

Local Music and More

- Feb 2:** See coyotes, live in their natural habitat -- a honkytonk bar! The Lonesome Coyotes 9:30 p.m. -- Historic Corner Lounge, 842 N. Central Ave., Knoxville TN
- Feb 6:** One of the most respected singer songwriters of his generation, John Mayer, will be appearing at the Knoxville Civic Coliseum. The show starts at 7:30 p.m., and tickets are \$45.00 in advance.
- Feb 9:** The operatic romance, *La Bohème*, will be appearing at the historic Tennessee Theater at 8:00 p.m. If you miss it, another performance will be held February 11 at 2:30 p.m.
- Feb 9:** A birthday celebration for Bob Marley at Blue Cats will feature Natti Love Joys and Fat Penguin. The doors open at 9:00 p.m. and the cover is \$7 or \$5 if you have your student ID handy.
- Feb 15:** *The Underground's* Coming Out Party. Grounded Cafe.


For More Information:

Blue Cats - www.bluecatslive.com

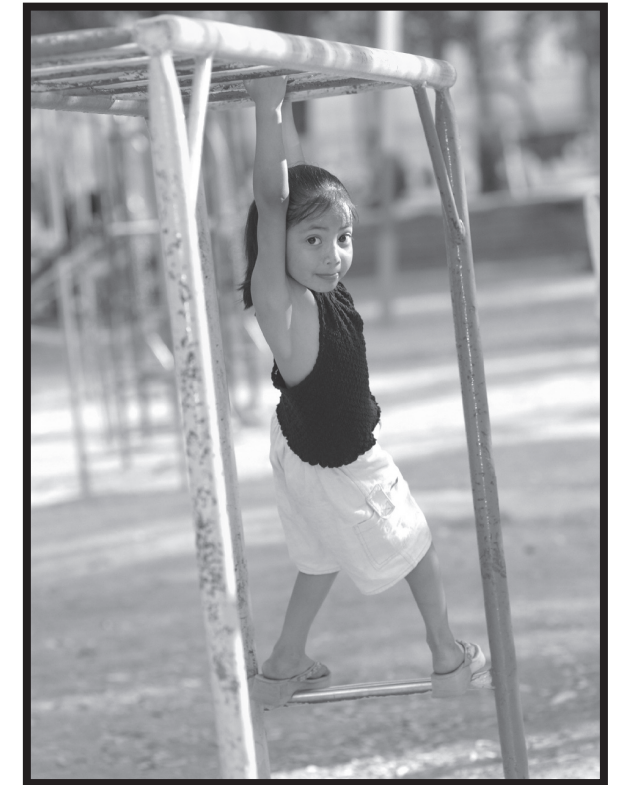
Tennessee Theatre - www.tennesseetheatre.com

Clarence Brown Theater - <http://theatre.utk.edu/>

Knoxville Civic Coliseum - <http://www.knoxvillecoliseum.com/>

 Music Schedule for February 2007 www.brackinsbar.com						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	Acoustic Jam no cover	SCOTT MCMAHAN No cover	Blues Jam no cover	1 HOLLOWTREE no cover	2 Eddie Kirkland \$5 cover	3 Trial By Jury \$5 cover
4	5	6	7	8	9 Smokin' Joe Kubek & Benois King \$10 cover	10 THE CORNBREAD BLUES BAND \$5 COVER
11	12	13	14	15 HOLLOWTREE no cover	16 Kenny Acosta \$8 cover	17 Blue Mother Tupelo \$6 cover
18	19	20	21	22	23 Avenue C \$5 cover	24 The Dixie Weevils \$5 cover
25	26	27	28			

Blount's Alternative Voice underground



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Our Statement of Purpose

As community members, we are dedicated to the idea of responsible and free press. As journalists, we have an obligation to truth; therefore, we constantly pursue this truth. As citizens, we should not feel obligated to cater to commercial markets; rather, we should recognize for ourselves the issues that affect us.

We believe that

- *Open dialogue can only strengthen a community.*
- *The people have the right to decide what news is relevant.*
- *The most reliable source for local news is the community itself.*
- *Community involvement is important especially for younger generations.*
- *International awareness inspires people to be locally involved*

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The Underground's Coming Out Party

YOU are invited!

The *Underground Blount's Alternative Voice* will be hosting a community get-together which will provide a time for our readership to come, meet the staff, make suggestions, and enjoy a good cup of coffee. We will talk about how we started and how we hope to develop in the future. We are eager to hear what you have to say about our paper, our community, and our world, so please come and let us know what you think!

The gathering will be held at Grounded Coffee and More, which is located at 321 High Street, near the Blount County Court House. Grounded will be providing complimentary coffee and desserts as well as a live band.

If you are walking from Maryville College, take the pedestrian bridge across E. Lamar Alexander Parkway, and then go right on High Street (the first street you come to). Walk several yards, and Grounded is located on the left. We hope to see you there,

The *Underground* Staff

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Movie Review: *The Last King of Scotland*

Thiago Buchert, Staff Writer

Idi Amin was one of history's most brutal tyrants. *The Last King of Scotland* is the story of a young optimistic doctor who becomes entranced by Amin's power and slowly discovers how nasty he can be. The movie is mediocre in some ways, but Whitaker's stunning portrayal of the dictator makes the film a must-see.

The film starts out with an adventurous young Scot, Dr. Nicholas Garrigan (James McAvoy), winding up by chance in the East African country of Uganda right after a military coup. The coup puts Idi Amin (Forrest Whitaker) into power. After this, a chance meeting between the two lends Garrigan to become Amin's personal physician, and a rather bizarre friendship develops. Initially charmed by Amin's simplicity and power, Garrigan little by little discovers that Amin's leadership is not all it's cracked up to be. During this realization, Dr. Garrigan somehow manages to drink enough whiskey to think that having an affair with one of Amin's wives, Kay (Kerry Washington), is a good idea. Obviously, Amin is disinclined to respond to the matter in an understanding way.

The Last King of Scotland, like *The Hours* and *The House of Sand and Fog*, is a movie that one should see largely because of the acting. Forest Whitaker's numerous accolades for his role as the Ugandan dictator are well earned. To prepare for his role, Mr. Whitaker learned Swahili and talked to Amin's actual friends and family. Despite the fact that the physical resemblance between Whitaker and Amin is absent, Whitaker creates a seamless transition from the charming down-to-earth populist that charmed Garrigan to the genocidal dictator that history knows. With superbly intonated broken English and paranoid stares, Mr. Whitaker has proven to be one of the best male actors of our time. James McAvoy's acting as the frivolous young doctor who gets in way over his head adds greatly to the film as well.

The writing, however, is rather unremarkable. It's pretty much a standard cookie-cutter thriller with the

theme of the supposed hero who proves to be a madman. Unfortunately, the writers tend to ignore the greater philosophical issues such as colonialism, race, and the general rationale behind Amin's actions. Passing remarks about his rough childhood and his attitude towards the British who once commanded him are insubstantial. Moreover, it does not deal with how regimes like Amin's use naïve individuals like Garrigan or how those well-wishers become naïve to begin with. It's this component that will likely prevent the movie from winning "best film," but perhaps a nomination is still in order.

