

PERSPECTIVES

A Fratty Week

STAFF EDITORIAL

This week features an abundance of Davidson traditions that many students, alumni and faculty alike anticipate for the entire year. Spring Frolics will begin this Friday afternoon (at least, most students begin frolicking after classes...or before), just in time for the annual Generals Big Show, some frat parties and predictably sunny spring weather (we hope).

The Third Annual Greek Week aims to drag out the fun of Frolics by encouraging some friendly competition among Patterson Court organizations. Props to PCC for once again providing a much needed social outlet on campus.

Frolics always coincides with Alumni weekend, a time when former students are welcomed back on campus to relive their glory days at the old alma mater. How curious, though, is it that alumni choose Frolics as the best representation of their Davidson past? Frolics, while highly anticipated and certainly highly entertaining, represents a Davidson that sadly doesn't truly exist.

As a collective student body, taking time out to celebrate on the Patterson Court lawn for an entire day seems daunting to the best of a Davidson student's workload. Given the timing of Frolics just before exams, it is all the more surprising that most students find themselves "insane" enough to "waste" an entire day (or weekend, or more thanks to Greek Week) on, gasp!, fun.

And that really pinpoints the tragedy of being a member of academia: we sacrifice playtime for study, pleasure for work, you get the picture. Poor us. What we also need to keep in mind is that we are young, its the Spring and let's face it, the only other time you may get to do something like this could be in 20 years at your reunion. You're not going to look as good in a swimsuit, campus will undoubtedly have changed more than you can believe and those damn kids won't be playing any music you've ever heard before.

We don't blame alumni for choosing the most fun weekend to make their debut-as-adults on campus, but it does seem a shame that what we choose to relive is something we rarely took any time to experience while actually still in our prime.

Morality's place in foreign policy

Webster Doctrine



ZEKE WEBSTER

This month, Afghanistan's government signed a law that, among other things, essentially legalizes marital rape of Shiite-Muslim women. Although President Karzai later removed the provision in face of mass protests in Kabul, it is deeply unfortunate that Afghanistan would almost enact such a horrific law. The response of the American political system, however, went beyond simple condemnation of the proposed change. Writers across the political spectrum cited this episode,

as well as a graphic video of a young women being brutally beaten by the Taliban in Pakistan's Swat Valley, to suggest that the United States should more actively defend women's rights in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Some, like The New Republic's Richard Just, have gone so far as to criticize the Obama Administration's plans to co-opt some members of the Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan because its insufficient respect for women's rights.

The response to this law demonstrates that, though the U.S. foreign policy elite have condemned the invasion of Iraq as misguided, the dangerous principles that justified the Iraq War are alive and well.

Now, such calls are made with very good intentions, and these incidents are just as horrible as they sound. More broadly, it's hard to see how the state of women's rights will be anything short of disastrous in these areas for the foreseeable future. But the soundness of their motives don't make such polemics a good policy.

Trying to directly advocate women's rights in Pakistan and Afghanistan would be a classic case of wildly unrealistic goals undermining broader policy objectives. No matter how repulsive this kind of behavior might be—and it is repulsive—there are an awful lot of people in Afghanistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Area of Pakistan, or FATA, that have no sympathy whatsoever for women's rights

as we know them.

Even if we don't share their values, many of these people might be inclined to support the United States and the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan against the Taliban under the right conditions, but will defect in a heartbeat if America becomes increasingly vocal about the need to compel Afghanistan's government to respect women's rights.

Morality has a place in foreign policy, but policy makers have to be realistic about the consequences of their actions, particularly if the "moral" course involves targeting the country in question with economic sanctions or military action.

Alienating potential allies will endanger U.S. prospects for victory and increase the chance that millions of women will suffer even greater injustices under Taliban rule. For someone concerned with the moral and humanitarian consequences of our foreign policy, this possibility can't be ignored.

The response to this law demonstrates that, though the U.S. foreign policy elite have condemned the invasion of Iraq as misguided, the dangerous principles that justified the Iraq War are alive and well. Just as no Iraqis benefited from the invasion and ensuing conflict that killed hundreds of thousands and created millions of refugees, no Afghan women will benefit if we jeopardize the effort to defeat the Taliban in the name of women's rights.

Morality has a place in foreign policy, but policy makers have to be realistic about the consequences of their actions, particularly if the "moral" course involves targeting the country in question with economic sanctions or military action.

Many people live in poverty or suffer from unjust governments; but it's not often that the poor benighted people of wherever will have their lives improved if the U.S. Army comes in with guns blazing. Nobody will thank America for well-intentioned policies with horrible consequences, nor should they.

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Overturn "Don't ask, don't tell"

ANJAN MUKHERJEE
Perspectives Editor

According to The New York Times, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates told reporters on Thursday that if the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy were to be repealed, it would be done "slowly, and suggested that it might not happen at all." Sec. Gates went on to say that the issue of gays in the military is a "complex and difficult problem."

Pardon my ignorance, but I beg to differ. While the actual bureaucracy (and paperwork) of all of this may be complicated, the issue itself could not be clearer. I firmly believe that discrimination based on sexual orientation is a violation of basic human rights. In the end, that's what the "don't ask, don't tell" policy is promoting.

As it stands, those who identify as homosexual may serve in the United States military as long as they aren't open about their sexual preference. Suffice it to say, this is a close-minded and foolish way of thinking. Sexual orientation is not a good enough reason to turn someone away from the military. There are thousands of potential soldiers, translators and medical professionals—just to name a few—who are ready to serve their country in a selfless and courageous manner. They also happen to be gay.

Discrimination due to sexual orientation is a violation of basic human rights.

When discrimination results from skin color, most people rightly recognize racism. When someone faces discrimination because of his or her gender, most people correctly identify sexism. When the issue changes to sexual orientation, however, the response isn't quite the same.

Like racism and sexism, homophobia must not be tolerated. If we truly support equality under the law, why shouldn't the U.S. military stand on the same plane?

When the fundamental question is posed, there exists no adequate justification for turning people away from the armed forces due to their sexual orientation. This homophobic rule must be eliminated, and it must happen soon.

There are thousands of potential soldiers, translators and medical professionals—just to name a few—who are ready to serve their country in a selfless and courageous manner. They also happen to be gay.

In 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed an executive order that integrated the armed services. This decision was undoubtedly a good one, as the American military became stronger when the wall of racism that divided it came crumbling down.

President Obama has said that he would like to see the armed forces repeal the "don't ask, don't tell" policy. I hope that he and Secretary Gates can reach an agreement soon this way, citizens who wish to serve their country would not be turned down that chance. I am glad that President Obama wants this change to be part of his administration's legacy. These men and women want to step up and proudly serve their country and help protect the ideals upon which the United States thrives. The very least they deserve in return is the opportunity to do so.

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