



COLUMBIA POLITICAL REVIEW

THE DAY AFTER COPENHAGEN

A GLOBAL SUMMIT TURNS UP THE HEAT ON THE U.S.
BY NARAYAN SUBRAMANIAN



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DEMOCRATIZING URBAN PLANNING

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EDITOR'S NOTE

You've just finished a Snapple, and you're all but ready to throw out the bottle. Yet you hesitate for a moment when you notice, out of the corner of your eye, that a lone trashcan stands next to the door. There are no other bins in sight—no other receptacle labeled “Bottles or Plastic,” nor any sign of the iconic three-arrow triangle. But you still end up walking to the bin and throwing the bottle out. It lands with a loud thud—not unlike the tree that falls in the forest. While you wince at the ominous sound that the glass bottle makes, you note to yourself, “Buy plastic next time.” Then you sit in your chair a bit unsettled and take a glance around the room, hoping that no one noticed. Eventually your unease dissipates along with the memory that you were once a bad person.

We've all felt that same sense of guilt at least once in our lives. Whether it was while watching *An Inconvenient Truth* or while being chastised by a friend for littering, we've felt disturbed by our current destructive way of life. Some young people, like our writer Jennie Rose Halperin (p. 30), have taken this discontent to heart by escaping to communes, tilling the soil, and living out their own utopian visions.

But it's not just the hippies who are realizing that “business as usual” is unacceptable. More than ever, leaders across the world are increasingly feeling that it is their duty to take governmental action. In our cover story, Narayan Subramanian (p. 7) discusses how an increased sense of urgency is surrounding climate change discussions in the United States and abroad in the lead up to the Copenhagen Climate Conference. Unfortunately, our own leaders in the US have disappointed the international community by failing to devise a cohesive national policy to combat climate change.

Closer to home, Tommy Hill (p. 24) discusses how a group of planners and architects—many of whom are undergraduate and graduate students at Columbia—are developing a new and better approach to urban sustainability. The project, called Safari 7, calls for a more flexible urbanism that allows ordinary New Yorkers to engage with their environment.

It is the hope that the rest of us at Columbia take heed of such ideas—idealistic to practical, urban to global—so that together we may curb the pernicious influence we have over our environment. Maybe next time we'll step outside to find one of those black trashcans—or at least understand the consequences if we do not.

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CATHERINE CHONG





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COMMON (NON)SENSE

On American hubris

By Kiran Moodley

The Cold War may be long over, and capitalism is still basking in the glow of its successes (did someone say recession?), but another rather icy, oh-so-subtle battle is being waged within campuses across this great union. Beneath the edifice that proudly reads “The Special Relationship,” Americans are constantly belittling their British counterparts. Whilst I may shed a tear when you declare our empire dead, our importance dwindling, our prime minister obese and our children drunk—the fight back must begin.

D-Day is here.

I could have begun this essay by copying a good old American student’s trick—announcing my esteemed self before the start of a sentence. It might have begun: “Speaking as an Englishman in New York...” But I refrained. Yanks seem to take pleasure in instantly placing themselves at the forefront of the conversation. Replies to questions in seminars always start with “What interested me was...” or “I guess

what I was questioning in the piece was...” As a result, the subject of the discussion is pushed to the back, and the student becomes the focus.

Take this example of a professor posing a question to a student:

“So what role did journalists have in the shaping of the civil rights movement in Selma?”

“Well, what interested me, speaking as a Vermont-born, anti-healthcare reform advocate and Ayn Rand lover who frequently rides the 1 train...”

“Wait a minute, you’re from Vermont? I love it there!”

“Oh really, professor? Well let’s hop on the 4:42 Greyhound Express from Port Authority.”

“Awesome. I’ll bring *The Fountainhead*.”

What happened to the original question? It has been tossed aside and left to dry, a bit like mayoral two-term limits.

Yet this type of discourse even occurs at the highest levels of American society:

“President Bush, why was your reaction to Hurricane Katrina so delayed?”

“Well, speaking as a Texan cowboy who likes football and socializing...”

“Hey, Mr. President, do you want to cut this crap, get a beer and watch the game? I’ve always wanted a Corona with our commander-in-chief.”

“Yeah, sure, those wars can wait for now.”

This all comes down to the American love for the individual, which, for a Brit, is hard to grasp. In an ethics seminar a few days ago, the professor discussed at length the deficiencies of the BBC. He labelled it hierarchical and too much of an old gentlemen’s club. The BBC cheats, the professor argues; it gets its money from the tax-payer every year. Apparently, it’s some sort of state monopoly that actually causes the production of trashy TV.

But has the BBC set-up really been debilitating? Let’s take a minute to realize that the BBC is the one news organization

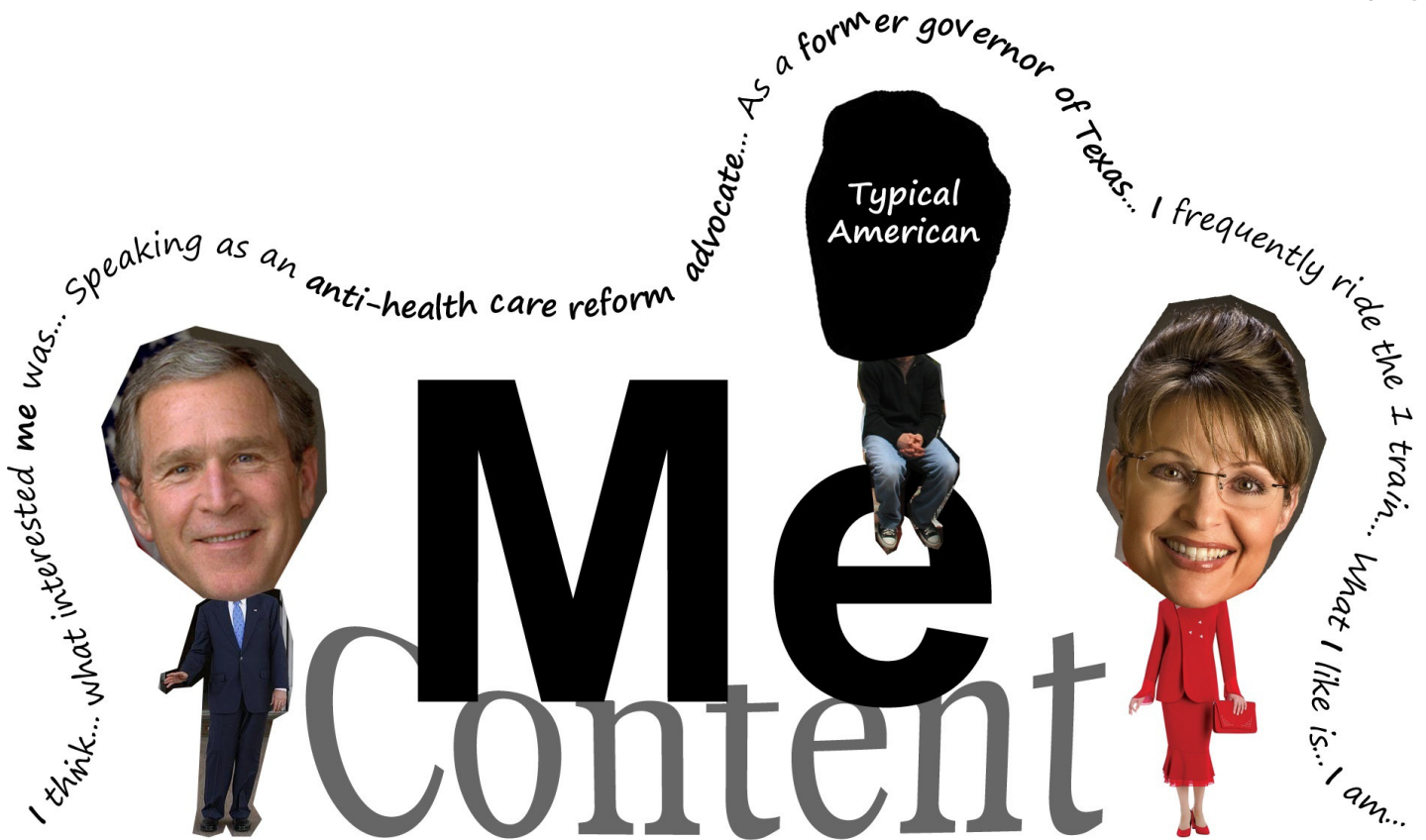


Photo Illustration by Anne Park

that hasn't been effected by the journalistic depression that has hit the industry. It's still teeming with well-versed British intellectuals. The same could hardly be said for American media institutions. Dare I mention Glenn Beck?

But I digress somewhat. The American student's need to insert the self into conversation reflects perfectly the American belief in the individual, and this is wherein their difference from their British counterparts lies. But it's more nuanced than that: American society is embedded with an anti-intellectualism that deprives them of the sophistication of the plucky Brit. While admiring the individual is a worthwhile trait, Americans have always been taught to ignore superior individuals who could diminish their Yankee virility. Hence, in the late eighteenth century the English crown was defeated by such clever tactics as throwing tea boxes in the ocean. Now that really was below the belt: we invite you for a discussion about taxes over a quiet cup of tea, and you dispense of the beverage? That's just not cricket. (For those of you who grew up on this side of the pond, that's an English idiom referring to the refined etiquette of this most noble sport, where players break for "tea," whereas

baseball players break to dip tobacco and down 3000-calorie burritos).

Perhaps the American is plagued at night by the knowledge that the foundation of their constitution relies on Englishmen: Locke and Paine. Thus, in order to fudge the roots of the American ideal, they are constantly trying to refine English ideals into superior American ones. This attempt is valiant but, in the end, wildly unsuccessful. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* was recently renovated by Glenn Beck in his new book, *Glenn Beck's Common Sense*. In another instance, the Bush administration's obstinacy to "stay the course" in Iraq was not unlike George III's insistence on staying at war with American revolutionaries while his own advisors expressed hesitation. In the twenty-first century, the insurgents may be different, but the stubbornness is all the same.

Americans still haven't learned their lesson.

The American sense of inferiority to the British bred individualism combined with anti-intellectualism, which has now created an unprecedented level of narcissism. It is plain to see in our respective governments; Gordon Brown is aware of his intelligence, but he doesn't

need to show off; he hides it behind the mask of a deflated and depressed Scotsman. President Obama however requires Greek columns and a rather stunning wife to show that he's the leader of the free world.

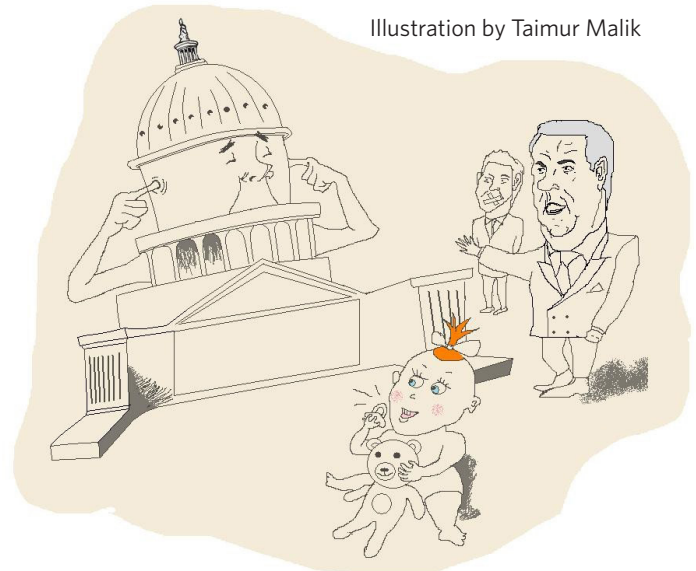
This is the crux of the issue: the British people have always let their accent do the talking. The majority of us don't put a premium on comportment—we leave that to the Royal Family, a dynasty rife with genetic disorder and inbred ignorance. Americans, on the other hand, are not about the content of discourse, they're all about style. It doesn't matter that in a seminar you make no sense; it's about how you look good when you're not making sense. That's why last year's decision by the GOP to spend \$150,000 on Sarah Palin's clothing should not be derided; it was a choice rooted in the noble American tradition.