As a student of history, I found many of the references unsatisfying. When I noticed few allusions to Idi Amin's alleged cannibalism, I first applauded the writers for not going down a predictable sensationalist path. However, it was only after the completion of the movie that I realized that there were few references to any history. For example, Idi Amin's regime was genocidal towards several minority groups but this is barely referenced in the movie. Moreover, the movie excessively focuses on the predicament of the Scottish doctor and glazes over his history. In terms of historical fiction, this movie leans heavily toward fiction.

Aside from the acting, the cinematography is the best part of the film. Jerky camera motions, which are distracting in most movies, fit in perfectly with this one. This technique tends to manifest itself not only in scenes of action, but also in scenes of paranoia, for example, when Idi Amin looks around at his men for signs that would tell him whom the traitors around him were. There are also beautiful panoramas of Uganda's lush jungle and serene countryside as well as a nice sequence of the capitol city, Kampala.

In summation, I urge those with strong stomachs to see this movie mostly for the acting but also for a decent thrill as well. I give it four and a half Forest Whitaker eye-twitches out of five. 🚫

Why We are the *Underground*

(and what is that funny little 'o' with the bar across it?)

Emily Winsauer, Staff Writer

After our last edition, we've been asked repeatedly by our readers why we call ourselves the Underground. Do we think we're oppressed? Are we hippies, or worse?

And so, by way of explanation, here is a little history. The phrase "underground press," the source of our ambiguous name, refers to the alternative print media, a term which means simply that we are independently published and distributed. We are not reliant on a media conglomerate for anything; we research and write our own stories and we pay for printing with advertisements.

The alternative press movement in the 1960s and 70s adopted the term "underground" from the valiant efforts of disenfranchised peoples to maintain a free press. Some of the most notable examples of underground newspapers come from Nazi-occupied Europe; the Dutch had a particularly active underground press, and French POWs likewise published their own papers. Their stunning and brave efforts are what inspired our name.

The underground press offers a platform for people normally excluded from the greater dialogue. We, as Americans, are blessed to be free from the kind of oppression experienced by many people all over the world and throughout history. However, as you may have read in our last edition, the press in our country is largely controlled by media corporations with ties to the government and big business. In this way, the welfare of most of the country is sometimes ignored in favor of profit or self-interest.

Additionally, so much of what occupies the pages of major newspapers is drawn from other sources, like the Associated Press or the local syndicate where the story occurred. As an independent paper, we choose what we print. We get to spend more time than daily newspapers researching and writing our stories, which is a major strength of the alternative press.

Our symbol, the 'o' with the bar across it, was inspired by the logo of the London Underground subway trains, commonly called the Tube. London's alternative press has been active and well-known through the years, and we felt that this simple and recognizable symbol would mesh well with our mission. Those of us involved in the paper share a dedication to the values of the alternative press,

and we created this symbol to evoke that simplicity and straightforwardness.

When I was a little girl, passing the News Sentinel building in downtown Knoxville filled me with a sense of awe. I envisioned the Sentinel guarding us from misinformation and ready at a moment's notice to report the facts to the people. Other names, too: The Chicago Tribune, The Beacon, The Herald. Newspapers were, in my mind, the Paul Revere of the print media. And I still see them that way. The job of a paper is to bring information to the people and let them decide for themselves. Of course journalists include opinion, but it has to be clearly stated as such. To me, that's the beauty of journalism: a hot, bright light shining wherever we need it to. That's why the rules of journalistic ethics are so stringent. We protect our sources, we quote accurately, we search for context, we ride ahead and signal back "one if by land, two if by sea" Maybe the Paul Revere metaphor doesn't stretch that far, but I believe that there is a brazen nobility in this field that has been forgotten in an age of media conglomerates and of pulling things off the AP wire. This is the spirit that inspired the Underground. It is a spirit shared among freedom-loving people everywhere, including those that stood up for their beliefs during the beginning of the alternative press movement.

Founding father Thomas Jefferson was a great proponent of a free press. He once said in a letter to a friend, "were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

Thus, we take this responsibility very seriously. We may not always be perfect, or even right, but we strive for both. And our voice, together with yours, will play a part in preserving the great and fundamental freedoms that we have.

And so, to answer your questions, we don't feel oppressed. Nor are we hippies, or even Satanists (as, amazingly, one person wondered). We are dreamers, we are Americans, and we are journalists. 🚫

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The Challenge of Religious Pluralism

Buzz Thomas, guest writer

I was sitting in an auditorium in Greeneville, Tennessee, listening to two Sudanese boys, whom my wife and I helped through college, recite the pledge and take the oath of citizenship. Our Sudanese friends were Christian, but standing alongside them were Jews, Muslims, Hindus and who knows what else. All different. All about to become American citizens.

Two days later I was reading a prominent atheist's shrill tirade against all things religious when I was reminded what a unique country we are and what a tall order being a good citizen really is.

On one extreme stand the "Theocrats" -- those religious firebrands of the far right. The problem with Theocrats, as a preacher friend once noted, is that each one thinks he's Theo. If they're harping about prayer in schools, you can bet it's their prayers and not yours. These are some of the same people who think that the earth is no older than your Great Aunt Edna and that hurricanes, tsunamis, HIV, and even 9/11 are instruments of God's wrath - never mind if a majority of the victims happen to be innocent children or the elderly. I think these red-faced believers are wrong, but hey, they're my neighbors, and they're just as American as I am.

On the other extreme stand the so-called religious "nones." I'm not talking here about women in black habits but the people who, when the pollsters ask them their religious preference, reply, "None." They're Americans, too. They also happen to be one of the fastest growing segments of our population, and two of their own, Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris, sit atop the New York Times best-seller list.

Therein lies America's challenge: We have a big group on the far right and a big group on the far left with both groups planning to stick around. How, then, do we live together with such deep differences? Better still, how do we remain "one nation, indivisible?" Is there any real hope for finding common ground?

Religiously? No. Thousands of different religious groups make their home in America, and the country's largest group -- Christians -- has hundreds of subsets. Even our subsets have subsets. Consider for a moment that Gore and Gingrich are both Baptists. So are the two Jesses -- Helms and Jackson. There is not and never will be a religious consensus in America. It's one of a dozen good reasons why we should never return to the practice of teacher-led prayers in our public schools. The first and most intractable question would always be: whose prayer? As I once heard Republican Senator Mark Hatfield put it, "I don't have the time to write all those prayers, and I don't trust anyone else to!"

If there is no religious consensus in America, then what? Are we, like much of the rest of the world, left to flounder in our diversity with no hope of finding common ground?

Before we throw up our hands and move to a gated community, let's do as colonial patriot George Mason once admonished his fellow Virginians during times of trouble and return to "fundamental principles." What exactly does it mean to be an American other than the fact that most of us were born here? Is it simply that we drink Coke, wear Levis and shop at the

Gap, or is there more to it than that?

At one time, for example, in order to be part of established Virginian society, you had to be several things: white, male, land-owning and Protestant -- Anglican to be more precise. It was that way in most of the colonies. And, although we have moved beyond much of our parochial past, many Americans still carry around with them these notions of what it once meant to be fully American.

