeal to portray him in a balanced way, and his opponent negatively. Obama has even bought a full 30 minute media time slot at 6 p.m. on Oct. 29. It's a mutually beneficial relationship; Obama gets more play and the media get more pay.

With this in mind, surely there must be a way that we can keep the electoral coverage equal. There certainly is: the public finance system. It forces political candidates to use public money, equally dispersed to all parties. This way, there is no unfair advantage by one candidate over another, and the wealthy have less influence over

who gets elected. Common Cause, an organization in favor of these "fair elections," asserts that "the undue influence of big money in politics undermines the public's interest." Their concerns are clear—when large corporations or rich, powerful figures who have agendas, finance political campaigns, they will probably expect some return on their investments. In other words, they are buying a candidate who will bow to their interests.

Obama initially agreed to limit his campaign financing to public money, but later reneged on that agreement. To a presidential candidate questionnaire in 2007, he responded, "I have been a long-time advocate for public financing of campaigns combined with free television and radio time as a way to reduce the influence of moneyed special interests." But earlier this year, the Obama campaign backed out of the public finance system when it became apparent that he could make more money through private donations.

McCain agreed to use public money to finance his campaign, and has stood by his promise. Even today, McCain honors his commitment. Many past presidents have made promises before being elected that they did not follow through on. Judging by Obama's actions at this stage in the race, I can't help but have doubts about whether he, if elected, will deliver on his promises.

Lucas Nottingham
Senior, English

Diagnosing "Islamophobia"

The way Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz. has run his campaign should disappoint everyone who has ever regarded his/herself as different from others. In Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., we should all see a little bit of ourselves. Who would have guessed that there would be an opportunity for a "Barack Hussein Obama" to lead the United States? All of the views that Obama cannot lead because he is different could very well be about you, me, or anyone else that is unlike the next person. This election is showing everyone how being different is actually viewed by the general population. Everyone has a different story, struggle or experience and different values, which does not make one incapable of guiding a nation.

Are we that low, that anyone who is considered different cannot have a chance to run for president? The Republican Party and Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., during the primaries, have made zealous efforts to point at Obama's middle name—"Hussein"—and tie it to the Islamic faith, the implication being that Islam is a negative thing. It is a given that "Islamophobia" is not a recent trend, but to denounce an entire faith (or Arab ethnicity) in the name of one's own election is downright wicked. How inconsiderate, how selfish, how racist can they be?

You see, Obama's name is my first, your middle, and that guy-you-sit-next-to-in-class's last. It is a symbol for all variations of people, the diversity of this nation and the distinctions of one's beliefs. Does that make anyone any less American than you, Sen. McCain? Sen. Clinton?

A person's ethnicity or religion should in no way lead

anyone to believe that someone will not strive for issues such as global awareness, equality, education, coexistence and utilize any given opportunity to his advantage—that is the true definition of the "American Dream." However, this election leads one to believe that being different is un-American, unpatriotic, and that these people do not know how to live out the "American Dream." These politics of division lead us to the conclusion that no Muslim youth, including myself, should ever dream of serving in public office. Where in that is there equality?

At a recent *Meet the Press* interview, Colin Powell spoke of the implications of the Anti-Arab and Islamophobic messages of this election. Top Republican officials (and they are not alone) have tried to portray Sen. Obama as a Muslim or an Arab—although he is neither. But what if he was? Powell goes on to talk about a purple heart fallen soldier, and seeing his mother crying over his grave—a grave headed by an Islamic crescent moon and star. An admirable Muslim-American who gave his life for the freedoms that those repulsive officials do not deserve. The notion that there would be something wrong with Sen. Obama if he was Muslim is the notion that there is something wrong with you and me alike. Something un-American and unpatriotic, that is letting that American soldier die in vain.

