

# opinion

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George Mason University's Student Newspaper

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LETTER FROM OUR STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT

## Changing Mason

### Student Government's Goals to Improve Campus Life



PHOTO BY COURTNEY ERLAND, PHOTOGRAPHY MANAGER

Last Tuesday, Student Government co-sponsored the Mason Vote Vans, which took registered students to the Woodson High School polling place. Student Government leaders drove the vans taking over 200 students to the polls, they were given a survey that gave them an opportunity to voice their opinion on issues affecting the campus and to also evaluate student government's role in representing students thus far. A common theme I noticed in students' perception of their Student Government was that they weren't sure what we are working on this year to make

George Mason University even better for students.

About a month ago, Student Government put together a comprehensive plan with eight goals to accomplish accompanied by eight specific projects to achieve the goals we set. I want to make the plan public so that everyone knows exactly what Student Government is doing and how we are doing it.

Our first goal is to help promote a sense of pride among students about their university.

We have two projects right now to support this goal. The first is "Gold Rush," which we are doing again this year with some interesting additions. Our Gold Rush kickoff will feature the drum line and the color guard leading a procession, or a "Gold Rush," through the residence areas and campus to the Patriot Center. Anyone who joins this "Gold Rush" will receive the new shirt, and be part of a new tradition here at Mason. The other project that we have to support our goal of promoting pride in Mason is to encourage and promote giving back to our university. We will use Gold Rush to help advertise the Office of Annual Giving's student giving initiative so that students can see the value of giving back to Mason.

Our second goal is to help

dear Mason to the Fairfax community. We want students to realize that when we come to Mason we are not only joining the Fairfax community. Last week's Witch Watch, where students volunteered to go out into the community and make sure neighborhoods were safe for trick-or-treaters, is an example of how we are trying to achieve this goal. The vote vans, a program that make it easier for students to vote in the Fairfax community, is another way that we are trying to endear Mason students to the Fairfax community.

Our next goal is to help Mason, from the student perspective, prepare for an expanded residential population. There are three ways we hope to achieve this goal. First, we are going to advocate for a late night study facility, preferably Fenwick library. Next, we are going to try to get condoms dispensers placed in residence halls to promote sexual health. Finally, we are going to work to get more tables placed outside of the residence halls, so that students have more places to gather and socialize outside of their individual rooms.

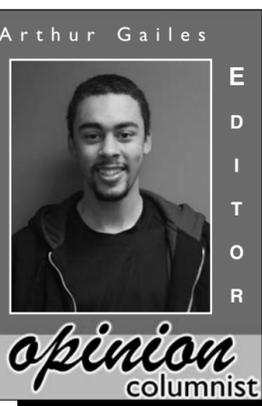
Student Government's fourth goal this year is to bring our residential and non-residential populations together. Mason is unique in that it will

always have large residential and non-residential populations; therefore we need to find ways to bring the two together. The first way we hope to do that is to work with our administration to start a University Life Hour. This would be an hour in the middle of the day, in the middle of the week, where there would be fewer classes scheduled. This would create a time where both populations are on campus. During this time we would be able to schedule our University wide programming, and members of both populations would be able to attend. Next, we hope to open the Chesapeake residence area first floor study rooms to non-residential students. Currently, our Johnson Center and Fenwick study rooms are filled to capacity during the day, and opening more of them would help alleviate the congestion.

These are the first four of the eight goals we have set for the year. Next week, I am going to talk about the remaining four and their accompanying projects. In the coming weeks I will be writing about the status of our individual projects, and why they are or are not working. I hope that this helps students understand what exactly their Student Government is doing for them this year, and how we can help.

## Fight Doesn't Stop

### No Time to Celebrate Obama Win



EDITOR

The fireworks have stopped, the dust has settled, and Barack Obama is the president-elect. For those of us who supported Obama, it's tempting to celebrate and declare the mission accomplished. For those who did not vote for him, it's just as tempting to sit back and wait to attack on Obama's first mistake. If any of us fall victim to that impulse, all that we have fought for this election will be lost.