Being American, of course, has nothing to do with our gender, economic status, skin color or where we go to church. Being American is about the principles and ideals set forth in our framing documents, namely the Constitution and Bill of Rights. When naturalized citizens swear to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States, that's what they're talking about. That's also why scholars sometimes refer to us as the world's first "new" nation. America was the first nation to be founded not upon bloodlines or kinship ties but upon principles and ideals.

Don't get me wrong. Our "tribes" are important to us. It matters whether we are Baptists or Buddhists, male or female, Democrat or Republican. But remember, as Catholic Theologian John Courtney Murray once reminded us, the Constitution does not begin, "We the tribe." We are more than a tribe. Much more. We are a people. A pluralistic polyglot of races, religions and creeds committed to a common set of rights and responsibilities. Freedom of religion, speech, assembly and the press. Due process. Equal protection of the law. That's the stuff that makes us Americans. Not whether or how we choose to worship.

In a word, the American consensus is civic, not religious. Within this civic framework, there is indeed a common vision for the common good. When it comes to religion, that vision means that persons of all faiths, or no faith, will be treated with fairness and respect.

Are we up to the task? Honestly, I'm not sure, but the civic framework set forth in our framing documents has served us well thus far. Admittedly, it takes a lot of work. The words on those hallowed pages do us very little good unless they are etched in the hearts and minds of our citizens. And that, dear Americans, is a challenge -- particularly for a nation as diverse as ours. We must begin living by a new Golden Rule. A "civic" Golden Rule as scholar Os Guinness likes to call it. It goes like this: My rights are best protected by protecting your rights. That means Jews standing up for the rights of fundamentalist Christians and vice versa. It also means that the way we debate our differences is almost as important as the differences themselves.

If this sounds like the beginnings of a good New Year's resolution, I think you're right. Perhaps I'll take my own advice and stop calling them Theocrats. ☹

Oliver "Buzz" Thomas is a minister, lawyer and author of an upcoming book, 10 Things Your Minister Wants to Tell You (But Can't Because He Needs the Job).

MC cont.

demolished, their continued existence (at least in story form), is threatened. The original plans for the \$43 million Civic Arts Center called for the complete destruction of both Wilson and the Fine Arts Center, but later revisions, unveiled in May 2006, incorporate portions of the old FAC.

When it was first constructed in 1950, the Fine Arts Center was praised in Architectural Record for its "complete integrity" and "its close approach to functional perfection." Today's students may find the "functional perfection" bit particularly humorous; the FAC is notorious for its befuddling maze of passageways, leaky ceilings, and rapidly deteriorating details. However, the art and music students who spend most of their waking hours in the FAC have a certain fondness for the building, in spite of its faults: after its demise had been announced, an anonymous party chalked "RIP FAC" onto an exterior wall.

Now that the FAC and Wilson face their ends, what will happen to the spirits of Lilly and Andrew, or at least to the legends surrounding them? Perhaps they will fade with the memories of two buildings, or perhaps they will be preserved as an integral part of the MC theater department, continuing to provide intrigue and mystery for generations of

Letter to the Editor

Hi,

I had the good fortune to pick up your December edition while at the Capitol Theatre Coffee Shop this past weekend. Kudos to your effort to publish the Underground and provide an alternative source of information in your small community.

My elderly mother and her sister live in Maryville and, like the good son, I make occasional trips over to visit from my home in Winston Salem, NC. Typically, one weekend there is about all I can endure before I go stir-crazy.

Not that Winston Salem--where I've lived all my life--is any hotbed of excitement. But what I've seen in my hometown has some correlation, I think, with your little burg.


Some urban renewal money flowed into Maryville/Alcoa around the time of the Knoxville World's Fair in 1982 and the cities have tendered it well--and likewise revenue from converting all that bucolic East Tennessee farmland into subdivisions. So, you have a nice setting to work with. But a pretty facade does not a community make.

Winston Salem has had numerous "downtown revitalization" projects in my lifetime and our downtown remained as lifeless as ever. It was not until the late 1990s

theater students to come.

MC alum Nancy Allen was quoted in a 1993 edition of the Highland Echo saying, "When you're acting, you create another person with its own energy. At the close of a show, where does all of that energy go?"

Whether Lilly is the spirit of a shy costume assistant or just the creation of imaginative minds, it is true that she is the manifestation of the energy of the theater. She represents the link among all of the people who have participated in the theater department over the years, and in that capacity she will endure. ☹



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when Winston Salem realized that a serious side effect of its boring town was the draining away of young professionals who wanted to live in a more hip, cultural surrounding.

The mayor actually commissioned a study group to examine the problem. One of the things that came out of it was that a young paralegal came up with the idea to start an email list called "Smitty's Notes" (think Craig's List even before it was a household term. See: www.smittysnotes.com). It was that grassroots effort that has (in this lifer's opinion) turned things around for Winston Salem.

That's why I was excited to see your effort. I feel the same thing happening there in Blount County. Keep it up, guys! Jeff Smith had many brick walls to make him discouraged, but he kept chipping away and it's made all the difference in the world for us here. The city muckity-mucks can build the greenway and refurbish the downtown buildings, but it's up to you guys to really make it happen.

Warm regards,
Clark Harper
Winston Salem NC

Have any questions or suggestions?

Contact the Underground: Blount's Alternative Voice

@

UndergroundB@gmail.com

MC Myths and Legends Part II: The Theater Ghost

Emily Winsauer, Staff Writer

Memory is a funny thing. Details about deceased loved ones, childhood recollections, friends' birthdays and locker combinations seem to inevitably slip away as time passes. The exact opposite is true of supernatural tales. First, the story consists of a vague impression, along the lines of "I get a funny feeling about that place..." Before long, someone has remembered hearing a story about something that happened there. Over time, the details are filled in and a full-blown ghost story has evolved.

Usually this process takes a while, which is why it is so surprising that Wilson Chapel at Maryville College is the home of two of the school's most well-known residents, theater ghosts and star-crossed lovers Lilly and Andrew.

Wilson Chapel, completed in 1954, was funded by the same monetary donation that provided for the construction of the Fine Arts Center. Wilson replaced Voorhees Chapel, which dramatically burned to the ground in the middle of the night in 1947. However, Wilson and its sister building the FAC have, in turn, outlived their usefulness and will soon be supplanted by the much-debated Civic Arts Center, which will occupy the same piece of land as the two

buildings currently do, and as Voorhees Chapel before them.

The story of the ghosts and of Lilly in particular is well known to theater students, who leave an empty chair on the catwalk for her at every performance. Over the years, many people have had experiences with her, and notice a definite personality. Students say she even has a favorite dress, a short black and white jumper.

According to legend, Lilly was an avid lover of the theater. She worked with props and costumes, but always longed to be an actress. Andrew, Lilly's boyfriend, also worked in the theater. Unfortunately, he fell passionately in love with one of the other actresses, so much so that he would sit under the stage and listen to his beloved practicing above. Lilly was, of course, heartbroken. Some believe that she murdered Andrew in a jealous rage in one of the downstairs bathrooms, and then killed herself as well. The bloodstains could not be cleaned from the walls, and so the room was painted red. Others say instead that in her anger, Lilly dropped a light on Andrew's head while he was working on the stage below, killing him instantly. In her misery, she hung herself from the catwalk, right where her chair sits today.

