

Media ignores Iraq when convenient Promote tolerance, not specific lifestyles



BOBBY DESPAIN

Where has the Iraq War gone? Since the war began—for that matter, even before the war began—the news was filled with Iraq coverage. Headlines screamed out the latest body counts and alleged atrocities, while editorial pages lambasted the decision to go to war.

Now, five years into the war, those headlines have all but disappeared. In August, September and October of 2004, the New York Times ran 254, 328 and 383 stories that mentioned Iraq at least five times, respectively. This year only 80 stories in August and 86 in September mentioned Iraq at least five times. The same drop in coverage occurred at the Washington Post, who in 2004 ran 195, 248 and 290 stories in August, September and October that mentioned Iraq at least five times. This year the Post only ran 65 such stories in August and 105 in September.

What changed? Fortunately, and at great consternation for terrorists and the left, Iraq is a success story, as of now. American and Iraqi casualties are at all-time lows, as are enemy-initiated attacks on pipeline bombings. A functioning government built on legitimate elections and a constitution exists. Iraq currently ranks at the top of the index for freedom in the Middle East. Israel, Morocco and Lebanon are judged more free. Automobile, electrical, internet and telephone use have skyrocketed beyond pre-war use.

Under Saddam Hussein there were zero commercial television stations, zero commercial radio stations and zero independent newspapers and magazines. Now there are 54 television stations, 114 radio stations and 268 newspapers and magazines. Crude oil production has surpassed pre-war levels and the GDP has tripled from \$20.5 billion to \$60.9 billion. With its oil money, Iraq has been able to pay off its outstanding debt to the International Monetary Fund and thus receive a new loan.

The Times either had to admit that our boys in uniform did their jobs, or abstain from even mentioning Iraq. They chose the latter.

Both 2004 and this year are presidential election years, and no longer can Iraq be used against the Republican Party. The decreased coverage of the war coincides with decreased American and Iraqi casualties. No longer can the New York Times talk about a war in which the United States shows success. The Times either had to admit that our boys in uniform did their jobs, or abstain from even mentioning Iraq.

They chose the latter.

Since Iraq has become a success story, it is understandable why the media is burying it. It simply does not bode well for the Democratic Party. Somehow, even as American citizens, they picked the losing side in an American war. In April of 2007, Sen. Harry Reid proclaimed, "This war is lost and that surge is not accomplishing anything." Rep. Nancy Pelosi, could not restrain herself from saying Iraq "is a failure." Even worse for the Democratic Party and the United States, herself, is that Democrats' wannabe White House occupants both declared the war a failure.

Under a Barack Obama presidency, Saddam Hussein would have continued to threaten the United States and massacre the Iraqi people.

Barack Obama made it a point in his primary debates to continually point out his overwhelmingly superior judgment skills by way of his initial opposition to the Iraq war. He would tell Hillary Clinton that his decision-making abilities were spot on from day one. So in an actual example of Barack Obama not simply voting "present" and using his touted judgment, it turns out he was dead wrong. Not only did Obama oppose the war, but he also opposed the surge while demanding a complete troop withdrawal. In sum, under a Barack Obama presidency, Saddam Hussein would have continued to threaten the United States and massacre the Iraqi people

Since Iraq has become a success story, it is understandable why the media is burying it. It simply does not bode well for the Democratic Party.

This brings us to the 2008 Presidential election. The media has hidden Iraq because it makes Barack Obama look unprepared for the presidency.

The odd part is that John McCain has let it happen. Why would he allow Obama to get away with such a colossal mistake?

John McCain was right about Iraq. He knew that our soldiers just needed time and support. He had faith in their abilities to bring back a nation from the depths of despotic rule to a democratic Middle Eastern country. John McCain, not Barack Obama, showed the judgment that this country can use in a time of financial and national security uncertainty.

Bobby DesPain '11 is undeclared. He is from St. Louis, Mo. Contact him at bodespain@davidson.edu.

By KEVIN COOK
Guest Writer

Well, it appears as if the current 'issue du jour' is homophobia on campus. First, let me state that I do not think there is a notable presence of homophobia on campus, at least, no more present than any other phobia or "ism." The fact of the matter is, we can go on as many self-righteous crusades, and Rallies for Change as we like, but we're never going to change everyone's mind on campus. I am not saying that homophobia, racism or sexism should be tolerated. I'm stating that to some degree it is an inescapable reality. However, some issues about the homosexual movement/cause need to be addressed.

First, it is notable that all the responses to Ms. Semble came from alumni. I believe this is because students do not see homophobia as being a major problem on campus. I can assure you that if a significant percentage of Davidson's easily-outraged campus thought this were a problem, it would've been addressed sooner and almost certainly with speeches and rallies.