Make no mistake, we haven't accomplished anything. As thrilled as I am that Obama is going to be the president, I'll be more thrilled if he becomes a good one. He has all the resources: a senate and congressional majority, huge popularity abroad and a mandate from the public to change the way things are being run. It's Obama's responsibility to handle the first two, and I've got a reasonable amount of faith that he will.

But we have to pressure Obama. We have to stay politically aware and alert, and ready to protest when he missteps or the senate tries to

lead him in the wrong direction. By doing this, we send a clear message to all of his constituents that he can't afford to put the American people second on his list of priorities. By staying on Obama, we actually make his job easier because we constantly remind the entire political sector that he has a mandate from the people.

We do this by staying informed and staying active. It's easy to keep in touch with politics during an election year because it's so prolific that we're constantly bombarded with campaign ads, news headlines and obnoxious friends who are obsessed with their candidate. But we have to pay attention to what goes on when politicians don't think we're watching so that we're aware of their real positions and actions when the next election year comes.

Voting isn't the only way we can stay active, either. Because of the Internet, there are so many new and innovative ways to make our voices heard. Start a blog. Mail your congressman. Join a Web site that polices politicians and new organizations. Become that annoying friend, and be the resource your social group looks to for political news. We all have the power to impact the future of this country, and it doesn't take a lot of effort to make a change. If Obama's win has taught us anything, it's that the true power of this country lies in its individuals.

Make no mistake, the Democratic Party is, at best, the lesser of two evils. They're not here to help us; they're here to gain power. They've gotten their position by letting the Republicans back themselves

into a corner with their own policy blunders.

Where Republicans benefit only the rich by limiting how much those rich have to pay into the government, the Democrats sell out to the power majority by giving them government assistance. This bailout plan, even with the positive changes that the Democrats made to it, is nothing less than evidence of that. If we don't stay aware, alert and active, we'll let them give more and more money back to people who don't need it.

At the same time, we need to put pressure on the Republican Party to police the expenses of the Democrats. While the Republicans lost seats this election, they kept enough to filibuster any bill that the Democrats propose. The Republicans have the most to gain from being the responsible party here, as it will help them gain back some of the center that they've alienated over the past eight years. If Republicans can return to being true conservatives, being responsible without being obstructionist, they can begin to erode at the Democratic majority.

Above all, we need to realize that even the best of politicians has to be pushed in the right direction. Otherwise, they'll be pushed by the people they interact with on a daily bases to go in a direction that helps the few and hurts the many. We have to remember that being politically active cannot stop on Election Day. Our parents have failed to stay politically active, and it has resulted in a political arena that has been largely unchallenged until the blunders of our current president woke us up. We can't afford to fall asleep again.

## Duty Calls

### Students Must Serve in Coming Years



WRITER

This past week we saw the history of America change. Whether it is good or bad, you all have your own opinions, so I will spare you mine. But, what does this change mean? For foreign policy, I think we are at an age where the famous quote of President Kennedy's inauguration "ask not what your country can do for you . . ." just might deserve a new deliverance. What we need to realize is that no matter how we voted last Tuesday, we are all going to be asked to do a lot for our country, and for some of us this will mean devoting our lives. This county is going to be involved in foreign conflicts for a long time, and what chose last Tuesday was exactly what we were going to be fighting for. President-Elect Obama stated in his address on Tuesday night that we would, in many more words, be helping the world.

Helping the world and humanity is something we need to do. People are still dying in Darfur, the Congo, Somalia, Iraq and so many other countries around the globe. We witness people dying for their families, their religion, their homes and their livelihood every

day on cable news, and with Obama we my find ourselves aiming to help all of the people in need. There are so many problems in this world that our hearts go out towards, and now we may finally have our hearts heard.