Bring on 2012.

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VERY JUNIOR SENATORS

By Raphael Pope-Sussman



In Great Britain, the most junior member in a parliamentary house receives the informal title “Baby of the House.” Sometimes the Baby of the House is not an actual baby, but rather a toddler who isn’t potty-trained. More often, the baby is a young man or woman who is quite exciting to the other members because he or she is barely legal. That is, just old enough to serve in the house in question.

“Baby of the House” is not commonly used in America, but by definition it can refer to the most junior member of any house in any nation of the world. For example, it could refer to Michelle Tanner on “Full House,” or to the youngest person on the show “House.” It also might refer to the youngest person in a house of Congress, such as the House of Representatives.

In the 111th Congress, 28-year-old Rep. Aaron Schock (R-Ill.) is the baby of the House of Representatives. Or he was, until Rep. John Shadegg (R-Ariz.) decided to take the belt from Schock and give it to an adorable little baby named Maddie.

To protest the many injustices written into the Democratic version of the healthcare bill, Shadegg brandished the little tyke at his colleagues, and then allowed her to speak against the bill. Maddie hasn’t yet learned how to manipulate her tongue and lips to produce recognizable words, but that didn’t stop her from wagging her little glottis. Say what you will, but that girl can phonate. Surely, in time, this baby of the House will be able to speak to us loudly and clearly, with a message other than: “Goooeeaaaaa.”

Shadegg, interpreting for the infant, told us that one of her complaints was that she “doesn’t want government to take over healthcare.” This complaint makes reference to the inclusion in the bill of the “public option,” which would be administered by the government. Public option? To Maddie that sounds a lot like “state socialism.” Literally. She can’t distinguish between words.

But she knows that “if this bill passes, then no more health care for her mom.” She’s just interested in fairness. So she has to speak (through the mouth of an old man) on behalf of the millions of Americans who aren’t cute enough (or tiny enough) to be waved in the air by a member of Congress. She “doesn’t want her mom’s taxes to go up by 730 billion dollars.” It’s a good point. It would be unfair, and downright un-American, for Congress to make one woman pay for the entire health care overhaul simply because her cherubic daughter had the courage to criticize the government.

That’s injustice. And, in the words of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice

everywhere.” Maddie is not going to stand for injustice anywhere, let alone everywhere. And that’s not just because her squishy little legs can’t support the weight of her body.

No, she’s going to not stand (she’ll sit, if you will) for this injustice. Instead, she will wail, piercingly, until the nation wakes up to what’s going on, probably five times in one night. Maddie’s a modern American dissident. Because she knows dissent is patriotic. That’s why *Dissent* is our nation’s favorite publication, and why dysentery is our nation’s favorite intestinal malady. Maddie’s not going to turn a blind eye to the coming tyranny. She’ll call a spade a spade, and then use it to build a sandcastle.

She certainly won’t settle for government-run health-care. As Shadegg told us, “She wants America’s health insurance companies to have to compete with each other.” Competition is good. Imagine, if you will, the current healthcare system through the lens of professional football (this is how Maddie, a lifelong Cardinals fan, sees it). In professional football, there is plenty of competition. That’s what makes football, like healthcare, so entertaining. The only joy that can compare to following the bitter rivalry between the Vikings and the Packers is the joy of observing Pfizer’s cholesterol drug Lipitor compete with Merck’s Zenia! For fun, I often sit back and watch the triglycerides drop like a rock.

Sure, sometimes competition can lead to brutal, debilitating injuries. Like when Lawrence Taylor snapped Joe Thiesmann’s leg like a toothpick, or when no insurance company will sell a man a policy because he has diabetes! Hits like these sting for a while, but aren’t they what make life so exciting?

John Shadegg loves competition. And so does our wee free-market-lovin’ friend Maddie. For the sake of this country, we need to defeat this sinister health-care plot. Otherwise, an emboldened Democratic Party might just decide to nationalize professional football. Their scheme of a Nationalized Football League would have no competition. And it would tear this country apart. They may say, “Are you ready for some football.” But they’ll mean, “Are you ready to have your organs stolen by government doctors?”

Defeat this government plan. Don’t let the Feds break Maddie’s heart. And don’t let them take it either.

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A photograph of Barack Obama speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark suit, a light blue shirt, and a light-colored tie. The podium has a microphone and a small American flag. The background is dark with a textured wall. The UN logo is visible on the podium to the right.

THE DAY AFTER COPENHAGEN

A global summit turns up the heat on the U.S.

By Narayan Subramanian

With movies like The Day After Tomorrow depicting the apocalyptic consequences of global warming, the issue of climate change has since transformed from being simply a “Hollywood problem” to a reality we must confront. Global warming deniers have long since been discredited, and an urgency to address climate change has heightened in policy spheres and also in the public imagination. It is the unfortunate fact that climate change is not an issue that can be simply tackled by one well-meaning individual or even one nation. Maintaining the sustainability of our planet is a collective responsibility, because it affects us all. An effective and lasting solution—or, at the very least, a hope of one—can only be reached through global consensus. The Copenhagen climate summit that will take place early this month provides an opportunity for nations to collectively define the direction of climate change policy over the next few decades.

International efforts to curb global warming have been attempted before but have been largely unsuccessful. The Kyoto Protocol, formed in 1997, required all developed countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emission levels by 5.2% from 1990 levels. The protocol, however, was hampered by the fact that climate change had still not been accepted globally and developing countries such as India and China, who were projected

token, developed nations argue that it would be equally inequitable for them to inhibit their growth while countries like India and China would be unchecked.

Just because developed countries such as the United States industrialized in an irresponsible fashion does not mean that India or China should follow the same path or that the rest of the world should stand idly by as they attempt to do so. History ought not be repeated. The

means of making such a transition, ought to pursue it. With all that said, developing countries will eventually have to confront the very problems developed countries are currently faced with as a result of their unchecked industrialization. It would behoove them to adopt a different mindset.

Copenhagen, nicknamed by some as the “Kyoto redemption,” is seen by many as the final chance to begin the talks

Just because developed countries such as the United States industrialized in an irresponsible fashion does not mean that India or China should follow the same path, or that the rest of the world should stand idly by as they attempt to do so.

to have some of the highest carbon emission levels in the years after the treaty was signed, had no obligations to cut carbon emissions. This privilege was justified, according to the protocol’s signers, because carbon emission levels in India and China were insignificant in 1990, and, to a large extent, measures to limit India and China’s emissions were viewed as a way of obstructing their growth. Though at the time the Clinton Administration symbolically signed the treaty, the U.S. Congress failed to ratify it with many congressmen arguing against the existence of global warming. The lack of regulations on India and China’s emissions was also a major factor in the United States’ refusal to back the treaty. The reasoning was simple: the United States would not be able to maintain its status as the forerunner in economic development if it had to cut back its growth to curb emissions

On the global scale, tackling climate change has taken on a vicious tenor—being couched crudely as a clash between “East and West.” Developed countries, such as the United States, argue that international treaties be applied to all countries equally, given that some developing nations have now achieved economic prosperity. To still developing nations, this treatment seems like a veiled attempt by the West to prevent their continual ascent as it very conspicuously favors developed countries. By the same

time has come for developing countries to pave a new path of industrialization by taking a different approach—an approach that would consist of renewable energy alternatives that would create jobs and build an economy that is not dependent on fossil fuels.

That is not to say that this path will be an easy one. One of the leading economists working on analyzing the economic impacts of climate change policy, Lord Nicholas Stern, estimates that the costs for developing countries to adapt environmentally responsible practices will be between \$75 and \$100 billion per year over the next 40 years. For less wealthy developing countries, these costs are too overwhelming to even be considered. These countries can still participate in combating climate change even if doing so is extremely costly, insists Professor Michael Gerrard, Director of the Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia University and one of the most prolific writers on environmental law in the United States. “If the less developed countries can be paid to greatly reduce deforestation and improve the efficiency of their use of energy, that becomes a way to put through a trading mechanism to transfer significant funds and make the whole enterprise work economically.” It is incumbent upon wealthier, developed nations to aid developing nations. Further, developing countries, such as India and China, which actually have the financial

to draft an international plan to curb global warming before the phenomenon reaches a point of irreversibility. Gerrard describes Copenhagen as the “occasion for a comprehensive agreement among the nations of the world including the U.S. on what to do about climate change.” While an increasing number of doubts have cropped up in the days and weeks leading up to the summit, policymakers and researchers are still crossing their fingers that discussions will not be fruitless.

TOWARD A SOLUTION

If we are to speculate as to what kind of international climate agreement could be made at Copenhagen that would avoid the problems of the Kyoto Protocol, it seems that one viable option would be for developed countries to cut carbon emissions based on a per capita standard as opposed to meeting benchmarks or total emissions standards. In other words, instead of establishing an arbitrary cap on carbon emissions, countries should be required to decrease their carbon footprint per person. Leading scientists have established that 350 parts per million (ppm) is the safe level for carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. An international percentage decrease in per capita carbon emissions that meets 350 ppm by 2050 would be ideal. There are many advantages to this approach—the

most important being that it forces all developed countries to play some part in cutting carbon emissions. It would also be more politically feasible to get developed countries such as the United States to ratify such an agreement, since part of the reason the U.S. refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol was because not all countries were being held to the same accountability standards. Gerrard, however, voices his concern with this proposal, reasoning that “a uniform percentage reduction essentially legitimizes today’s emission levels. There are some places in the world that are extremely inefficient in their energy use and, arguably, they should have greater reduction obligations than a country that is currently efficient.” Thus, decreases per capita would place an unfair burden on some nations, argues Gerrard.

On the question of how to involve developing countries such as India or China in the fight against climate change, Gerrard advocates for “greenhouse gas intensity goals” to keep developing countries, who would have a harder time meeting such decreases, involved. His policy proposal is based on the idea that, “although economic development can proceed, the amount of greenhouse gas emissions per unit of economic activity has to decline; in other words, the efficiency of energy use has to improve.” So, instead of countries having to reduce emissions, categorically, they would be required to reduce emissions as the result of increased efficiency—a system that would encourage rather than discourage growth. He goes on to add that, “there have already been some signals from both China and India that a goal of that sort might be palatable given that it explicitly allows continued economic growth.” In this way, there is, perhaps, a space for compromise between the “East and West.”

THE CLIMATE OF COPENHAGEN

Geopolitically, the European Union has established itself as the leader running up to Copenhagen by coming together at the end of October and pledging that it will aim to cut carbon emissions 80-95 percent compared to 1990 levels by 2050. This pledge follows the E.U.’s unilateral commitment earlier



Courtesy of Nicolas Perriault

in the year to reduce all carbon emissions 20 percent by 2020 regardless of the actions and policies of other nations. The current debate in the E.U. revolves around how these ambitious plans can be met in a financially feasible manner. The E.U., however, has long since proven its strong commitment to combating climate change. More surprising has been encouraging signs of cooperation from countries like India and China that were once an impediment to the Kyoto Protocol’s success. Leaders from both countries met at the end of October to sign a pact to ensure coordination of their climate negotiations signaling that they both seek to be active participants in Copenhagen.

With cooperation coming from all ends, the international community has been increasingly curious to see what role the U.S. intends on playing at Copenhagen. Though President Barack Obama made climate change one of the centerpieces of his presidential campaign, the financial crisis and the healthcare debate have sidelined efforts on the environmental front. Although many analysts contend that more has been done to deal with climate change since Obama took office in the last year than in the last eight years of Bush’s tenure, there have still been no signs of established leadership from the U.S. Congress in the lead-up to Copenhagen. The international community has kept

a watchful eye, expecting the U.S. to pass domestic legislation to prove its commitment. There is still a long ways to go, however. The House passed its version of a climate bill last June requiring 17 percent reductions in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 while the Senate, driven by Senators Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and John Kerry (D-Mass.), has been attempting to draft a bill that would require 20 percent reductions in greenhouse gases by 2020.