In spite of her murderous actions, Lilly is considered to be a friendly spirit. According to students, she mostly engages in mischievous behaviors like hiding props and costumes, which inexplicably reappear later. Others, however, witness a different side of her personality. Karson Beaty, who graduated in 1998, had such an experience: "One night I was up in the costume room by myself. While looking at costumes, I heard someone crying. I assumed it was my friend, and I called out her name, and then walked around the room looking for her. When I didn't find anyone, I ran downstairs as quickly as possible. I found my friend in another part of the theatre and she was not crying. I also asked around to be sure no one else had been up there, and they had not. We could only imagine it was Lilly!" Such stories are common, though not all are authentic. Some upperclassmen admit to playing jokes on the younger students, blaming their tricks on Lilly. Other stories are hard to refute, and most theater participants are not willing to risk her anger by ignoring her presence.

Andrew is, apparently, a less benevolent presence. He lurks beneath the stage where the props are kept, supposedly listening for his beloved actress practicing above. Stagehands claim that they sometimes feel him brush up against them while they are working in the area.

Regardless of whether these legends really do reveal the presence of supernatural beings, the stories are a colorful part of our local history. [Continues on next page]

Now that the theater which Lilly and Andrew inhabit is going to be [Continued on Next Page]



Photograph by Steph Zilles

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Celebrating the Fight for Equality

Rebekah Lührs, Staff Writer

There are a number of reasons why every year communities pull together to celebrate Black History Month by promoting programs that honor the battles of the past, educate participants and celebrate the cultural traditions that brought comfort and hope in times of struggle. Though the United States claims to have always supported diversity and equality, it has only been in this last century that these rights have been established. Yet in some ways, the established rules stand as a testament to a societal structure that has not fully changed the hearts of people.

No one can deny that there have been drastic changes in the minds of many people concerning race, but it is important to avoid becoming so lost in these progressions that remaining problems are ignored. Yes, things have changed: no longer do we condone the use of slaves, and no longer are there facilities sectioned off as a result of racial discrimination no longer are African Americans held below the natural rights. But do these facts mean that there is a heartfelt equality that exists? Are people now colorblind and fully accepting? Unfortunately, no.

Though not established by law, a racial disconnect lies in public housing districts, city zonings, and the statistical income gap between blacks and whites in America. Although we have come quite far, there is still more ground to cover. As Americans, we often stand in condemnation of the world when it comes to human rights and equality, while forgetting that we too struggle to uphold this equality on many levels in our own communities.

Community Events Honoring Black History Month

- Feb 1-11** "Fences," a drama by August Wilson, will run at the Clarence Brown Theatre, Knoxville (UTK). About a boy who has to face his own barriers after his father, who was once a talented baseball player, is barred from the major leagues by the color line.
- Feb 4** Voices of Praise will be having their 15th Anniversary Concert at St. John Baptist Church. Concert is from 3-5pm.
- Feb 6** Theatrical puppet production, *Ananse!* in celebration of Black History Month. Performance starts at 7:00pm and is at the Bijou Theater in Knoxville. Tickets are \$6.00 for adults and \$4.00 for children age 12 and under, and are available at all library locations and the Tennessee Theatre Box Office.
- Feb 7** Performance of *A Woman Called Truth*, a play By Sandra Fenichel Asher celebrating the life of Sojourner Truth. There will also be a dinner starting at 6:00 (\$5) and the performance is at 6:30. At First United Methodist Church in Maryville (804 Montvale Station Road).
- Feb 13** Soweto Gospel Choir, direct form South Africa, performs at the Tennessee Theater. Tickets are \$36.50 and \$30, plus applicable service fees.
- Feb 22** Spoken word Poet Taalam Acey will be 9:30-11pm on the Maryville College Campus in Isaacs (Bartlett Hall). Free and open to public.
- All Month** *Stomp the Yard* will be playing at Foothills Cinema.

When Reverend John Colquitt, pastor at St. John Baptist Church in Alcoa, spoke at the closing Martin Luther King festivities at Maryville College, he reminded us that Martin Luther King Day was established so that all people could equally honor the words and actions of a man who empowered blacks and whites alike into action. The same goes with Black History Month as all people acknowledge the past and how far we have advanced.

Yet sadly, many people forget this. Some, like an old acquaintance of mine from high school, get caught in the mentality of "Oh, Black History Month, that's where blacks can enjoy their freedom." And with that in mind, he would choose to go take a nap rather than attend a service. Yet this is problematic because statements such as these enforce the same gaps that existed a hundred years ago. Black history month is not about the African Americans' freedom alone; it is a celebration of human rights. It is in honor of all of those who fought for these freedoms and a chance for us to come together and honor the heroes of the past.

In this spirit, I would encourage you to celebrate Black History Month with the local community here in Blount County. There are several events, some hosted by Maryville College and others by the cities along with some in Knoxville as well. Black History Month celebrates our history as Americans as we began establishing equal rights. Let's keep this spirit alive. 🍌

Music Review: The Weekends

Brian Phelps, Staff Writer

Meet San Dimas' Own... The Weekends, "a long-running joke in bad taste." Dressed sharp and possibly looking to kill, this is a band that has been all over the United States in its relentless goal to piss everyone off and reform the dismal state of post-grunge rock and roll. Beginning their sordid musical conquest in San Dimas, California, guitarist Anthony Catholic, a.k.a. "Tony the One and Only" and percussionist Rutch Dikus wanted to create a band with style that would hit an audience like a punch in the mouth, a band that would tell any kid with dyed hair wearing tight jeans and a midriff shirt, "you are not rock and roll."

For a time this went well, but the in-your-face style along with some shadowing escapades got them in trouble in their hometown, and they quickly found themselves on the road playing odd shows and running from the law, which wants them arrested in a rumored thirty-six states. During this audacious stage in their career, The Weekends found themselves in Red Bank, New Jersey, where Mickey "New Orleans" Shitstorm was discovered sitting on the side of the road. As Anthony tells it, "I said to him hey, uh, you play bass? We need a bass player, we've been traveling around with just the two of us, drums and a guitar for long enough, and people aren't taking us seriously. So I asked the guy, I said hey you play bass and he said no, so I was like well you wanna play bass? And he's like sure why not... so we threw a suit at him, told him to put it on, and he's been with us ever since."

The adventures in New Jersey didn't last, however, and eventually the band found its way to Maryville, Tennessee,

looking for a safe refuge from the law. They have been here ever since, preparing for their ultimate dream of playing on the Conan O'Brien show.

To accomplish this dream, The Weekends have been constantly perfecting their music, drawing from such influences as The Ventures, Dick Dale, Armed Robbery, Paul Anka, Pabst Blue Ribbon, Johnny Cash, and Jack Daniels. These influences have helped mold The Weekends sound into a mellow instrumental surf rock nostalgic of the 50s that explodes with a gravitating energy and heart in their live show. Truly, The Weekends are simply to be experienced. The band's songs, named after days of the week and holidays, are slow jams and hard jams both, and their tunes are mixed with an occasional cover, a favorite being the ever popular "Diana" by Paul Anka, sung by percussionist Rutch.