However, are we as a nation, willing to do this voluntarily? I am almost sure that many of us, specifically students, did not expect to be serving our country in the military or to a lesser extent the civil service. Those of us who have, I greatly respect, and would like to thank for helping our great nation. But, many of us take for granted the military service of others, and now we are dawning on a new age that just might require all of us to consider it. We are already stretched militarily, and now we have been committed in a way to helping people around the globe with our military and other government services. This may mean following through with our second thoughts of supporting our nation. Hopefully, many of us will answer the call, because the alternative, the draft will more than likely affect us.

The draft, while only slightly mentioned during the campaign, may in all seriousness be called, and as students, we need to take this seriously. Before, students and women were exempt, as well as others for various reasons, but in our politically correct world, I am afraid that we must take the idea of conscription seriously. The chance that we all may be drafted if it is enacted is very real and serious. Will we answer the call? Will the day come? As I see it, we have a lot to accomplish across the globe for the good of humanity and serving your country just may

be what is needed to accomplish our great, some may say lofty, goals of helping the disenfranchised around the globe.

Civil service will also undoubtedly be expanded with Obama's foreign and domestic policies. Base infrastructure, medics, base staff support, intelligence, Department of State work, USAID and so many other things will all require increased staffing on a global basis. Learning new languages, working with development aid organizations, securing our troops overseas and supporting them and their missions will all be asked of us. The things that accompany an expansion in foreign policy always have rippled through our society, all the way down to manufacturing plants. As students, we must realize that these new jobs will all need to be filled in one way or another, and serving our nation should be an option in these new policies that were just voted in. In the next years, our world will become a lot smaller and people are going to need to do a lot of work.

Agree or not, history shows that peace-keeping requires a lot from a country. During the Clinton administration, troops were deployed more often than during any other presidency. Many of those conflicts, while nothing like our commitment in Iraq or Afghanistan, demanded a lot from our country. We need to acknowledge this as a part of what is to come over the next four years. We all want to change the world, we all want to make it a safer and better place, but just how we do it is always up for debate. These years to come will surely be testing our nation in the world abroad as we hope to change.

Thank you for reading *Broadside*.

Now, don't forget to recycle!

# Examining Sex & Violence in the Media

*How the Media Affects the Minds and Actions of Children and Teenagers*

**SABRA HAYES**  
Staff Writer

Television and other media outlets cannot make you pregnant, but yet again the problems resulting from lack of good parenting are being blamed on the media. Researchers at the RAND Corporation have begun to document how exposure to racy and sexual media is affecting teen pregnancy rates. The RAND Corporation found that teens exposed to the most sexual content on TV were twice as likely to become pregnant before they reach age 20 as teens watching less of this material; however, they did not test what parental influence was placed upon the issue of sex.

More than a quarter of the participants dropped out of the RAND study, and the authors simply ignored them. However, those who dropped out of the study might have differed in significant ways from those who remained in the study, and their absence may have led to invalid findings.

Of the 1461 teens that remained in the study, roughly 10 percent refused to say whether they were sexually active. Of the remaining 1315 teens, 571, only 43 percent, were not sexually active at all. At a minimum, the 571 teens who were not sexually active should have served as a control group for the sexually active group. The amount of television viewing with sexual content done by the active and non-active teens was recorded but not released. One would think that this would be imperative to the scientific nature of the results and that this

information would drastically change the nature of the study.

In the end, RAND looked at the television viewing habits of those teens that did not drop out of the study, were willing to divulge their sexual status, and claimed that they were sexually active. After eliminating those who refused to divulge whether or not they had been involved in a pregnancy, only 718 teens were left of an initial group of 2003 that had started the study. In other words, the authors only looked at 36 percent of study participants (all of whom were sexually active) and ignored the other 64 percent (including everyone who was not sexually active). This leads this experiment and its accusations to be faultily placing the blame on the media for teen pregnancy.

Over 30 years ago, studies found that violence and aggression in children had a direct link to television. Now, television has been linked to teen-age pregnancy. The demand for this link is a demand for why so many teens have become pregnant. The lack of parental involvement and the lack of sexual education from a perspective other than abstinence only are causes of teen pregnancy, not television viewing habits.