The most upsetting news came in early October when Obama's top climate and energy official, Carol Browner, announced that it was virtually impossible for Congress to pass any type of climate change legislation before the Copenhagen talks. Browner made it clear that the best scenario would be for the Senate to complete its hearings and at least produce a draft of a bill before Copenhagen. This announcement was followed by Obama himself acknowledging that it is very unlikely that an international agreement would be made at Copenhagen. Instead, Obama has stated Copenhagen will be a venue

to continue the discussions that have been ongoing for the last year. Gerrard express his disappointment, saying, "the prospects for a binding comprehensive agreement in Copenhagen have dimmed partly because the U.S. Congress does not seem poised to take final action before then." What is relieving, however, is that on the domestic front, there are signs of bipartisanship to combat climate change that were once non-existent. Senators Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and Kerry recently co-authored an op-ed in the *New York Times* urging the Obama administration and Congress to give more importance to the issue of climate change. Without a doubt, the environment remains one of Congress' main concerns.

AMERICA'S TURN

As noted above, Congress has not left environmental issues completely untouched. Last summer was an exciting time for climate change experts and environmental activists when the House

narrowly passed its version of a climate bill, the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009. The major elements of the House bill, more commonly known as the Waxman-Markey bill, include a cap-and-trade program, carbon capture and storage (CCS) incentives, a requirement for 20 percent of electricity to come from renewable fuels by 2025, and higher energy and fuel efficiency standards for buildings and cars. The ultimate objective of the bill is to reduce greenhouse gases by 83 percent by 2050. Similar to concerns on the global scale, there is much doubt as to the effectiveness and political feasibility of the bill's implementation.

The cap-and-trade program would essentially set a limit on the carbon emissions of companies or industries and would force them to buy credits from less-polluting companies if they exceed their emissions limit. A report published by the Sightline Institute from July 2009 highlights three core principles that any cap-and-trade program should embody: effectiveness, efficiency, and fairness. An effective program should cut greenhouse

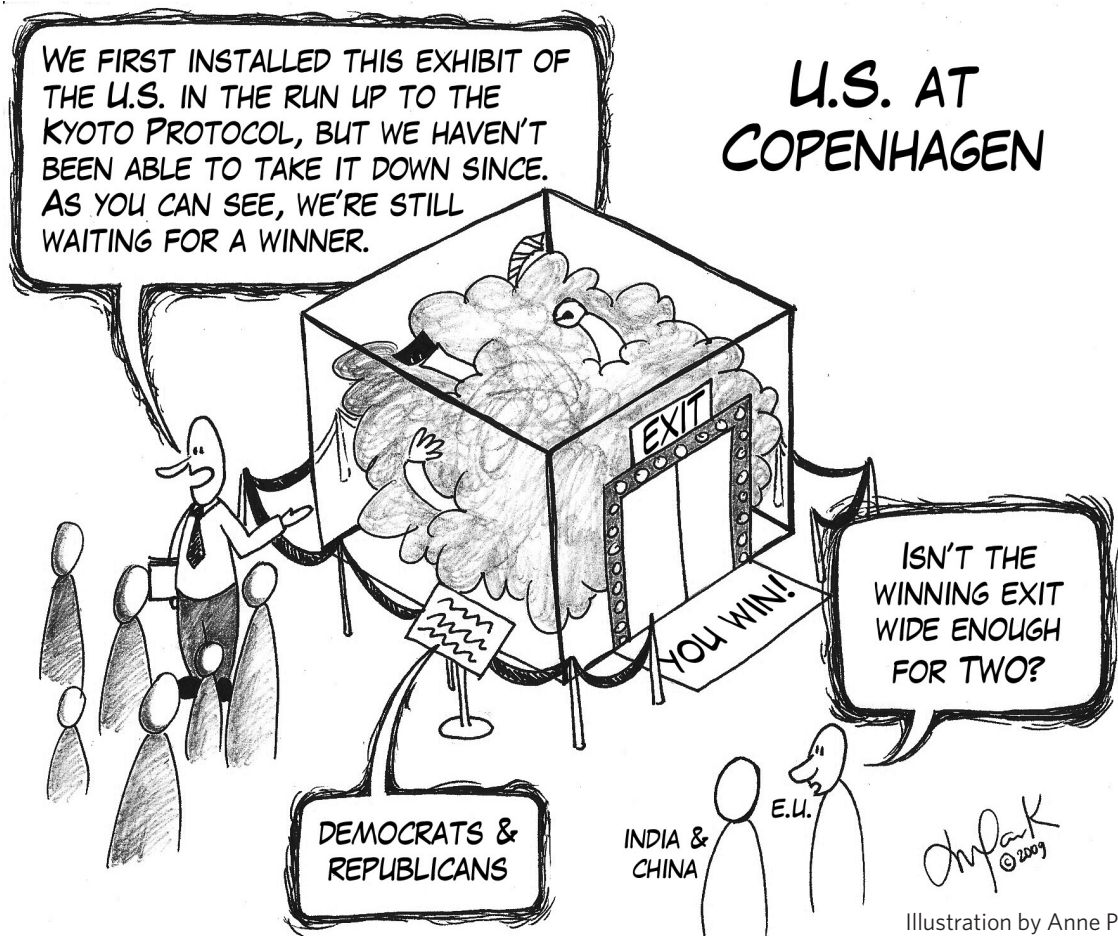


Illustration by Anne Park

“If Copenhagen can assert a set of goals and can set targets and define a direction, that will be an enormous step forward, even if Copenhagen cannot tell the world all the details.”

gases in a manner that is gradual but rapid enough to meet the needed targets. This program should also be efficient by being simple, flexible, and market-oriented. Lastly, the economic burden ought to be equitably distributed and focus on not just benefitting a wealthy few.

This idea sounds compelling at first but cap-and-trade has its own host of problems, many of which have surfaced in areas that have already implemented such a policy. The system was first implemented in Europe in response to the Kyoto Protocol but turned out largely unsuccessful as too many credits were distributed initially, rendering the value of carbon credits negligibly low. On the east coast of the U.S., utility companies have complained that the system set up by the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) utterly cripples them because of pre-existing long-term contracts. Their complaints have prompted New York Governor David Paterson to issue exemptions. This result had the effect of undermining the entire system. Once a few companies had been given exemptions, other companies scrambled for the same concessions. Gerrard, however, defends RGGI and offers some optimism in regards to cap-and-trade. “I think RGGI has worked pretty well within its terms. We also have the successful precedence in cap-and-trade in the context of acid rain reduction and certain other air pollutants. So I think there is reason to be hopeful that cap-and-trade will yield positive effect.”

Looking into the future, it will be difficult to garner enough political support for an equitable cap-and-trade system that actually limits greenhouse gas emissions because states that heavily rely on the coal industry will simply not agree to such a plan. Moreover, 50 percent of the United States’ energy needs are currently being met by coal power plants. For that reason, the Waxman-Markey bill accounts for such problems with its carbon capture and storage (CCS) provisions. CCS involves a system of capturing carbon dioxide from the air

through a process called engineered chemical sinkage and sequestering it. Professor Klaus Lackner, chair of the Earth & Environmental Engineering Department at Columbia and one of the most reputed environmental scientists in the world for pioneering CCS technology, explains that the goal of CCS “is to literally collect all of your CO₂ and put it somewhere where you can safely and permanently store it.”

The concern with CCS is that it would discourage the innovation of renewable resources and support the increase in the use of fossil fuels. Further, provisions outlined in the bill would give the coal industry record subsidies as the United Mine Workers of America estimates allowances to be worth over \$180 billion between now and 2050. But Lackner notes the coal industry “wouldn’t see it as a boon. They would see it seriously as an attack. Because basically they are told they cannot do business as usual but that they have to come up with something brand new.” Seen in this light, CCS could offer more than one purpose: in the short term, it could perhaps help cut our carbon emissions but high costs may actually encourage the use of more renewable technologies in the long run.

The elephant in the room, however, is that, according to reports released by Greenpeace, CCS will only be a commercially viable option in 2030. It seems naïve to rely so heavily on a technology that has still not been completely proven to be effective on the large scale. Moreover, the need for CCS technology should technically be mostly non-existent come 2030 because current projections already require the heavy use of renewable energy sources by that time. Professor Lackner, however, disagrees and argues that “[CCS] will never be viable unless there are regulations which say you must implement it.”

Another concern with the bill is that it does not require reductions below current levels until 2030. By requiring the majority of reductions to be carried out in the long term, the bill seems to be

a mere attempt to respond to short-term political concerns rather than attempting to address the urgency of global warming.

Though there are a number of problems surrounding the Waxman-Markey Bill, it is at least a step in the right direction. The absence of a comprehensive plan from the U.S. leading up to Copenhagen is disconcerting, but it is certainly a relief that climate change has not been completely neglected as it had been for eight years under President George W. Bush. Gerrard agrees but believes there is much work to be done: “I think that we do know that vigorous and expensive measures are going to be needed by all developed and rapidly developing countries of the world and I hope that the U.S. picks up its fair share of the burdens.” Gerrard will be attending the Copenhagen summit as part of the Columbia delegation.

Lackner offers a slight bit of optimism, stating, “If Copenhagen can assert a set of goals and can set targets and define a direction, that will be an enormous step forward, even if Copenhagen cannot tell the world all the details.” The hope of an outline being drawn at the conference is undoubtedly dissatisfying. Yet, the obvious change in tone about climate change in the lead up to Copenhagen offers some kind of solace. Abroad and at home, there is a growing consensus that the issues surrounding climate change transcend pure science and require us as a human race to set aside differences and make the right political choices. As with many of today’s most pressing concerns, our time to resolve the issue of climate change is finite, but our ability to contain this phenomenon is potentially infinite.

Narayan Subramanian, SEAS '13, is an earth & environmental engineering major, who discovered his interest in the issues of climate change and sustainability as a middle schooler. He hopes to eventually attend law school and pursue environmental policymaking. He can be reached at nss2130@columbia.edu.

INVISIBLE NOTE CARDS



New York
City's
Non-Profit
Crisis

By Sophia
Bellin Warren

Illustration by Igor Simic

One of my first assignments at Columbia, for University Writing, was to sit in Bryant Park for an afternoon and write about my experience there. I hopped on the subway and headed downtown excited, eager to discover some wonderful secret of New York City. However, when I arrived at the park, I was immediately taken aback by the scene of poverty before my eyes. Instead of glamorous fashion or an urban oasis, I found a sick, elderly woman digging for food in a garbage bin, and, underneath a tree, an old veteran desperately shaking a cup in hopes of a few coins. A wonderful secret, indeed.

I tried to sit in the park and observe other sights, but these images of destitution were everywhere. About an hour after I arrived, a middle-aged woman approached me with a note card. She did not speak, but she pleaded for my sympathy through a few written

for their services.

The situation in New York is bleak. According to an article published in August 2009 by the Robin Hood Foundation, fifty-five percent of babies born in this city are born into poverty and 1.9 million New Yorkers are currently living below the poverty line. In 2008, more than 90 percent of emergency food sites in New York experienced an increase in demand. 1.3 million New Yorkers now rely on emergency food. Last year, the New York metropolitan area experienced 15,000 home foreclosures, leaving a record 9,720 homeless families sleeping in the city's municipal shelter system, writes Julie Bosman in the *New York Times*. Charitable organizations are overwhelmed with new crises, but they lack the resources necessary to provide relief.

Moreover, the non-profit crisis is not limited to institutions that serve

social and economic imperative that we begin to tackle this issue and restore the programs that aid the poor in our society.

NON-PROFITS 101

At the most basic level, non-profits are organizations that seek ends other than generating profit. These organizations do not distribute their income to shareholders or owners, but rather use it to pursue the group's goals. While there are many different types of non-profits (such as the government, some corporations, and religious organizations), the most commonly known—and the largest part of the sector—are public benefit corporations. These philanthropic groups provide invaluable services not only to the city, but to the world as a whole. From creating art programs for low-income

“Instead of glamorous fashion or an urban oasis at Bryant Park, I found a sick, elderly woman digging for food in a garbage bin; and, underneath a tree, an old veteran desperately shaking a cup in hopes of a few coins.”

words and her needy eyes. The note card said that she had four children, and that she had recently lost her job. Her babies were starving, and she begged for means to support them. I sat there wondering why this woman did not take her card to the government or to a charitable organization. Why was she not seeking help from a more sustainable source?