The name "The Weekends" itself is also telling of the band's personality. The name springs from the idea that the weekend is the greatest time of the week. It's that time "when you kick back and cut lose... it's your time." Similarly, The Weekends feel that they themselves are one of the greatest band's bands of all time. They believe absolutely in their music and fight against the commercialism that has become all too common in the industry: "It's our music, it's our world..." says Anthony, "we stand for everything rock and roll is... music makes you feels something, it doesn't make you buy something, and that's what we're trying to promote."



Photograph by Brian Phelps

Helping them accomplish that goal is El Deth Records, located in Knoxville and responsible for Sunspheric Sounds, a compilation CD which features The Weekends as the vanguard along with several other bands including The Weekend's good friend, Skippy and the Bellbottoms, a solo project from the great Jeffrey Orion Maynard. In the future, The Weekends hope to release a full-length album from the El Deth studio to satisfy the fans who are looking for "Weekends that we can buy," but until then, enthusiasts can visit their El Deth's website or their MySpace page to hear The Weekends' exciting reinvention of rock and roll. 🍌

For more, visit
<<http://www.eldeth.com>>

Capital Punishment: The Case of Saddam

Holley Roberts, Staff Writer

On Saturday, December 30, former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein hung from the gallows. He was killed for the dominant role he played in the death of countless innocent citizens, and while it appears justice was reached through his execution, one cannot help but question the relevance and usefulness of such an end. Now that Hussein is dead, many Shi'ite Muslims and others around the world claim to feel a sense of peace, a sense that justice has been rightly served. Yet what does state-sponsored killing have to do with justice? Regardless of the crimes an individual commits, what power gives a government the right to execute human beings, however decidedly unrighteous their actions? Superficially speaking, the formula is simple: murder in exchange for murder. But what lesson does this practice serve to teach? No doubt, revenge is the underlying variable in this morally tricky equation.

A number of arguments exist in favor of capital punishment, in varying degrees. One such argument purports that it is an effective deterrent against future crimes. Another approach professes that the death of a criminal serves appropriately as an equal exchange for the conviction of murder. However, such arguments often prove false in practice. The only way capital punishment deters future crimes lies in the fact that a single criminal's existence is stamped out, and he or she is therefore rendered physically incapable of committing further crimes. Of course, there is no accurate manner in which to project the effect of a convicted person's death on other potential criminals within society.

In addition, the argument that state-sponsored killing is an appropriate punishment for murder is, in essence, subjective. The practice sends a clear message, much like war,

that killing is justified under certain circumstances. Clearly, the problem here is that such circumstantial lines are unmistakably ambiguous and often center on fundamentally treacherous assumptions with regard to human nature. In the case of Hussein, the very same questions apply, among numerous others. This is not an American or an Iraqi issue. Rather, it is a human issue. Hussein, along with a number of his direct cohorts, is dead. One cannot help but point out that, in spite of his hanging, sectarian violence rages on in the Middle East.

So, to what end was his execution carried out? Who stands to benefit save the international media in an opportunity to broadcast and glean profit from such an event? Possibly the families of those murdered under Saddam's regime felt a sigh of relief at the news of his death. Maybe some even shouted with joy for a moment with a jolt of revenge. Still, as history is quick to remind us, violence begets more violence. Nor does it help that the very individual nature of capital punishment, as it is exemplified in Hussein's particular situation, tends to make an idol or martyr of the executed one. In various news accounts of Hussein's execution from all over the world, witnesses and writers alike described him as "calm" and "dignified." Regardless of the legality or morality of Hussein's execution (and it was carried out illegally according to Iraqi law), the event's practicality is most obviously in question. State-sponsored killing removes the stamp of murder from the hands of an individual and places it in the collective hands of society. In this sense, we failed to rise above the atrocities committed by Hussein during his lifetime. Instead, we managed to stoop nearer to those very actions ourselves. ☹

Animal Shelters: Private vs. County-Owned

Diane Hicks, Staff Writer

Many worthy causes start with the vision of one before taking hold and gaining momentum through the continued efforts, dedication, and support of many. The grassroots efforts and vision of Steve Phipps to establish a no-kill animal shelter and complete solution to animal control is such a cause. This article will address both of the proposed animal shelters for Blount County: a "kill shelter" and a "no-kill shelter," how they differ and how they are similar.

There has been no animal control in Blount County since January 1st of this year because the contract between Blount County and the City of Maryville to provide the service expired. This fact has received ongoing coverage in the local newspaper.

However, due to the various names of groups and individuals, some changes to previous names or membership, coupled with apparent disharmony among certain groups and individuals, confusion has resulted. Clarification is needed so that the residents of Blount County and interested persons may know the facts about the shelters, how they can become involved and help, and most importantly, how the health, welfare, and safety of our animals and people can best be served.

As of January 24, 2007, plans for two separate, permanent shelters are underway, in addition to a proposed arrangement with the Loudon County Animal Shelter to provide temporary animal control for Blount County. One of the proposed shelters will be privately owned and funded as a "no-kill shelter." The other will be county owned and operated as a "kill shelter."

The Smoky Mountain Animal Care Foundation, recently created and apparently replacing the previous group known as CUBBC (Citizens United for a Better Blount County) is seeking to build a municipal or county-owned shelter (a "kill shelter"). Some of the animal groups and individuals affiliated with this effort are Animal Works, Arfnet, Blount Care and Almost Home, and Terry Morgan, Teresa Cutshaw, and Rick Yeager. These groups have proposed building a shelter in an existing industrial area.

This proposed county-owned shelter would operate in accordance with Tennessee law, housing animals for the required 72-hour period, employing animal control officers to pick up and bring strays into the facility, responding to complaints regarding biting animals, and accepting animals from the community that are "surrendered" by their owners. Any animal not adopted, or accepted by another group for continued adoption efforts, would be euthanized after the 72-hour period expires. Where a pet is surrendered, the law permits euthanizing at any time following surrender. In some cases an animal is not adoptable and is therefore euthanized. This is the concept of a "kill shelter."

The Blount County Humane Society (hereafter shortened to Blount Humane Society) was founded in 2003 by its president, Steve Phipps (who also proposed the plans for the pending temporary shelter arrangement with Loudon County),

wants to build a privately owned and funded No Kill Animal Shelter. Phipps' plan and vision is to offer a complete solution to animal control and overpopulation.

The Blount County Humane Society no kill shelter will be modeled after a no kill shelter in Utah, called Best Friends. The shelter will not accept animals directly from the public but will accept those whose time has run out at the county shelter. Those animals will be kept until adopted. The shelter will also include a free or low-cost spay and neuter clinic at the facility for all animals sheltered there, as well as the community at large, and will have educational programs for children to learn good animal stewardship, and ultimately, a wildlife sanctuary, animal talk radio, and more. Individuals wishing to become a part of this effort can join the Bark-N-Purr Club and contribute on a regular basis. There is also a magazine published bi-monthly called Bark-N-Purr AniMag and a website, <www.blountcountyhumanesociety.org>. The individuals working with the group are referred to collectively as "The Pack."