The information regarding safe sex practices are severely limited for teens. This study wants to put the blame on the media when in fact it is the lack of education of safe sex. Researchers for the Journal of Adolescent Health have found that one in four teens have received abstinence-only education. Nine percent received no sex education at

all. The other two-thirds received comprehensive instruction with discussion of birth control. Teens who received comprehensive sex education were 60 percent less likely to report becoming pregnant or impregnating someone than those who received no sex education.

There has been a big push to get condoms and other contraceptives in public schools, a place where kids spend eight hours a day during the week. Sex needs to be brought out of the bedroom and into the light. If we talk about it and teach teens about it, perhaps less of them will end up pregnant. Hiding it and pretending abstinence works and blaming the pregnancies on what kids see on TV is not working towards a solution.

The only solution for teen pregnancy lies in the hands of the guardians. The time has come for sexual safety to be taught not only in the schools, but by the parents as well. The only evidence that this so called research by RAND has brought to the table, is that teens are getting pregnant. This is an issue that has been around for years and can only be stopped by education, not by blaming the media. It is the duty of the schools and the parents to teach teens about sex and about how to handle it in a safe manner. The time for judgment and hiding from the truth about sex is over. This study by the RAND has shown us that it is time to abolish abstinence-only education and to educate parents as to how to talk to their teens about sex, and to no longer place the blame on TV and media.

**LUCAS NOTTINGHAM**  
Broadside Correspondent

Children are highly influenced by violence in media such as movies and lyrics in music, but there are other sources of influence that haven't been focused on. Video games, TV shows and even our own actions are highly influential in the lives of children. Children usually do what they see, not what they are told. Because of this, we all have a responsibility on some level to monitor the content that our youths have access to, including our own behaviors.

Video games are considered relatively safe for children, but according to research released in *Pediatrics*, published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, we may want to be a little more selective about which games are safe. According to Donna St. George of *The Washington Post*, this research documented evidence that children who played violent video games "showed an increased likelihood of getting into a fight at school or being identified by a teacher or peer as being physically aggressive five to six months later." In other words, children who play violent video games a lot eventually become more physically aggressive than those who do not. This research was done in the United States and Japan, whose culture which contains many gamers, but is

less violent, and the results were essentially the same. St. George quotes Craig A. Anderson, lead author of the study done in America, "We now have conclusive evidence that playing violent video games has harmful effects on children and adolescents."

The information revealed in this study is a game-changer—St. George reports that the American Academy of Pediatrics "now recognizes violence in media as a significant health risk to children and adolescents and recommends limiting screen time including television, computers and video games to one to two hours a day." There can be no question now that playing violent video games leads to violent behavior in children; parents and caregivers should be vigilant about selecting which types of games their children have access to. This information, combined with the fact that lyrics in music and violence on TV influences youth behavior, means that mostly anything that children see is likely to be copied by them or at least spark their curiosity. But violence in TV shows isn't the only concern now; we should also be alarmed by the numerous new shows which have excessive sexual content. Rob Stein of *The Washington Post*, reports that in another study, also released by the American Academy of Pediatrics, teens who often viewed programming with sexual content were "twice as

likely to be involved in a pregnancy." Apparently, the instances of teen pregnancy have been "inching up again." Stein reports that lead researcher Anita Chandra, admitted that other factors might play a role in teen pregnancy, but that "the study provides the first direct evidence that (TV viewing) could be playing a significant role." This is even more evidence that children are likely to do what they see instead of what they are told.

Media of all types have a significant influence on young people. These recent studies cement the argument that if we want to help prevent teen pregnancies and violent crimes in the future, we should be taking the first step by teaching our children properly. Anyone who has a child in his or her life or interacts with children should keep the impressionability of these youths in mind when speaking or acting. You may not see yourself as a role model, but it is likely that if you interact with children regularly, you are educating them to some extent. We also need to continue to monitor the content they have access to, including musical lyrics, TV shows, movies and video games. The next time we do anything we know to be improper, let's consider the idea that young, inexperienced eyes may be watching us, perhaps to copy.

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