The answer, I discovered, is a complicated one. Far more than bank CEOs or holders of bad mortgages, the economic recession has dealt a severe blow to the poor of New York City. In addition to federal aid program cuts, the non-profit sector – a traditional safety net for those who are most economically vulnerable – is being forced to cut back as well. In a kind of “perfect storm,” non-profits are experiencing a sharp decrease in financial support at a time when there is an ever-increasing need

the homeless. The United Way of New York is reducing funding to non-profit agencies by 7 percent in 2009, cutting funding for programs that provide AIDS relief, child services, ESL classes, and conflict resolution workshops. While the major CEOs of our nation are receiving bonuses for their failures, our charitable non-profits are being completely undermined. Programs that help the sick, immigrants, the uneducated, and the poor are all under immediate threat.

The woman with the note card in Bryant Park was just one person, but she represented thousands. An increasing number of New Yorkers are walking the streets with invisible cards that detail their struggles, pleading for help. How is our government responding? When will these metaphorical slips of paper begin to truly disappear? It is a

students in inner-city elementary schools to providing emergency aid to victims of natural disasters, millions of people benefit from and depend on charitable non-profits.

In New York, there are hundreds of powerful charities who have historically provided a range of programs to help the struggling. The Clinton Global Fund, the Robin Hood Foundation, the Salvation Army, and the United Way are only a few of the thousands of groups that tackle major issues facing those living below the poverty line. There are also smaller philanthropic groups; some focus on tutoring programs, while others sponsor soup kitchens or other similar programs.

All of these non-profits, both large and small, are funded by revenue (earned income), individual donations, and grants from the government, foundations, and for-profit corporations.

Since these groups survive almost entirely by the generosity of donors (both individual and corporate) and the help of government, non-profits are crushed in times of economic distress.

Non-profits not only help the city's poor (which benefits the city as a whole); they also provide thousands of jobs to the people of New York. The non-profit sector is the city's largest private employer. By providing work in city hospitals, social service organizations, and public arts programs, among many other areas, according to United Way, non-profits are responsible for about 500,000 jobs—more than 15 percent of the total workforce.

In many ways, non-profits are the glue that holds our city together. They are irreplaceable.

A CASE STUDY

In an economic recession, the strength of non-profits deteriorates. I spoke with the Katherine Walling of the United Way of New York City to get perspective on the situation.

“Unlike other industries, when the economy falters, demand for our services goes up rather than down,” she explained, adding that, “For most private businesses rising demand is a good thing. Not so

year, the non-profit sector experienced its first drop in charitable giving since 1987, the last serious recession, with overall giving down almost 6 percent. In response, roughly two-thirds of all foundations nationwide found it necessary to cut their grant-making to lower-rung organizations in 2009.

Walling explained that the decrease in funds has been detrimental to providing services.

“All you have to do is to look at the increased volume of calls to 311 to get an idea of the increase in demand of services,” she said, referring to the New York City government's social services hotline. “Calls for food stamp assistance

Non-profits provide thousands of jobs, especially to the socially marginalized. From a financial perspective, non-profits are crucial to the success of our city and nation's economy.

Historically, the sector has also been an engine of job creation. United Way also reports that from 2000 to 2007, before the recession hit, the local nonprofit sector added more than 50,000 jobs, while the rest of the city's private economy declined. Non-profits are also unique in their support of minority groups. The number of minority workers employed by non-profits increased by nearly one-third from 2000 to 2007. Elsewhere in the city economy, minority employment grew by less than 3 percent.

While non-profits help the poor, immigrants, and the uneducated find employment, they are simultaneously providing thousands of jobs, especially to the socially marginalized. From a financial perspective, non-profits are crucial to the success of our city and nation's economy. From a social and moral perspective, non-profits promote human rights and facilitate workplace environments that close the gap between different groups of people.

for human services non-profits. Rising demand indicates a greater level of human suffering. Economic contraction also means shrinking revenues to support the delivery of services at the very moment when the demand for them is peaking. It's quite a wrenching countercyclical phenomenon.”

The United Way of New York supports other non-profit organizations in the city through partnerships, grants, and administration of government services. With other non-profits, they work toward income stabilization in communities, more educational opportunities, and an increase in health services. The organization and the non-profits it supports have been devastated by the state of the economy. In general, estimates predict that foundations like the United Way have experienced a decrease in assets of 30 percent or more, in conjunction with a record-number of layoffs.

And the situation in New York is not unique. After the markets crashed last

are up 41 percent, and requests for public assistance and welfare information have increased by 43 percent.”

The demand is still rising, but the resources just aren't there.

COPING MECHANISMS

The United Way and other organizations are restructuring to cope with the flood of need. In order to survive, they must eliminate waste, change governance, and alter investments.

“Foundations will be giving less than they expected at the beginning of the year,” said Bradford Smith, president of the Foundation Center, an organization that keeps data and statistics on the state of the non-profit industry. He concluded on a more hopeful note however, saying that “many are rethinking their grant-making so that fewer dollars will not necessarily mean less impact.” In such a challenging climate, non-profits must become more strategic and creative.

“We are placing a greater emphasis than ever on keeping our current donors close by communicating with them regularly and offering them opportunities to volunteer and get involved,” Walling explained. “Over the next year we are planning a number of online giving campaigns, which we hope will reach a greater number of New Yorkers and offer them opportunities to support our work in education, income and health.”

These plans, however, may not be innovative enough. In this market, non-profits must be completely original to endure and persevere. Many organizations are holding innovation workshops and setting up meetings with the sole purpose of generating unique ideas, and even the Obama administration is getting into the act. Over the summer, the President created the White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation, which will work with non-profits to tackle social problems and provide seed money for the most innovative proposals.

The Chronicle of Philanthropy published an article in early November, explaining that experts believe that the best non-profit leaders will “change the rules of the game, restructure parts of their operations, and redefine the way people work”. In the current economic climate, however, they must also work quickly. To hold on to their donors, organizations must come up with new plans, and fast. Radical thinking is desperately needed, but non-profits may be moving too slow in the face of the current challenges.

LOOKING AHEAD

While non-profits must do their best to adjust to the current situation, we, as a society, also need to do more to help. Although the federal economic stimulus package contains programs to support non-profits, the funds are minuscule compared to the money needed, and the funding mechanisms provided by the White House are complex and convoluted. In the midst of expensive bailouts for banks and the automobile industry receiving billions, non-profits seem to have been forgotten.

Our economic focus is misplaced. The stimulus bill allocated only 50 million dollars for the creation of a program to help nonprofits provide aid to those severely affected by the economic crisis. When millions are struggling, this program is, at best, completely inadequate. Non-profits provide services that keep our economy alive. They support the poor, which sustains consumption and prevents our industries from collapsing, while providing many jobs to New Yorkers. Supporting non-profits is an economic imperative, not just a moral responsibility.

*The facts speak
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In writing this article, I spoke with employees of several major New York City nonprofits to ask them about their anxieties for the future. Although each was concerned about the recent decrease in donations, they were, collectively, very optimistic. The representatives from the groups told me that they will stand strong by their missions to support the struggling, and that they will simply need to be more creative and careful to handle these tough times.

I believe their confidence, however, is just a façade. The facts speak for

themselves. Nonprofits are closing, downsizing staff, and cutting hours and wages. Seventy-three percent of organizations have no financial reserves, and 80 percent have seen major decreases in private funding. They remain optimistic simply because appearing so is an economic imperative. For donors to give money, they need to feel as though their donation will make a difference, and individual contributors are what these non-profits need most now. Non-profits must appear optimistic and stable in order for people to continue their philanthropy. Appearance is everything; no one wants to throw his money onto a sinking ship. I do not doubt that these charities are hoping for a brighter future, but their current level of positivity is unwarranted; it is only a mirage of strength.

The situation non-profits currently face is bleak. In times of economic turmoil, donors are skeptical and the government is overwhelmed. As men, women and children in the city carry their invisible note cards, organizations can no longer respond with aid to their requests. The number of note-cards keeps growing, and people who may have once been donors are now the receivers. Eventually, however, there will be nothing to receive. The note cards will multiply, but resources will dry up.

We will not truly recover financially until the government and the people of our city and nation recognize the urgency of this crisis. To really rehabilitate our economy, we must find effective means to save the organizations that work tirelessly to better our world. Non-profits need to discard their positive fronts. The note cards of Bryant Park and the rest of the city need to be revealed. Once we see the truth, then we, as a society, must commit to progressive action.

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MOROCCO'S GROWING PAINS

Rabat's difficult transition to democracy

By Alex Bedrosyan

This July, while interning for l'Organisation Marocaine Des Droits de l'Homme (OMDH)/Moroccan Human Rights Organization, I saw the streets of Rabat, Morocco adorned with red and green. The Moroccan national flag was displayed at every street corner, and pictures of King Mohammed VI were hung in every restaurant. The country was preparing to celebrate Throne Day, the ten-year anniversary of King Mohammed VI's ascension to the throne.

In addition to its symbolic significance, the anniversary celebrated ten years of progressive reform: the democratization and increased respect for human rights evident throughout the reign of the young king. During his first few days in office, Mohammed VI released prominent political prisoners jailed by his predecessor, his father Hassan II. In 2004, he established

the Equity and Reconciliation Commission to investigate and publicly broadcast human rights violations committed under his father's rule. A year before, he reformed the Mudawana (Family Code) to improve women's status by granting them equal rights in family life. This reformed Family Code stipulates that, among other things, a man requires his wife's consent to secure a divorce. The king showed his sincere interest in the new code, taking only one wife and marrying her in public, both unprecedented steps for a Moroccan king. His wife appears with him at political events, seeming to symbolize "at the highest level the major role for women in the fulfilment of our country," according to liberal newspaper *La Gazette du Maroc*.

Yet, Morocco remains far from democratic, as its pervasive election fraud and corrupt legislature indicate. Political

liberalization, in terms of meaningful opposition to the state and substantial alternation of power, remains elusive, as does true inclusion of minority groups like women and homosexuals. Morocco's slow progress seems surprising, given that the king himself, who wields absolute constitutional power, is attempting to reform society.

The problems Morocco faces are not unlike those affecting other Arab Muslim nations. This correlation gives dangerous rise to claims that reforms imposed from above will always be limited in their effect in countries where Islam is constitutionally institutionalized. Yet, in the case of Morocco, this claim seems myopic. The more salient obstacle to reform is that the political elites below the king remain conservative and uninterested in actually altering the balance of power.

CONSTITUTIONAL ISLAM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Despite the king's effort, freedom of expression and the status of women remain threatened in Morocco. According to the nation's constitution, Morocco is a "sovereign Muslim state." Islam is the foundation for the state and, more importantly, the monarchy—the King is perceived as a descendant of the Prophet and as such has absolute constitutional power. The constitution states that he is "commander of the believers" and guarantor of the territorial integrity of the state. These three elements—the king, Islam, and the territorial integrity of the king's state—are constitutionally sacred and immune to public debate.

This fact permanently threatens freedom of expression and government accountability in Morocco. While Mohammed VI has loosened press controls, the three sacred elements remain off-limits, as institutionalized in the new Press Code of 2002. Following the enactment of this Code, many publications deemed overly critical of the king were banned or suspended, and many journalists prosecuted and imprisoned. In recent years, journalists who commented on the country's ongoing war with Algeria met the same fate, as the war, fought over the separatist Western Sahara region, compromises the country's territorial integrity. Even in the wake of Throne Day, magazines *Tel Quel* and *Nichane* were banned for publishing an opinion poll on Mohamed VI's reign—to which 91 percent of those surveyed responded favorably. Minister of Communications Khalid Naciri summarized the constitutional line by explaining, "The monarchy cannot be the object of debate, even through a poll." Despite the king's liberal intentions, constitutional constraints always limit how much criticism of the state and freedom of expression is permitted in Morocco.