The Blount County Humane Society would like to build its shelter in Townsend on at least 10 acres of land to be able to fulfill its "complete solution". It is hoping for a donation of land and is accumulating material donations for the building. The Blount County Humane Society and The Pack members were at the Foothills Fall Festival, in the Townsend Christmas Parade, and will have their Extravaganza Fundraising Event in May.


The reality is that there is uncontrolled breeding, too many unwanted animals, and not enough homes for them to live in. It is not possible to save them all. While the City of Maryville was providing animal control for Blount County, the rate of euthanization was 70 percent. To put it differently, almost three fourths of the animals brought into the shelter were killed. That figure is unacceptably high, and overpopulation of animals is the root of the problem.

The proposed county-owned shelter will handle the day-to-day animal control. It is needed to protect animals and people alike. The private no-kill shelter will rescue the adoptable animals whose time has run out. However, this will not solve the problem. It will only treat the symptoms. Both shelters will have limited space and resources.

If you don't believe this is a problem, you don't need to go far to see packs of dogs roaming, or feral cats hiding in dark corners all around Blount County.

Most of you reading this article cannot conceive of a world without pets. Many of you who own pets also have pets that have been neutered or spayed. Because there are irresponsible pet owners and other circumstances, there are dogs and cats roaming about, and your pet can become pregnant. Each litter then goes on to breed, and the cycle continues unless it is broken.

Animals cannot help themselves. Be responsible. Get involved. Your help is needed. ☹



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Editorial: State of Disunion

Meredith Collier, Guest Writer

Who else enjoyed Nancy Pelosi and Dick Cheney's consistent inability to clap at the same time? No Child Left Behind - Cheney goes up, Pelosi stays down. Immigration - Pelosi goes up, Cheney stays down.

Sort of like whack-a-mole.

I have to say, I sympathized with Pelosi's expression of disgust when the President laid out his plan for reduced healthcare costs via tax cuts, of all things. Either you have effective state or national healthcare, or you don't. Either people can afford to take care of their health, or they can't. A few thousand dollars off of their tax returns is not likely to help this, and it ignores the travesty that is the state of our

“Climate change, terror, health-- all of these are global problems with global solutions and they will not be solved by any one nation.”

current healthcare system. Don't tell people that the state will provide for them when, in fact, the state does not and cannot do so.

All of this sounds particularly lovely when contrasted with the President's promise to balance the federal budget and reduce debt. Yes, lowering taxes is sure to accomplish this. Absolutely.

The government loves to play with numbers, almost as much as television journalists love to play with statistics.

Don't get me started on No Child Left Behind. The beauty of that system is that if you want math and science scores to rise, you simply lower the testing standards until - surprise! - the scores begin to rise. And then you pat yourself on the back.

The system has done some good, particularly in low-income areas, but on the whole it is an impediment to the ability of good teachers to teach to the best of their abilities.

You want to “help the children?” Pay the teachers more. Give them incentives to follow through on more rigorous training standards. Promise cushier retirement pensions, and allow teachers more freedom in their classrooms to tailor their lessons to their students' needs, not to the state's perception of their needs. Make Teach for America a bit more like a local Peace Corps, with bright, capable professionals taking a few years out of their careers to get into the classrooms and “do their thing.”

Will helping our teachers and students in this way raise taxes? Yes. Absolutely. But I can't think of anything more important to a nation than its education system. Without a population of thinking individuals, every other concern is pretty much moot.

Bush's plan for immigration (the resident worker program) seems relatively fair, and the decision to put more pressure on employers who consistently hire illegal workers

for low wages is a good one. But in order for this to work, our government will have to work closely with the Mexican government - in part to make staying in Mexico look more appealing than it currently is - and I can't say I see any real cooperation coming anytime soon.

And Iraq. Ah, Iraq. The President is right to insist that we stay where we are. We've gotten ourselves and the Iraqi people into this mess, and it is our duty to do what we can to fix what we can. But escalation will not help (“surge” is such a cute word, which means absolutely nothing in military terms). This is not a situation that will be helped by more military muscle. The government needs a nation-building agency, if indeed it is our stated desire to “bring democracy and freedom to the world.” But we don't have thinkers in our government capable of designing such an agency, and if we did, they would not find the necessary support to make such an agency effective. More soldiers will result in more retaliation and more deaths. If we subdue the insurgents by military might, it will not help to create a free and democratic Iraq.

We don't understand the principles of nation building. We assume that the system that worked for us will work for all. The American Revolution was formed and waged by Americans, not by some good-intentioned occupying force. Without an infrastructure of educated, willing citizens, how can Iraq-- or any nation-- hope to change itself for the better?

What a messy world this is.

Anyhow, this struck me as a very insular speech. America will tackle climate change, America will tackle the war on terror, America will create the new technologies to improve healthcare and reduce energy expenditure. How can we justify not signing to the Kyoto Protocol now that we've officially acknowledged the problem that it is designed to alleviate?

If this “America-centric” rhetoric was an attempt to make us feel good about ourselves (which it was), I found it lacking. Climate change, terror, health-- all of these are global problems with global solutions and they will not be solved by any one nation. Businessmen, economists, doctors - the “capitalists” of the world - all recognize this. A government that does not see its nation partly in terms of its place in a larger world is a shortsighted government indeed.

Of course, how can a government that is itself handicapped by divisiveness hope to work with any other governments at all? A strong executive branch could harness the tensions of the legislature to bring a new sense of unity, fairness, and effectiveness to the American government, but a strong executive branch is exactly what we no longer have.

I wonder if any of the candidates for the 2008 elections-- Democrat or Republican-- will do any better.

Does anyone have a plan? ☹

Somalia: The Third War

Thiago Buchert, Staff Writer

With American forces admittedly stretched so thin in Iraq and Afghanistan, one might think it unlikely that the United States would become militarily involved in another country. However, this belief was disproved with American air strikes against Al-Qaeda camps in Somalia on January 7. This followed an invasion of Somalia by US-backed Ethiopian forces. American policy towards this impoverished country is deeply misguided and threatens to make Somalia an Al-Qaeda stronghold.

One must know the history of American involvement in Somalia to understand this. During, the United States supported the dictatorship of Siad Barre due to its anti-communist stance. When the communist threat evaporated in 1989, so did American aid, which resulted in the collapse of the Barre regime and the beginning of the Somali civil war that continues today. In 1993, the US government sent troops in for humanitarian purposes. However, it is almost impossible to send troops into a country during a civil war without implicitly or explicitly taking sides, so the US was seen as an invading force, which led to the notorious “black hawk down” incident and the subsequent US pullout.

Late last year, Somalia was nearly unified under the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), which advocated Sharia law. After 9-11, the US attitude toward Islamic states became extremely belligerent, so it gave tacit support as its regional ally Ethiopia led a force to oust the regime. Ethiopia's numerical and technological superiority quickly smashed the ICU forces. But the battle is far from over.

The first reason the US did this is that, in a country that hasn't known stability for 15 years, the ICU was seen as a force that wasn't perfect but still allowed people to send their children to school without being shot at. The removal of this force by foreign US-backed Ethiopia, has given the ICU a boost of nationalist support. Moreover, Ethiopia has stated its intentions to withdraw all forces by the end of January, which will leave a massive power vacuum wherein the invigorated and even more anti-American ICU will take control.