At a McCain rally a few weeks ago, a woman told McCain, "I can't trust Obama. I have read about him and he's not, he's not uh—he's an Arab." McCain responded, "No, ma'am. He's a decent family man [and] citizen that I just happen to have disagreements with on

fundamental issues and that's what this campaign's all about. He's not [an Arab]." McCain defended Obama's background. No, he is not, in fact, an Arab. Where people get this notion (since Obama lived in Indonesia and his family is from Kenya—both of which are not Arab countries), is beyond me. Yes, it is great that McCain defended him, but he completely avoided the implication of her statement. It may be a stretch to say McCain implied that Arabs are untrustworthy while Obama is not, but that is the way it came out. McCain is completely wrong for not addressing her insinuation that Arabs are dangerous. Are these the ignorant people who will be voting in this election?

Would it have been different if the woman had said she was scared of Obama because he is a black man? Would McCain have then said, "Yes, he is a black man, but there is no reason to be scared of that, we are beyond that sort of bigotry"? There is a similarity between the discrimination of blacks, women, and now Muslims and Arabs in this country. Because the notion that not everyone has equal opportunity to pursue anything they desire, to allow pure discrimination towards a religion or a race to be politically correct and to advance the status of one's candidacy, to hypocritically ignore the fact that our country was founded on religious freedom and fights for political justice and equality—that is what is unpatriotic. That is what is really un-American.

Sabrina Ahmed
Sophomore, Government and International Politics

Why I'm Not Voting

Who are you voting for? I hear this question nearly every day as the national election approaches. Often people look to me for advice on this issue because I am the president of George Mason University's Economics Society, expecting a reasoned response why one candidate is better than another on economic issues.

What answer do I give? I simply respond: "I don't vote."

Am I apathetic about economic, international, or other policy? No; in fact I hold very strong opinions about public policy. What I am apathetic about is the impact of my vote.

The reason I feel this way is mainly because of the public choice school of economics. This school of thought was founded by two of Mason's greatest scholars, Gordon Tullock and Nobel laureate James Buchanan, who revolutionized the way the world looks at politics. Public Choice says that if we assume people act relatively self-interested in their personal lives we should assume they will act self-interested in their public lives. Just as regular citizens act to increase their benefits, politicians act to increase their own gains.

In a democratic election process, the winner must win at least 51 percent of the vote. To get the 51 percent, the candidate must not only sway

the fringe party members but they must seek to satisfy the preferences of the moderates. It is more likely to get your own hardcore party members to vote for you, but much harder to get the moderates and independents. It is no surprise then that politicians aim to formulate policies based upon the wants of these moderate, or median, voters. Since both presidential candidates are fighting over the same wants of the median voter, one would expect to see very similar policies from each. This tends to be the case throughout history—President George W. Bush's policies were more leftist than his critics would let on and former President Bill Clinton was much more conservative than pundits would admit.

The takeaway is that whether Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., or Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz. wins, the policies they are offering must be very similar if they are rational and want the most votes. You may still not be convinced though, saying perhaps the slight changes in implementation or experience matter as to voting for one or the other. Public choice economics has an excellent response to this argument: the Returns to Voting Model.

Most people recognize that the probability of their vote mattering in a national election,

even with the Electoral College system, is infinitesimally small. You have a higher probability of dying in a car crash on the way to vote than you have of your vote individually deciding the election. The benefit to you of voting then is a small number multiplied by a very tiny number. Add on the cost of voting—missing school, work, or reading a book—and most likely you have a negative return from voting.

Despite these statistical truths, many millions of Americans will still go out and vote on Nov. 4. These voters are not irrational; they get their pleasure out of participating in the democratic process that has been passed down from our founding fathers. Voting "for fun" in this way is in fact very rational. Voting for change in policy is not. If you want to make the world better off, you'll do much better by volunteering, educating others, or just yourself, on important issues. But if you are still planning on voting next Tuesday, by all means, enjoy yourself.

Sincerely,
Kevin R. Hilferty
President, GMU Economics Society

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