Additionally, the king's reforms and remarks in favor of enhanced roles for women have yet to translate outside of the palace. Access to education and healthcare for rural girls, according to Fatiha Layadi, a member of the Moroccan parliament, remains low, leading to underrepresentation and disenfranchisement; only 37 women serve in parliament and there is only a single



Even though King Mohammed VI wields absolute constitutional power, he is hardly the most stubborn obstacle to political reform in Morocco. (Courtesy of Alex Bedrosyan)

female mayor in the entire country. The subjugation of women in Morocco, shown in part by the literacy gap between genders, reflects a persistent feature of Arab-Muslim societies. Whether this correlation reflects causation is subject to significant debate, but the religious conservatism in Moroccan society regarding gender equality is undeniable—despite the king's example and the reformed Family Code, the old practices of a husband's divorcing his wife without consent, polygamy, and unequal

inheritance remain the norm in many households, according to the International Federation for Human Rights. Even the Family Code was met with heavy opposition in parliament and had to be forced through by royal decree. According to the aforementioned banned surveys, almost one in two Moroccans feel the king went too far in his attempts to liberate women.

Homosexuality is another area where the primacy of Islam in Moroccan society prevents realization of human rights.

Homosexuality remains firmly closeted because it is not recognized by Islam. Homosexuals remain outlawed from society, and, as I witnessed first hand, many battle depression and suicidal impulses as a result. A good friend of mine confessed to me of being called into a meeting at work once his homosexuality was revealed, and being presented two options—resignation or dismissal. The fact that this occurred at a French call centre where no Arabic was spoken and the aesthetics were glaringly European shows how deeply entrenched Islam—and resulting obstacles to human rights—is in society, and this entrenchment begins in the constitution.

show up when the body is in session.

Given the insignificant role of elected officials in parliament, Moroccans do not view their elections as legitimate. Voter turnout has steadily decreased since the democratization push began 2002, and reached a record low 37 per cent in 2007 parliamentary elections. Political ideology does not motivate most voters; outside of the cities, votes are sold or tied to tribal concerns. According to OMDH observations, in June 2009 local elections in Laayoune, a town near Rabat, for example, voters would take a photo of their completed ballot to show to illegal agents working on behalf of party lists, who would pay them compensation based on which party they voted for. Since

personalities of rival list heads. List heads had trouble finding enough candidates to fill their lists, and thus had to bribe people to occupy vacant spots. Voters realize the corruption of the candidates, and do not trust their government as a result; in the banned surveys, one responder answered that it is “better that the power be in the king’s hands than in those of the corrupt elected officials, who look after only their own interests.”

While Mohammed VI has zealously pursued social and economic reforms, “the same appetite for reforms challenging the king’s authority has been lacking,” according to Maati Monjib, a professor at the Université de Rabat who recently spoke

“A good friend of mine confessed to me of being called into a meeting at work once his homosexuality was revealed, and being presented two options—resignation or dismissal.”

ELUSIVE DEMOCRATIZATION: THE ROLE OF THE CONSTITUTION

In addition to realization of respect for human rights, democracy in Morocco remains in its embryonic stages. One reason is because the constitution renders the role of the legislature—and the people’s vote as a result—inconsequential. The parliament’s role as a legislature is extremely weak compared to the king’s. The king issues royal directives which set the agenda for each semi-annual parliamentary session, and he has the power to override any laws which he feels do not conform to these directives – as he did the old Family Code. The king also names the Prime Minister and cabinet, and sets the government agenda with royal directives as well. In summary, “the parliament has no role in the nomination of the government and must settle for discussing the governmental program which reflects the royal directives to the government.” To illustrate the extent to which the king’s own legislative authority overshadows parliamentary powers, most members of parliament don’t even bother to

the legislature has no role in Moroccan politics, voters are more concerned with getting food on the table than expressing political preferences.

ELUSIVE DEMOCRATIZATION: THE ROLE OF THE STATE AND ITS POLITICAL LEADERS

However, while the constitution remains an inhibiting factor, the problem lies as much in behaviour of the Moroccan state and its politicians as in its constitution. Corrupt politicians in Morocco are as much to blame for the weakness of the legislature and hollowness of elections as the constitution is, as they are unable to mobilize the population and lack clear political direction. Candidates seek parliamentary status for financial benefits and other perks, such as legal immunity. OMDH observers reported that “the political dimension of the campaign remained weak throughout” the June 2009 local elections; in Rabat, many heads of party lists did not even publish platforms, resorting instead to propaganda about

at Columbia. Monjib argues that Morocco today resembles “an absolute monarchy” much more than the democracy “to which it rhetorically aspires.” The palace has not attempted any constitutional reforms which would limit the royal mandate; it is instead actively intervening in politics to ensure the balance of power does not shift despite new reforms. Less than a year ago, the king’s close friend and Deputy Interior Minister Fouad Ali El Himma created the Party for Authenticity and Modernity (PAM). Because of its perceived royal sponsorship, and the thin role of ideology in the formation of political loyalties as explained, many deputies from left and right flocked to this party in search of parliamentary status, knowing PAM’s ties to the palace would ensure its victory in the 2009 elections, which they did. Opposition parties see the PAM as a return to the old practices of Hassan II, whose palace created and sponsored loyal parties which would dominate elections and ensure parliamentary acquiescence to the king’s objectives. Prime Minister Abbas El Fassi has even stated publicly that he is implementing the “king’s program.” Even despite its constitutional leverage, the state is ensuring its control over the government and legislature in Morocco.

Most importantly, the state’s methods



Crude political slogans and advertisements covered the white walls of Rabat in advance of June's elections, but voter turnout and engagement was paltry. (Courtesy of Alex Bedrosyan)

to consolidate its power—press censorship and intervention in judicial matters—have often come at the expense of Islamist opposition. This reveals political, rather than religious motives, and debunks the argument about constitutional Islam as the biggest detriment to democracy in Morocco. Most cases of press censorship have targeted those who criticize the state and its decisions rather than those who publish subversive material regarding Islam. Mohammed VI has allowed freer press—OMDH notes that “a new media generation is appearing in Morocco and the field of free expression has considerably extended”—and forced through moderate reforms like the Family Code. However, he draws the line at criticism of the state. His concern is a political one rather than a religious one; his goal is to consolidate his own power, rather than consolidate adherence to Islam in society.

Furthermore, in the wake of terrorist attacks in Casablanca in 2003 and 2007, many Islamist politicians, mainly from the moderate Islamist Party of Justice and Development, were arrested on dubious charges of complicity in terrorist plots and jailed based on circumstantial evidence. Other human rights abuses in the name of stopping terrorism—like illegal detention,

torture, violent dispersion of peaceful protests—were committed against those accused of being Islamic radicals but in reality moderates who posed a political threat to the regime. The state's agenda is to prevent dissent and consolidate its power amidst reforms and political violence which could destabilize the regime; this process has come at the expense of the religious extremism embodied in the constitution.

CONSTITUTIONAL ISLAM EXONERATED

The prevalence of Islam in society cannot alone be blamed for all of Morocco's slow progress to reform, though certain human rights violations can certainly find their origins there, as in the case of homosexuality. Islam plays a negative role towards democratization in Morocco insofar as it legitimizes the monarchical constitution, which gives a weak role to the popular voice. However, the actual agents of Moroccan politics are responsible for their situation. The Moroccan state has shown itself unwilling to relinquish its hold on power, both by choosing not to pursue constitutional reform but also by

means of consolidation—manipulation of the political parties, press censorship, and infiltration of the judiciary. Its political opponents are often moderate Islamists. The conservative nature of Moroccan leadership, as well as the corruption of its elected officials—both factors unrelated to religion—are the true obstacles to Moroccan liberalization.

If Morocco is truly to progress towards a meaningful multiparty democracy, constitutional reform will be necessary, but so too will a conscious decision by its leadership to give substance to its rhetoric—to stop suppressing alternative sources of information and political parties in order to allow true alternation of power.

In an autocratic state, top-down reform can work to achieve democratization, but only if the autocrat allows his reforms to include himself and his own power.

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FRIENDING CUBA

Easing Access Across the Florida Straits

By Mark Hay

“The time is ripe for change in Cuba.”

Many have made this claim before, and many have been dead wrong. Indeed, the Cuban Castro regime, having survived to see ten U.S. presidents come and go, outlasted an embargo for over fifty years while maintaining its communist-authoritarian integrity. His rule has inspired, as of late, a spate of rather pessimistic literature. There is great doubt as to the ability of a democratic movement to come about in Cuba, much less one that will come about in any way beneficial to the U.S. Rather, many Cuba-watchers at best see the nation turning into a little China at best, and rebounding and plugging forward into eternity as a legitimized communist power on our doorstep at worst. Yet it is hard to imagine a set of circumstances so amenable to U.S. interests in Cuba as those now existing. And with the right executive maneuvering by Obama, it is not hard to imagine both immediate and long-term gains for the Cubans (mainly liberalizers) and the U.S. in the domestic and international spheres. A wild claim, to be sure. But in these pages allow the author to paint a picture of the current state of affairs in Cuba, the openings they create, the actions taken by the U.S. in response, those we should be taking, and why.

First and foremost, the Cuban economy is in absolute shambles. There has been a

40 percent decrease in the value of nickel (Cuba’s main export) and a serious decline in tourism (Cuba’s main industry), coupled with a 41 percent increase in imports (not commensurate with an increase in exports). To add insult to injury, three successive hurricanes in 2008 inflicted approximately \$10 billion in damages. As a result, Cuba’s estimated growth for 2009 has fallen from 6 percent to a measly 1.7 percent and extreme austerity measures have gone into effect. The state has given up free lunch canteens at workplaces, instituted limitations on air conditioning, electricity and cooking, and has nearly run out of toilet paper. Generally when a state runs out of toilet paper, that’s when the shit hits the fans. As of yet unable to tap into its own offshore oil reserves and highly dependent on Venezuelan subsidies (especially of oil—they took on average 94,000 free barrels a day in 2008), the Cuban state is on the brink, especially when one considers that the Venezuelan handouts cannot last forever given the effect of the economic crisis and falling price of oil on Venezuela. Granted, Cuba has weathered such austerity before as in 1990 when it lost its \$4.3 billion yearly subsidy from the USSR. But as of now and for the foreseeable future, the simultaneous collision of recession, corruption, the inherent unproductive and failed collectivization in a communist

system, and the failure of handouts have left Cuba in an unprecedented weakened state.

Throw into the mix the massive increase in civil society in Cuba over the past twenty years and things get even worse for the Castro regime. As Carl Gershman and Orlando Gutierrez so brilliantly argued this past January in the *Journal of Democracy*, in the case of all past opportunities in Cuba, there was no force capable of standing up to the Castros. Even as late as 1994, Cuba was able to disperse protests with relative ease; this pattern, on a shallow viewing, persists: as of January 2009 Raul Castro had a force of about 340,000 communist youth at his disposal for the intimidation and indoctrination of the population. But despite crackdowns on anti-government protests, the number of anti-Castro, pro-democratic and pacifist groups in Cuba has grown at an alarming rate over the past two decades. And cracking down on them has become increasingly difficult and decreasingly meaningful. Despite raids on illicit libraries, 135 known and operational facilities carrying banned books have come into being with a continual circulation of a quarter million regular patrons. And in the case of the arrest of Porno para Ricardo’s anti-regime front-man, Gorcki Aguila, the government was unable in August 2008 to prevent mass demonstrations for his release

and was eventually forced to give him an extremely lenient sentence unbecoming his seditious crime under the nation's legal code. Still, the military powers of the Castros are impressive. Note that prominent dissident Oswaldo Paya's Varela project (a legal petition for democratic reform) has only managed to gather 40,000 signatures in a nation of 11 million in over seven years of circulation, mainly due to government presence and intimidation. In such a state, libraries close quickly. Protests still get broken up.

Yet the regime has proven itself to be utterly incapable of dealing with the use of technology to foster anti-communist civil society. Using memory sticks and computers, the rich can now buy the cheaper models manufactured and sold on the black market, which means dissidents have been able to leak news onto the Internet, even in mainstream media. "In one case," wrote Gershman and Gutierrez, "a video of students at the computer science university confronting National Assembly president Ricardo Alarcón about economic injustices and restrictions on personal freedoms found its way onto the BBC and CNN." Additionally, spearheaded by Yoani Sanchez, Cuba has produced a vibrant blogger community operating against government regulation. Since its inception, it has only grown, even as the government clamps down on Internet availability (access was consistent at 94 percent for quite some time but decreased to 4.6 percent in November 2008). Despite all attempts, the government has discovered no efficient means of monitoring and/or restricting the black market and Internet dissent. And so the rabble grows.