Secondly, as far as the LGBT "movement" goes, therein lies the problem. It is completely unnecessary to announce one's sexuality from a mountaintop. Whether it's "National Coming Out Day" or "Bar-B-Queer" (isn't that offensive in and of itself?), there is no need to announce to the world one's sexuality. If you do choose to make certain parts of your private life open to the public, then you must be willing to accept that not everyone agrees with your lifestyle. The Supreme Court ruled in *Griswold v. Connecticut* in 1965 that individuals have a right to sexual privacy. The individual's sexual life is left behind closed doors and out of the public sphere. But when these issues are thrust back into the public's face, you are going to get the full spectrum of views. Some may celebrate your lifestyle, tolerate or disagree with it. There may even be hatred because of it. This is true even at Davidson. Of course we "hold ourselves to a higher standard," but the reality is, the campus is not immune to prejudices and hate, some of which will most likely never fully go away. As Al Gore might say, this is an "inconvenient truth."

Finally, we should not be "celebrating" or "promoting" anything, gay or straight, especially since we pride ourselves on being "diverse." Openly endorsing or promoting one lifestyle sends the wrong message to the student body. We should tolerate all lifestyles and promote none. Because when you start promoting one way of life over another, you make people feel uncomfortable, and as everyone knows, no one wants a Davidson student to feel uncomfortable.

Kevin Cook '09 is a political science major from Syracuse, N.Y. Contact him at kecook@davidson.edu.

Exploring academic performance beyond GPA

AMANDA HANSEN AND COLBY UPTGRAFT
Guest Writers

Toward the end of last semester, the entire student body received information comparing Davidson's average GPA to that of its peer institutions. It showed Davidson to have the lowest average among 11 schools of similar stature. This seemed to justify student complaints regarding a disconnect between grades awarded and the work put into them. The Academic Policy Forum of last semester provided an occasion for students to express their displeasure directly to the administration. In response to the outcry, President Tom Swallow has since called for further research.

While waiting for the results, the SGA Academic Policy Committee has decided to take a new, more constructive approach by focusing on student performance (the dominant determinant of one's GPA) and other aspects of a student's record that might improve his/her chances of immediate success upon graduation. During the most recent forum, which was held on Wednesday, Oct. 8, the APC hosted a forum entitled "Exploring Academic Performance."

This forum centered on the many forces affecting the academic performance of students, as well as their impacts on post-Davidson opportunities, academic and professional. A group consisting of Dr. Malcolm Campbell (Biology), Dr. Tom Swallow (Mathematics), Dr. Nina Serebrennikov (Art), Dr. Leonard (Chair of the Trustee Academic and Educational Policy Committee) and a few students discussed students' perceptions of academics with extracurricular activities, ways for students to maximize opportunities while at Davidson and a summary of student concerns that were raised in the APC survey last semester.

Results from the survey revealed that students at Davidson

are generally satisfied, although, as previously mentioned, many expressed apprehensions about not receiving grades that adequately reflect their effort.

The faculty's response can best be summarized by three arguments. First, the faculty representatives agreed that one possible explanation for the disconnect between the grade-givers and the grade-receivers is that, in their experience, many students do not approach their professors with concerns or questions, even after several direct invitations. If students are having difficulty in their classes, the faculty advised that they should talk with their professors about what they can do to improve their performance and then make the appropriate changes.

Also, Dr. Campbell argued and others agreed, that success in life is not contingent on earning a high GPA during one's undergraduate study. He cited that Tom Ross was a 'C' student at Davidson before going on to become a successful lawyer and college president.

The faculty also suggested that many students seem to be overly-involved. While it's wonderful that Davidson students are engaged in things outside of the classroom, professors recommended that students consider their workload before committing to extracurricular activities.

The students present agreed that these were good suggestions but also made a few counterpoints. They called attention to the fact that GPA is a strong determinant of one's immediate success following graduation, citing that several programs and institutions have GPA cut-offs. Also, some students called on personal experience to support the claim that sometimes the workload is simply too much.

Regardless of whether or not the Davidson GPA is a problem, both students and professors agreed that students should still consider the following questions:

- Would you, in complete fairness, give yourself a high grade? In classes that you feel you are struggling in, have you tried talking with your professor? Are you spending the appropriate amount of time on study as opposed to extracurricular activities? Are you utilizing other resources such as the Writing, Speaking, Math centers?

Another interesting inquiry brought up by Mr. Leonard was whether Cats Connect would be a plausible way for students to initiate positive change by inviting upperclassmen to impress upon their mentees the importance of contacting professors, taking advantage of summers and time management. With this in mind, there is one more check to add to the list: If you're a freshman, are you using Cats Connect and/or other similar mentoring programs to talk to upperclassmen about their experience and ask their advice?

In another effort to better emphasize Davidson's academic rigor to post-graduate institutions, the APC is proposing an optional cover letter to be attached to students' transcripts that would state the applicant's class average GPA and the percentile breakdown. This would give employers and graduate institutions the ability to put Davidson students' GPAs in perspective. For example, at one of our peer institutions, the average GPA is 3.5. At Davidson a 3.5 GPA would place one in the 80th percentile of this year's senior class.

The Academic Policy Committee serves the student body by relaying academic concerns to the SGA, faculty and trustees.

Amanda Hansen '11 is undeclared. She is from Sevierville, Tenn. Contact her at amhansen@davidson.edu. Colby Uptgraft '09 is a biology major from Hickory, N.C. Contact him at couptgraft@davidson.edu.