But let's assume that the US actually wins. The group that's fighting the ICU is a CIA-invented group of warlords called the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism (ARPCT) whose name is as poorly constructed as its political structure. If the alliance wins, it will not doubt degenerate into the same sort of infighting and instability that Somalis thought they were finished with. The transitional government that the alliance represents and its plea for AU peacekeeping forces simply will not happen.

Secondly, by supporting the Ethiopian invasion and

later launching air strikes of its own, the US has confused Somalis as to which force is attacking them. The danger with this is that the Ethiopian government is not something the US wants to be associated with. The Prime Minister Meles Zenawi is prone to rather nasty habits such as electoral rigging, protestor massacring and, if Human Rights Watch is correct, flat-out genocide. A government like this that has no compunction about killing its own citizens will surely not take much care in ensuring minimum civilian casualties in Somalia. And if Vietnam has taught the world anything, it is that one cannot kill civilians and defeat a popular insurgency.

Another public relations problem the US has created is the simple fact that in the past six years, the US has attacked three separate Muslim countries. Just this idea is enough to make the United States despised in the Middle East for generations to come.

One fact that might get lost in the news is that,



Source: *The CIA's World Factbook*

before the invasion, the ICU had no proven links with al-Qaeda. I write “before” since nothing will drive a country towards extremism like a foreign invasion, so they might already be working together. The black-and-white myopia that has characterized the Bush administration tends to look at all Islamic societies as the Taliban, but there are more shades of gray than that. The terrorist training camps present before the Ethiopian invasion were there due to the chronic instability and not to ICU support. The ICU had even begun to do beneficial things like clamp down on pirating.

Also, from a humanitarian point of view, the intervention was inadvisable. Not only has the US caused more bloodshed, it has also created a crisis with massive amounts of refugees being stuck in the country as neighboring Ethiopia and Kenya have sealed off their borders. Air strikes in general also create high civilian casualties, and the recent US attacks in Somalia are no exception.

Indeed the greatest problem with US intervention in Somalia is that it's likely to increase. Today there have even been unconfirmed reports of American ground troops, under the title of “advisors,” being present in the country. If the US does not adopt a more conciliatory posture and a more diplomatic mindset, Americans again could be seeing the bodies of their soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. ☹

Perspective: On Cultural Relativism

Mary Moss, Staff Writer

These days, we seem caught between two equally repugnant philosophical stances: on the one hand, a belief in absolute shades of black and white and, on the other hand, an equally absolute and dangerous extreme - cultural relativism. In a country that is outsourcing tutoring services for American children, whose national minority has changed from African American to Hispanic, and that is fighting a so-called war on terrorism, these two stances can only serve to bolster ethnocentric views that act as catalysts to prolonged warfare and multicultural tensions on a global level.

The situation in the Middle East provides a good case in point. Many Americans simply cannot understand why a young man would commit suicide for his religion or nation to cause harm to another person. They take the view that Christianity and Islam are irreconcilable, that no shared values connect the two. Furthermore, some argue that not only is there no connection between the two, but that Islam is actually so different and foreign it poses a threat to Western culture.

Here, cultural relativism enters into its unholy alliance with cultural absolutism. For the cultural absolutist, not only are Christianity and Islam irreconcilably different, one is also better than the other. The just and right culture must be protected. But is there really no connection between the two? Are the differences in values so vast that Christians and Muslims can find no shared values?

Some American soldiers fighting in Iraq are Christians. These soldiers believe in Jesus Christ as Messiah and believe that the Christian God is the only god, and believe it a sin to worship any other god or idol. If the name "Jesus Christ" were changed to "Muhammad" and "God" to "Allah" this sentence could just as easily describe a suicide bomber. Islam and Christianity are not so different and are, in fact, what tie the American soldier and the suicide bomber together. Just as Jesus came and taught the Jewish masses in Palestine and was eventually hailed as the Messiah, so did Muhammad come to Arabia and spread what was divinely revealed to him. The message in Christianity and Islam is essentially the same: only one god exists, and through this god comes salvation. Jesus taught that it was his Father who was the one Father in Heaven, and Muhammad taught, "there is no god but Allah."

The fact that the core teachings of Muhammad and Jesus are remarkably similar aside, a Christian fighter and a suicide bomber are each fighting for his or her own religion. For each, faith is a crucial value - "value" here defined as something "worth having, getting, or doing." Each of these men is then fighting for the value of faith, something which they deem so worth having and keeping intact (getting) that they are willing to fight and sacrifice their lives for their nation (doing).

But perhaps this example is too obvious. Thousands of miles away, completely isolated from the current crisis in the Middle East, exists a tribe of people so separated from the rest

of the world that they aren't even aware of the wars being fought outside their jungle. This tribe, the Korowai of New Guinea, is one of the last societies on earth still practicing cannibalism. However, the Korowai do not kill their tribesmen simply to eat, but rather as part of an established justice system. They believe that illness in the tribe comes from male witches named "khakhua," who are said to eat their victims' insides, and then kill them through the heart with a magical arrow. The victim will utter the name of his khakhua before death, and it is then the duty of the male family members and a family friend to kill and eat the khakhua.

This practice is strange and there is nothing like it in most other cultures of the world - supposedly. But what about the United States? The United States employs capital punishment. When a criminal cold-bloodedly kills another, that person is subject to execution. No, the United States' citizens do not then proceed to eat the remains of the criminal, but at the base level the cannibalistic act of killing the khakhua is not dissimilar to lethally injecting a death row inmate. Both the inmate and the khakhua have committed an unforgivable wrong, and both societies have seen fit to punish the perpetrators.

Each society sees great worth in punishing the criminal. But on a more basic level, each of these societies places value on the human life that has been taken. While it may seem strange and horrific to a Westerner for one human to eat the remains of his fellow man, the same values of punishment and worth of human life are on the line.

However, the Korowai tribe doesn't even believe the khakhua are human anymore. The Korowai are just as horrified at the thought of eating another human being as we are. When a Smithsonian reporter asked a member or the Korowai if they ever ate the slain bodies of enemies, the report received a perplexed look and the rebuttal, "Of course not... We don't eat humans, we only eat khakhua." Perhaps it's really the Korowai who place more worth in a human life. ☹



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Nuclear Weapons: A Necessary Conversation

Brian Phelps, Staff Writer

This past month, students at Maryville College were presented with a special opportunity to learn as Ambassador Thomas Graham Jr., Special Representative of the President for Arms Control, Nonproliferation, and Disarmament, spoke to students and answered questions in Lawson Auditorium on campus. His topic: Nuclear Weapons. Ambassador Graham has an incredible expertise in the matter, having served as a senior US diplomat in every major arms control and non-proliferation treaty for the past thirty years, including the historical Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), the most well known of its kind. Graham's message had a gentle yet striking urgency; nuclear proliferation must come to an end and disarmament must be undertaken. The latent destruction in nuclear weapons is enough to destroy the world several times over, and it is senseless to hold onto a power that is capable of our own annihilation.