At the same time, there's a new sheriff in Havana, and his name is Raúl. Echoing many, it is only fair to admit that Raúl is almost synonymous with Fidel in his ideology and his use of force. However, Raúl is nowhere near as competent as his brother was. To legitimize himself as the inheritor of Fidel's throne, Raúl has enacted various reforms—some simply cosmetic, such as opening unaffordable hotels with overpriced Internet access to a poor population, but some more real, like the granting of the right to privately develop agricultural lands. He has also replaced key members of the party with his own personal team of followers, leading to his ousting of the prominent Felipe Roque and Carlos Lage, sparking wild speculations as to what they could have done. Regardless of the cause, this act and

other reform actions have bred, "intensifying debate, if not infighting, within the regime." Take as an example a recent letter, sent using government computers and Internet access, protesting the appointment of the new Arts Minister, which was met with sympathetic dissent from within the party, but which inspired no response.

Raúl, for all his gusto, is indeed so weak that when he attempted this past May to fight blogger dissent by restricting Cuban Internet usage in tourist hotels, he was forced to repeal his own ordinance when Sanchez raised a racket. In her words, as quoted in the *Foreign Service Journal*, "Yes, they cede when you push back; they have to amend their plans when we citizens raise our voices and the international media hears the echoes." It is no mean task, forcing the Castros back on a decision. Considering the success of dissenters, Raúl's own weakness, party dissent, the growth of civil society, the economic downfall, and the simple fact that every survey conducted in Cuba in the last several years shows that the majority of citizens (save those over 60 years old who were involved in the revolution) support a transition away from a Castro regime, the bulk favoring a transition towards democracy, it is not hard to see that the time is ripe for American involvement.

President Barack Obama has taken swift actions on this matter, like opening restrictions on Cuban-American family visits and remittances to Cuba and allowing contracts and sales of electronics and communications equipment to Cuba. But these steps have been too small and halting. The administration has expressed a will to wait for tit-for-tat reforms from Cuba before moving forward. However,

The regime has proven itself incapable of dealing with technology to foster anti-communist civil society.

this will not happen. Rather, Obama must look at Cuba and realize that it resembles the Iberian peninsula in 1970s: a beleaguered and divided place under authoritarian rule highly dependent on tourism and unused to foreign viewpoints, surrounded by democratic neighbors and hosting a pluralistic, dissenting society with an existing democratic tradition and movement. With this in mind, Obama should drop conditionality, immediately open travel to Cuba to all Americans, and offer U.S. access to the Internet free of the caveat that Cuba refrain from attempts to monitor and/or restrict the flow of information on the Internet.

Consider the benefits of opening tourism. Some have argued that such a move would only line the pockets of the government and forestall the economic collapse of the regime. They have also argued that current tourism (2.4 million tourists flooded through Cuba in 2008 and approximately 15 million have visited in the last ten years, mainly from the E.U. and Canada) has not been allowed to interact with the general population and has, as such, had little effect on Cuban politics. Consider, though, that Raúl's ostensibly cosmetic reforms now allow Cubans to move among tourists in their locations. Additionally, opening the country to American tourism would, conservatively, add 3 million more tourists per year to the list—a number hard to regulate in a sudden burst.

This all suggests that, as was the case in Iberia almost forty years ago, there will be increased contact with foreign ideas, varied viewpoints, and decreased ability for the state to act with impunity in putting down dissent (so as not to lose its tourism, the cornerstone of its economy). Additionally, tourism jobs tend to be the best paid in Cuba (garnished by illegal but common bonuses provided clearly and directly by non-Cuban employers), breeding an affinity for Westerners and their culture and helping to alleviate the economic concerns of the nation. This form of poverty alleviation fuses the Cuban economy to U.S. tourism while spreading anti-communist ideas and freeing social space for Cubans to direct their ire against their illiberal, underpaying government. Also, with a porous border comes a larger black market. The hardship of gaining a license to operate a business means that to accommodate increased tourism, black market business will have to increase accordingly, thus increasing the speed and ease of moving illicit

communications technologies, publications, ideas, and/or other materials across borders, while allowing an opening to address human and drug trafficking issues with the Cuban regime.

There is already massive support for such a move—a bill allowing this travel passed the House and Senate in 2003, but was dropped due to a threatened Bush veto. A similar bill, backed prominently by Senator Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.), will be coming onto the legislative agenda shortly. And even the usually die-hard opposition in Miami now agrees (with 59 percent approval) that the travel ban must go. But this move will not be enough on its own.

Currently, only a small fraction of the population has access to the dissident views expressed on the Internet. A whopping 72.4 percent of the population gets all of its news from the state media. As argued by Dr. Andy Gomez of the University of Miami's Institute

for Cuban and Cuban American Studies, this control of ideas is key in enforcing acceptance of an illegitimate and failed system by creating "institutions, collective memories, and facts or explanations of how the world operates as part of a cogent national cultural policy." However, Gomez argues, and the experience of 1970s Iberia confirms, that the increase of access to dissenting views, especially via modern communications mediums, does more than anything else to destruct this acceptance and usher in debate, dissent and democratization. Therefore, it is vital to expand Internet access to the majority of Cuban citizens and to do so by offering to provide Internet connectivity to the Cubans without caveats.

This solution (allowing Internet access without restrictions on Internet monitoring) may seem a little counterintuitive, but hear this: the Cubans have openly rejected such a caveat and, despite the higher cost

and spottier connection, are currently in negotiating a deal with Venezuela over a 1,500 km fiber optic link set to become operational in 2010. Granted by Chavez, the link will inevitably come with a host of tips and tools for monitoring Internet traffic. However, another line, only 110 miles long running from Miami, is being constructed by Miami's TeleCuba. Given Cuba's economic condition, the Cuban government would surely accept this cheaper, more stable Miami contract were it not for the fact that TeleCuba stipulates that it comes only with promises that Cuba will not restrict Internet access.

But, as has been seen in the case of Sanchez, the Cuban government is ill-equipped and far too poor to effectively monitor the Internet. Additionally, years of experience with Chinese censors has given rise to the development of a number of easily-accessible, untraceable, and effective evasive maneuvers and software to combat

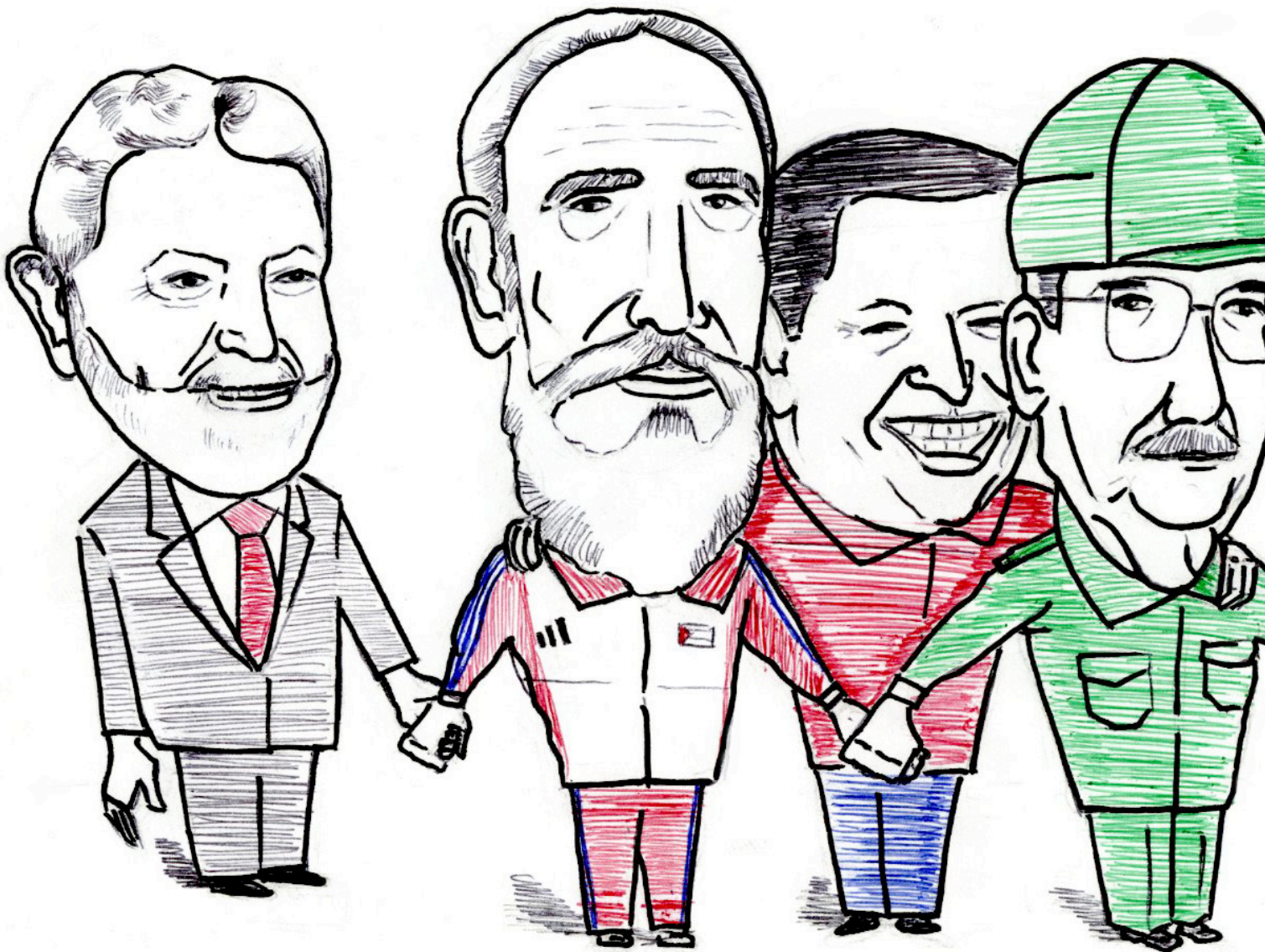


Illustration by Igor Simic

ensorship. As a result, Cubans will gain access to a multiplicity of ideas while the government scrambles and fails to block the access. If China consistently fails to monitor its Internet with a massive, high-tech bureau, then what chance does Raul Castro really have?

One might see this as the U.S. giving in. However, waiting for the Castros to budge is pointless and only opens the doors for less desirable powers (like China, currently courting the Castros) to step in and provide less desirable outcomes for the U.S. in Cuba. Acting now, Cuba may be able to take credit for the benefits it brings its nation in terms of salaries and goods via tourism and IT, as did Spain in the 1970s. But it must, as such, take responsibility for the spread of anti-communist ideals within its own borders and would be hard-pressed to step back on such measures. It could not harass the United States for these gestures, free of strings as

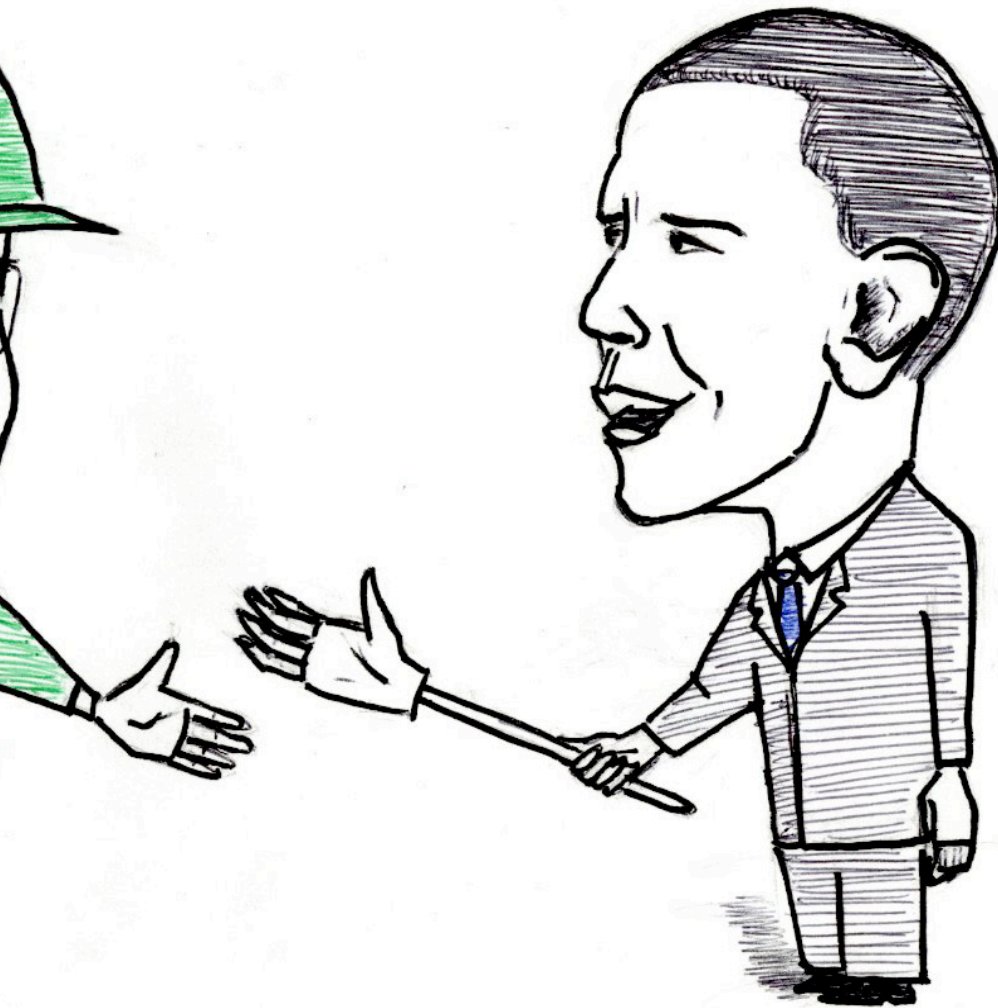
they would be (although they can try, as did Fidel by claiming that Obama's increased travel for Cuban Americans has caused a swine flu outbreak in Cuba), and it must live with the consequences. Such moves, then, effectively play upon the minor changes made by Raul, the weakness within the government, the discontent and democratic civil societies indigenously generated in Cuba, the economic downturn. They will also preempt less desirable outcomes, such as a Venezuelan Internet connection. In this scenario, the U.S. does not just come out neutral, but instead benefits greatly.

First and foremost, this move saves America face at home and abroad—it appeases the international community, which has railed against the U.S.'s isolation of Cuba for decades now (this fall marked the 18th unequivocal condemnation of the embargo by the United Nations). At the same time, it does not force the U.S. to admit the failure

of its Cuban policy and keeps the embargo as a tool that may be used, via repeals of restrictions (all possible by executive actions, contrary to what the Helms-Burton act may have led many to believe) as positive reinforcement for peaceful democratic transitions within the Cuban government—as opposed to negative reinforcement, throwing away the embargo because it hasn't worked and an authoritarian government is still in place. The U.S. population, including Cuban Americans, also overwhelmingly support such measures, which would garner support and accomplishment for the beleaguered Obama administration and generate jobs in the communications and air travel sectors for Americans. Similarly, opening the borders would allow an influx of Cuban doctors (the Cuban foreign medical bridge is the most impressive in the world, with 25,000 doctors graduating in 2008 alone and over 185,000 doctors sent abroad since 1962). America, which foolishly rejected the aid of 1,600 Cuban doctors during Hurricane Katrina, would benefit immeasurably by welcoming foreign medical brigades—alleviating pressure on the American healthcare system, fostering positive relations with Cubans, and increasing the probability of defection of doctors to American citizenship (over 6,000 doctors have already defected in Miami due to indirect exposure).

Indeed, it is hard to see a single downside to this arrangement, save that the transition to democracy in Cuba would not be instantaneous. Rather, it would be gradual and thus, in all probability, more stable, enduring and endogenous, just as it was in Spain and Portugal in the 1970s. Through two simple and practical steps, then, the United States can, with benefit rather than harm to its domestic and international image, initiate a controlled and positive path towards enduring democracy in Cuba, all by playing on the ideal and rare window opened in Cuba recently by a strange collusion of random factors. But the window will not stay open long. The time to act is now.

Mark Hay, CC'12, is a double-major in Religion and Political Science and writes for a number of campus publications. His article grew as an extension of the research and writing he did while interning with the *Foreign Service Journal* this summer. Both his bio and his article were written while listening to David Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust* on loop. He can be reached at meh2191@columbia.edu.



Frank Lloyd Wright had a useful hint for the contemporary urban planner: “Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you.” As sentimental as this advice might sound, the role of nature in the context of the built environment is no light concern in the minds of policymakers and planners today. In a nod to the spirit of these “green” times, two current New York exhibitions are exploring the realities and potentials of this role—and in so doing offer two contrasting ways of approaching an understanding of the relationship between the built form and its underlying ecosystem.

In a show whose scope stretches across a century of architectural history, the Museum of Modern Art’s exhibit *In Situ: Architecture and Landscape* explores the sprawling variety of attitudes towards nature expressed in modern building design.

concomitant attention to the specific natural habitats and relationships in any specific site poses the threat of ecological interruption, a threat left unexplored by MoMA’s exhibit.

Closer to campus, a collaboration among Columbia and Barnard Architecture students, members of the Urban Landscape Lab at the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, and the graphic design studio MTWTF has produced an imaginative new project called Safari 7. Through a variety of media, Safari 7 provides an interactive approach to understanding the dynamic set of habitats and ecosystems that weave through New York City’s unique built environment. This imaginative undertaking comes closer than almost

voices of those whose lives are embedded in a particular site’s set of ecologies, even ecologies as often overlooked as those of New York—might enable more flexible and site-responsive plans.

“We were interested in doing a guerrilla project,” explained Kate Orff, co-director of the Urban Landscape Lab, in reference to the project’s aim of engaging ordinary New Yorkers. “Reframing the Number 7 line as an urban safari forces you to experience the urban environment differently. ... This way, you’re not just on the receiving end of concepts brought to you by experts.”

Participants in this “guerrilla project” encounter the animal and plant populations that have adapted or become transformed through human intervention, from the estrogen-pumped fish ecologies of the East River to the swarms of Canada geese who

“While the exhibit at MoMA offers visitors a glance at the ways in which the architectural profession has historically interpreted, embraced, or rejected an often generalized view of the natural in building plans and designs, Safari 7 facilitates an expansion of urban planning discourse.”

The models and designs on display—among which are two of Wright’s own plans—serve as a catalog of 20th century architectural fancy, from its most starkly functional to its most beautifully flamboyant.

For all their variety, the projects and designs gathered in *In Situ* tend to express a monolithic, top-down approach towards nature and the landscape, an approach based around an unchanging physical plan which, while it may express a degree of attention to the site’s natural context, fails to acknowledge complexity and flux. When it comes to building construction, the static plan has primacy over the dynamic, living site.

This is problematic even in purportedly ecologically-conscious design. Incorporating cookie-cutter “green” improvements into plans without

any *In Situ* installment to answering Frank Lloyd Wright’s call.

The project consists of a self-guided tour, aided by maps, signs, schedules, podcasts, and social networking tools, of the complex set of ecosystems that thrive in the urban landscape along New York City’s no. 7 subway line. While the exhibit at MoMA offers visitors a glance at the ways in which the architectural profession has historically interpreted, embraced, or rejected an often generalized view of the natural in building plans and designs—often to the detriment of the existing environment—*Safari 7* facilitates an expansion of urban planning discourse, allowing city residents outside of the planning field to understand the complexity, diversity, and potential present in their own urban ecosystem. Such an expanded discourse—inclusive of the informed

seasonally congregate around the polluted man-made lakes in Flushing Meadows Park. The consequences of urban planning are made unusually palpable. “*Safari 7* presents nature not as something pure and untouched,” explained *Safari 7* Research and Design Associate Lisa Ekle, “but rather something that is constructed and constantly changing.” The project provides a channel through which members of the public can explore and engage with the specific set of diverse ecological relationships embedded in their own urban landscape. In doing this, it encourages a nuanced understanding of this relationship that holds the potential to challenge the at times unwittingly destructive approach taken by the projects and designs at *In Situ*.

The destructive implications of twentieth-century architecture and

planning's historical top-down approach are at their most jarring in a display at *In Situ* entitled "The Continuous Monument," a shining, globe-spanning prism conceived in 1969 by the radical Italian architecture firm Superstudio. "The glass and steel monster would have extended ad infinitum across the earth, totally overriding the landscape, paying no attention to nature or even the existing man-made structures that might have stood in the way of its path," explained Jennifer Gray, a specialist in architectural history who lectures at MoMA. As speculative as it was, the massive, and grimly monotonous, project can today be seen as nothing short of terrifying.

But the shortcomings of this articulation of man's exertion of his

human habitat all over the world. ... People are beginning to expand their view and see that in some cases human habitat excludes animal life."

"Most city infrastructure is constructed in a brutal way because government didn't really understand how interconnected environment, health, and commerce were and are," said *Safari 7* collaborator Glenn Cummings, founder of the design studio MTWTF, in the same *Architect's Newspaper* story. "It is the overlaps and intersections between these infrastructures, housing fabrics, human, animal, and plant habitats that tell the story."

A note of concurrence with *Safari 7*'s egalitarian and interactive approach is struck by *In Situ*'s multimedia display "Non

and political complications. However, Estudio Teddy Cruz's flexible and responsive approach to crafting socially and ecologically-responsible plans, as manifested on his exhibit's second display screen, offers a possible vehicle through which the public understanding fostered by *Safari 7* might be channeled into modern urban design.

"In terms of design and planning, I think the project supports the idea of specific and local interventions and how those then connect back to the greater urban environment," said Lisa Ekle. "Ideally, city and park planning organizations would implement more policies supporting informal or less controlled borders between what we perceive as nature and the built

"An expanded discourse—inclusive of those whose lives are embedded in a particular site's set of ecologies—might enable more flexible and site-responsive plans."

architectural will over nature, evident even in purportedly ecologically-minded projects, signifies the need for an expansion in sustainable planning discourse of the type that *Safari 7* makes possible. Take as example one drawing on display, entitled SITE, which envisions a big-box store rendered environmentally sound by the grass and shrubbery planted across its massive roof. "But the drawings are misleading," Gray noted. "When you see the complete model, you see how massive the heat-trapping parking lot is." Even in supposedly sustainable projects, the architectural field tends to marginalize ecological concerns for the sake of marketability to investors.

With its broad range of media tools available to anyone, *Safari 7*, by contrast, enables a grassroots, bottom-up engagement with the complex set of natural and man-made forces that operate across the urban landscape. "Growing awareness of habitats [fits with] a growing understanding of the less superficially technical and more emotional and compassionate side of the sustainability question," explained Kate Orff to the *Architect's Newspaper*. As architects and planners have "modified the globe to create

Stop Sprawl: McMansion Retrofitted," by the San Diego-based urban research and design firm Estudio Teddy Cruz. A film clip to one side of a scale-model McMansion first queries: "Because of high gas prices the 'supersize-me' urbanism of the exurbs is coming into question. Will the tactics of adaptation determine the future of this oil-hungry urbanism?" The clip, filmed in front of a number of pristine San Diego homes, proceeds with a series of statements—all in Spanish—by the maids and gardeners who tend to the homes, regarding how the properties and the surrounding neighborhood might be improved. "These houses should have mixed uses. I think that would make for a more sustainable future," says one interviewee. Other respondents suggest tearing down the fences separating the yards to allow for playgrounds and other collective activities, while others advocate infilling the space between the houses with commercial functions. The additional display screen, which at the beginning of the clip shows a diagram of a typical McMansion, responds to the ideas proposed by the interviewees, morphing and changing in accordance with their suggestions.

Incorporating the ideas of *Safari 7*, though, is fraught with economic

environment." But if the designs at *In Situ* offer any lesson, it is that informality and flexibility, when it comes to the relationship between construction and nature, offer challenges that, for developers, offset their benefits.

A broadened public understanding of the complex reality of the natural environment's relationship with man-made construction, along with a concomitant responsiveness on the part of the fields of architecture and planning, is necessary for any positive change. The *Safari 7* team hopes to take the project to schools, museums and libraries in Queens to further raise awareness of the habitats that exist within and throughout the urban environment. Only through a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of this relationship by all members of the community can sustainability become a recognized, clearly defined, and practical target at the urban scale.