The problem is terribly serious, considering the following: The infamous bomb dropped on Hiroshima that killed 330,000 residents (between 80-85% of the city's population) had a yield of 12.6 kilotons. We now rate the yield of nuclear weapons in megatons, the largest bomb ever tested being 50 of them. I'll let you do the math. To illustrate, Graham explained to students that a single megaton is the explosive equivalent of a freight train loaded with TNT that stretched from New York City to Los Angeles. Now try to think of the strategic use of such a weapon against an enemy. How about a terrorist? With the War on Terror being the hallmark of the United States' current style of international relations, one might wonder about the use of even a half-megaton bomb against a terrorist cell. Aside from the fact that we can hardly hit terrorists with our precision weapons (even if we hit the right building, they've often already moved), a nuclear weapon of that size would almost certainly result in needless civilian casualties.

Even more troubling is that the only reason any states hold onto nuclear weapons is to deter other nuclear powers from using them. Nobody wants to throw the first stone, yet all parties argue that they need nuclear weapons because someone else might have them too. The Brookings Institution's estimation that our government has spent \$5.5 trillion dollars on nuclear weapons since 1940 adds interesting numbers to the question: Can we justify spending this much on nuclear weapons? It has been tried. For example, some argue that a major part of the reason we dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, aside from making a power statement to the Soviet Union, was to vindicate the astronomical amount of money we had spent preparing them. With all the energy that went into their creation, the use of atomic weapons simply seemed the logical next step. Moreover, the fact that we basically knew Japan was ready to surrender before we dropped the bombs begs us to examine our actions as a means to end the war.

But what have we learned since then? How can we still pursue nuclear weapons when in hindsight, so many argue that the United States never should have dropped the bombs in the first place? If we have spent over two-thirds of our national debt (and add interest) on developing weapons that threaten the entire world's survival and provide for no practical or justifiable uses, are we really making the best choice for our nation and the world? Furthermore, our flaunting the terms of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty is giving foreign states legitimate reason to doubt that we are serious about disarmament. Ambassador Graham feels strongly about this. He clarified that if the United States does not take responsibility to follow the terms of the nuclear treaties, it will encourage other states to do the same, thereby putting nuclear weapons into a greater number of irresponsible hands. This means nuclear weapons would then be even more likely to end up in the hands of individuals who might use them irrationally. This should not be allowed but will inevitably continue unless the United States and other nuclear countries stand up to their commitments to disarm. If this does not take place, states like Iran and North Korea will be left feeling as though they have no choice but to answer our nuclear weapons with their own. If such a situation arises, the consequences could be dire. ☹



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Confronting the Ties of Immigration

Sarah Hailey, Staff Writer

On September 29th of last year, the Senate approved the Secure Fence Act, a project that plans to stop the flow of illegal immigration with a concrete wall. A majority of 80 senators voted yes, with only 19 senators standing in opposition to the act, which has already been signed into law by President Bush.

The act details the construction of a 700-mile fence along the southwestern border from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico, a border that is 2,000 miles long (simple math suggests a slight flaw in this picture).

In addition to the "physical infrastructure" entailing a 2-layer fence, vehicle barriers, and additional checkpoints, the act also entails "unmanned aerial vehicles, ground-based sensors, radar coverage, and cameras" which will further enhance security along the border.

To top it all off, the act will increase Border Patrol personnel—the icing on the cake. After all, someone has to keep

an eye on the radars, sit at checkpoints, and round up the truckloads of immigrants who will inevitably make it through all these new security measures. President Bush has been beefing up Border Patrol throughout his time in office. He boasts that on his watch, Border Patrol will have doubled from 9,000 in 2001 to 18,000 by 2008. Congratulations, Mr. President.

The estimated cost of the project is roughly 6 billion U.S. dollars.

Congress passed \$1.2 billion, roughly enough to cover 370 miles of the fences (this one is for consistency's sake).

Setting all logistical absurdities aside, let's step back and consider the situation within its context. Today, 41 million U.S. residents are Latinos. Every day Latin Americans risk their lives and leave their homes in search of a future; a future where houses are built of wood and stone rather than tarps and crates; a future where children live in relative security, free from the whims of drug lords; and a future where an honest day's work provides for the necessities of life.

Do our leaders really think that building a wall is a viable solution to the problem of illegal immigration, or even a step in the right direction? Is a wall really a legitimate policy in a democracy?

Back in 1989, the "free world" (propaganda that survived the cold war era, translated "capitalist world") praised the fall of the Berlin wall. The wall was a stark representation of the oppression of dictatorship. At that time in the West, walls just weren't en vogue.

Presently, the wall trend is growing. We have all seen how well it is going in Israel. If it weren't for the wall towering around the West Bank, instigating economic stagnation and degrading the Palestinian people's quality of life and human dignity, the Palestinians may never have voted Hamas into power.

Yet even with all these fine examples of just how blatantly stupid the idea of building a wall really is, somehow 80 of our senators, including good ol' Hillary, thought it reasonable enough. Or

at least they saw it as a perfect last-minute opportunity for some political leverage just before mid-term elections.

Walls are designed to stifle that one nagging question we all should be asking. Why?

Why is there such a constant flow of illegal immigrants in the first place? Why is it that people are so desperate that they are willing to trek through the desert for days to reside in a foreign land?

The solution to the question of illegal immigration is found in the why. But to ask why requires an open dialogue with those very individuals who defy our laws to live within our borders. It demands an effort to understand the other. It eliminates the us vs. them mentality. It requires an honest examination of the facts of the situation.

In 1994, the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement was signed, seeking to open free trade among the United States, Canada, and Mexico. While the pact promised to boost the U.S. economy while helping to lift Mexico out of poverty, such has hardly been the case. Walking the dusty streets of the countless shantytowns of any Mexican border city, you will search in vain for the slightest sign of prosperity.

For starters, NAFTA allows heavily subsidized U.S. crop imports, most notably corn, to swamp the Mexican agricultural industry, paralyzing Mexican farmers who are unable to compete in the market. In the past decade, this devastation has forced nearly 2 million Mexican farmers to find work elsewhere.

NAFTA paved the way for U.S. companies to open tax-exempt factories called maquiladoras along the border of

Mexico. As these plants began springing up in the major Mexican border towns, many Latin Americans migrated north to find work in these maquiladoras. Over the course of just a few years, the city of Nogales grew from 40,000 to 400,000. Yet without a tax base to support such population growth, the government cannot provide the basic infrastructure of roads, schools, sewers, and solid waste disposal, leaving these new residents little choice but to forge out makeshift communities that consist of little more than dirt roads and tin boxes.

These U.S.-owned factories employ Mexican workers for about \$1 an hour. In addition to the perk of tax-exemption, U.S. corporations hop the border to skirt the social responsibility in other respects as well. Mexico's lax labor laws and environmental regulations prove to be more generous to the corporate interests of low costs and high profits. Why not cross the border? This is the question both sides are asking.

The reality is that while NAFTA clearly is not the sole cause of Mexico's economic failures, it does indeed have a role to play in this drama, thereby placing the U.S. at the scene of the crime. Our own hands are stained. As citizens of this democracy, we have a responsibility to address the real causes of this dilemma rather than seeking to slap a 700-mile concrete band-aid on a gaping wound of poverty, corruption and exploitation. ☹



Photograph by Peter Coats

Gallery: Beyond The Borders

Peter Coats, Photographs from Nogales, Mexico