Tommy Hill, CC '12, is an Urban Studies major with an English concentration. He is interested in urban planning, public policy, and journalism. He can be reached at tsh2119@columbia.edu.



The Failure of 'Compassionate Consumerism'

By Cassandra Lee

A few months ago, I was standing in line at the Gap when I overheard a mother talking to her young daughter. “Buying this shirt will help us to save Africans,” she said, smiling as she waved a child-size shirt that read “INSPI(RED)” across the chest. I wondered if this could possibly be true.

We’ve all seen the ads for Product (RED)’s Gap t-shirt campaign: a celebrity stands against a neutral backdrop and stares at the camera, sporting a red t-shirt scrawled with fading letters reading “INSPI(RED),” or “DESI(RED),” or some such incarnation. The letters may be weathered, but the message is clear: buy this t-shirt to help to fight AIDS in Africa.

This formula seems almost too good to be true: you don’t have to change any of your normal habits, and you can help save Africans. On closer inspection, however, (RED)’s products and advertising campaigns may actually be perpetuating attitudes and beliefs that hinder the very people they purportedly help.

Compare a Product (RED) Gap t-shirt to any of the other Gap products. The

This form of marketing makes Africa’s problems seem more like a trend than anything else—what is “trendy” about Africa is the act of saving it.

Product (RED) shirts have “exposed seams, unfinished edges,” and much thinner fabric that is faded, worn, and in some cases tattered. This contrasts starkly with the classic basics found in the Gap’s other products, which suggests that products representative of Africa must be of poorer quality, or falling apart.

(RED) explains on their website that they use the color red to signify that AIDS in Africa is an emergency. AIDS is, of course, a huge problem on the African continent, but the idea that “all of Africa” suffers from AIDS, or that AIDS afflicts

Africa alone, is erroneous and misleading. By percentage, the top nineteen countries in terms of AIDS prevalence are in sub-Saharan Africa; by count, South Africa and Nigeria are followed by India. Clearly, the AIDS situation in many sub-Saharan African countries is the worst in the world in terms of prevalence, but other countries in Africa have prevalence rates even lower than that of the United States. However, (RED) sums up their business model succinctly on their website by having a picture of a Product (RED) iPod with an arrow pointing to cartoon of two red pills



Courtesy of Steve Rhodes

with an arrow pointing to a red African continent. Here the implication is that all of Africa, collectively, suffers from AIDS.

The (RED) campaign itself does recognize the global nature of AIDS by donating money to the Global Fund, whose funds are used to fight AIDS on other continents like South America and Asia. However, all of the marketing nevertheless focuses on Africa. This marketing decision coincides neatly with the words of Bono, (RED)'s founder, in a New York Times article about the campaign. "Africa is sexy," he says, "and people need to know that."

(RED)'s advertisements also encourage this sense of superiority of the West in comparison to Africa that the products create. A recent American Express ad shows supermodel Gisele Bündchen in a fashionable red dress next to Masai warrior Keseme Ole Parsapaet in traditional warrior dress; next to Gisele, lettering reads "MY CARD," and next to

"paternalism persists as a psychology precisely because it satisfies the cravings of vanity in a way that real reform doesn't. (Where people have learned to save themselves, they do not need saviors.)"

In no way should AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa or elsewhere be trivialized, but the branding of AIDS as an uniquely African problem that affects the whole continent is problematic. As Kenyan writer Binyavanga Wainaina argues, the depiction of the continent as one giant crisis, a place of emergency that is perpetually tattered like the (RED) products suggest, ignores the progress of that many Africans are making on their own. Stock exchanges now thrive in Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, and Ghana due to measure taken by citizens of these countries. Such self-motivated enterprise does more to increase wealth than any aid can.

Helping individual people in countries like South Africa and Lesotho seems—and is—great, but the problem

creates these problems: corrupt leadership modeled on colonial governments, lack of infrastructure, and increasing debt due to foreign loans.

Not only does the paternalistic approach to aid which is endorsed by the ways (RED) is marketed and the look of the products themselves fail to interrogate the underlying causes of the AIDS epidemic it also endorses, as Wainaina notes, the victim-savior and child-parent relationship that distorts Africans' idea of themselves and their potential. People in Africa should not be viewed as victims and children that can be saved by the superior West, but rather as agents who affect change for themselves and by themselves. (RED)'s products and advertising do not reinforce the idea that people in Africa can help themselves, but rather through the power of the wonderful and benevolent Western consumer-capitalist system, we can save Africans.

If individuals in the West want to truly create long-term improvements and help to fight disease, it won't be as easy as buying a (RED) iPod.

Parsapaet, lettering reads "MY LIFE." This sets up the juxtaposition that what is but a mere purchase to a Westerner is an African's entire life, furthering a sense of Western superiority. This sense of power imbued by the products and advertisements for (RED) relegate people in Africa to the role of victims and elevate people in the West to the role of saviors.

But what is so wrong about this victim and savior dichotomy between Africa and the West? After all, aren't we in effect saving Africans by helping them to access much needed medicine?

This form of marketing makes Africa's problems seem more like a trend than anything else. The trendiness of Africa is unlike certain other ethnic, national or cultural trends because what is "trendy" about Africa is the act of saving it, as performed by campaigns like the (RED) Foundation. As Michael Beran, a lawyer and writer in the field of African aid, wrote

with adopting (RED)'s paternalist approach is that it ignores the history of aid to Africa and also prevents true change. The approach of (RED) is to simply raise money—the cure for AIDS in Africa itself comes later.

However, this approach fails to examine the underlying causes and structures that create the disease and poverty that many people in these countries face. As NYU economist William Easterly observes, "The response of the West to Africa's tragedy has been constant throughout the years." A constant response that has constantly been to donate more and more money. All told, \$568 billion in foreign aid has gone to Africa over the last four decades, but between 1990 and 2001 the average daily income actually fell from 62 to 60 cents and 46 percent of the continent continues to live below the ordinary poverty line. In order to actually reduce disease and poverty on the African continent, people need to address what

For all the problems that already exist in sub-Saharan Africa, these ad campaigns create more problems than solutions. If individuals in the West want to truly create long-term improvements and help to fight disease, it won't be as easy as buying a (RED) iPod. We must discard notions of "saving" and replace them with ideas of cooperation and mutual support—and this may mean undertaking the hard, ungratifying, unglamorous work of analyzing underlying causes instead of getting enough celebrities together to raise even more money by peddling accessories you can wear out of the Gap.

Kassandra Lee, CC '12, is majoring in Comparative Literature and Society. Her interest in project (RED)'s advertising stems from a more general interest in the sociocultural implications of media representation. She can be reached at kml2134@columbia.edu.

MY SUMMER OF LOVE

By Jennie Rose Halperin

Susan said that her commune was “the best kind of anarchism, for a short time.” It functioned as an artists’ retreat, collective, and farm; although it now functions solely as a land collective, the colony’s hand-built houses still dotting the hill that leads to Haystack Mountain. A new bridge runs across the brook, whose banks are overgrown with wild raspberries. Upstream, a giant waterfall flows, where the commune members bathed every day, surrounded by rock sculptures. The construction along the brook is destroying their woods, and mountaintop tree removal is visible from the pastures and dirt roads.

This now-disbanded artists’ collective in Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom occupied my life this summer, as a rotating cast of hippies told me stories of the quick dissolution of utopian dreams and harmonious anarchism into destructive drug and alcohol addiction—a physical manifestation of 1960s idealism morphing into 1970s excess.

With philosophers and scientists warning us that humans cannot continue on their path of destruction, young people, myself included, are flocking to organic farms and homesteads once again. Gardening and self-sufficiency are part and parcel of both lifestyle anarchism and liberalism, an uneasy partnership aggravated by class and race. I left New York to live deliberately, both to learn how to grow my own food and to enact my own utopian vision. I did not expect to find a place at Susan’s farm, but she took me in after a last-minute cold call from a website, her intuition as her guide.

Susan bought her fifty acres down the road from, but separate from the commune,

in the early 1990s, and invites young interns to live with her, teaching them about herbal medicine, cooking, and farm work. In my three months living in her house, I hand-scythed hay, learned to milk a goat and care for chickens, made tinctures and dried herbs, cared for a garden, and fell in love with a barefoot anarchist boy who never stopped laughing. I frolicked in fields, swam naked in lakes, knitted scarves, read books. I never had enough time in a day and collapsed into my lover’s arms every night in our tent across the field dotted with fireflies.

Looking back on my summer, I recall critical theorist Simon Critchley’s claim that we are living in an “anti-1960s.” He says that while that generation built communes and dropped out of society, we are political realists. We recognize and reject the naïveté of the past. But to lose the utopian impulse in radical politics would be a fatal mistake. It would mean giving in to the Obama vision of liberal democracy, accept that capitalism is an inevitability, and stop imagining that another world is possible.

For us, the collapsed collective remained a vision of what could have been—Susan’s neighbors and friends were mostly connected to the collective, either as neighbors or former members. For her, their collapse was a symbol of the difficulties of communal vision in a capitalist society, marred by the hard reality of addiction. It was a specter that lived with us all summer; it lived in the barn from which transient hippies were recently evicted and in the furniture in Susan’s house, built by a friend killed by cirrhosis.

While the 1960s vision of utopia was based on romantic visions of land and transparency, now radical action must live in secrecy, on the fringes, in squats, in mutual aid, in rejecting the septic systems that poison the land and the pesticides and GMO crops that poison our food. It means creating new uses for trash, avoiding surveillance culture, and creating beauty out of the often destructive and scary world.

To believe, as many of our predecessors did, that dropping out is the only solution is problematic; these opportunities are available to a small, usually white, educated, middle class, and able bodied sector. The back-to-the-land movement was not equipped to deal with this reality, and thus failed, quashed by government intervention. For me, the most important task is to make these utopian projects inclusive to all, to transition into the future with trepidation, but also hope.

By the time my three months were over, I was ready to leave Susan’s, though the world my parents called “real” loomed forebodingly. The farm felt more real to me than the smog, trash, and surveillance of New York, or the rarefied, academic environment of Columbia. The first few weeks back I felt lost and alone, a mindless cog in a system I could not control.

I realize the limitations of my individual actions in an inherently destructive system, but each piece of trash, each thoughtless comment in class, each homeless person rankled me in a new way. Still, it was disconcertingly easy to fall back into the pattern of school, cell phones, and city life.

Dropping out permanently may not be sustainable, but I am learning how to balance my two communities, returning both physically when I can and also in memory whenever I like to the farm, in order to live as freely as possible in both places.

Jennie Rose Halperin, BC '10, is an American Studies major. She is the Barnard Zine Library special collections assistant, and a former intern at the American Social History Project and StoryCorps. For the past two summers, Jennie has worked on organic farms, and is an avid gardener, cook, tap dancer, and cyclist. Jennie hopes to some day be a homesteader and public historian. She can be reached at jh2658@barnard.edu.



Courtesy of Jennie Rose Halperin

CALL FOR PITCHES: March 2010 Issue

PITCH INSTRUCTIONS

**Pitches are due by 11:59 PM on Friday, January 22.
Please email them to cpureview@columbia.edu.**

We're asking you to submit any number of pitches—i.e. proposals for articles. Each pitch should be at least one paragraph long. If you're able to give us a rough draft, we will more seriously consider your pitch. Remember again that the issue will be published in early March, so your topic should not be overly time-sensitive, though it should have a contemporary resonance. If you'd like to write a humor or satire piece, please let us know. We may want to discuss article ideas closer to the date of publication so that the humor is relevant and effective.

Check out our website, www.cpreview.org, for examples of past articles.

Please include the information below in your pitch:

1. Name, School, Year, Phone Number
2. What do you want to write about? What will the main thrust of your argument be? What makes this an interesting topic?
3. List sources you plan to contact (up to 2 can be Columbia-based experts). If you cannot name specific sources right now, please try to list the general field of expertise for potential sources. Searching for sources should not be extremely difficult, but the more externally verifiable a topic, the more convincing it is as a pitch.

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