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COLUMBIA POLITICAL REVIEW

SEEING THROUGH THE FOG

SAN FRANCISCO PROVIDES A MODEL FOR HEALTH CARE THAT WORKS

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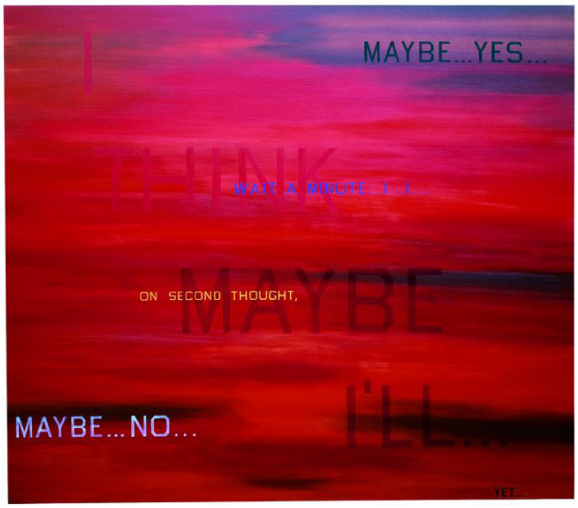

Editor's Note

About two weeks ago, the White House released a list of 45 works that are on loan to the Obama family from several Washington museums. Among them is one pictured to the left, entitled "I think I'll..." by California artist Ed Ruscha. Set against a fiery red sunset are several phrases, including "On Second Thought..." and "Maybe...No," all playing on the theme of indecision.

Just ten months ago, the selection of this painting for decoration in the White House would have seemed incongruous with Obama's presidential modus operandi. On his second day in office, he issued executive orders banning torture and closing secret prisons run by the CIA. Within his first 100 days in office, he had moved with impressive speed to focus on the recession and collapsing financial industry. He arranged massive bailouts for the auto industry and failing banks and won approval for a $787 billion economic stimulus package. Obama was no vacillator—he was, in fact, using the Presidency as his bully pulpit.

Initially, his fans, including yours truly, saw no sign of indecision on the part of Mr. President. Rather, they praised his willingness to listen to criticism and his thoughtfulness—indecision's better brother. His team approach to management contrasted sharply with that of the previous administration. Many welcomed the perceived change in how things were being conducted in Washington.

Lately, however, Obama's honeymoon appears to have ended. A bad summer of vicious town-halls and the uncertainty surrounding America's commitment to the war in Afghanistan have contributed to the meme of Obama as passive and, dare I say, indecisive. But in regards to the most critical issue on his very full plate, health care reform, indecisive he is not. Obama has been keen to point out that health care reform is not only a moral imperative, but also a fiscal one, and has tirelessly campaigned across the nation to garner support for it.

In order to see health care reform pass at all costs, Obama—along with other moderate Democrats—has taken the road of compromise, stating that he will not insist on the public option. But compromise has come at a substantial price. For instance, the Senate Finance bill, though perhaps more palatable to conservative Democrats and deficit hawks, is said to do more for insurance companies than for the American people.

So, on both sides of the aisle, reform-minded folk dream on. Progressives hope for a Scandinavian health care system for America that never will be, while conservatives lament the free-market health care system that never was. Our cover story writer Jacqueline Mauro, on the other hand, takes a look in her own backyard—her hometown of San Francisco—where everyone is, astonishingly, happy with their health care (p. 8). Nevertheless, she argues that San Francisco's universal health care system would never be politically or administratively viable on a national scale. Even so, this rare instance of government functioning close to the ideal inspires even the most cynical among us to hope for a more uncompromised system of governance.

On the East Coast, Jimmy Dahroug—even though his bids for a New York State Senate seat were unsuccessful—offers advice to those political hopefuls on campus who may want to try their hand at that whole "idealism" thing (p. 14). Ross Bruck searches for the conservative soul and discusses how the Republican party might envision a cohesive future for America (p. 23). Across the Pacific, Yurina Ko considers whether the recent Japanese elections—which resulted in the first "regime change" in half a century—will yield meaningful progress or is simply change for change's sake (p. 20).

While these visions of progress differ widely and may sometimes even be ideologically at odds, at the heart of each of them is a belief that the future might just be a little better than the present. Without a map, politicians and average citizens are tackling the problems of our age—not knowing if "our" way is the right way. Thus, we proceed with trepidation but not without conviction. So when I look at that painting again, my eye gravitates towards Ruscha's optimism rather than his equivocations: "Maybe... Yes."

CATHERINE CHONG

OCTOBER.09

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ART BY CRISTINA POLITANO

BABEL'S LEMMINGS

By Mark Hay

You, or several of your friends, are studying either Mandarin or Arabic. It's a fact. Of that pool, the vast majority have undertaken their studies because they see Mandarin and Arabic as useful languages—languages that will set them apart from the crowd, advance them in their careers, and possibly earn them a buck or two.

This is silly. Arabic and Mandarin, rather than being the rising world languages, are likely just this season's posh languages. And is language study worth it—the hours in class stumbling through strange sounds, squiggly lines, the painful dialogues on your imaginary Chinese dating life and Arabic cooking habits—just to be momentarily fashionable? More to the point, can an academic ever really be fashionable? On both counts, probably not.

At this point, it would be understandable if you disagree; it is hard to admit that you may have wasted so many days and dollars of your life. Take in Dickensian fashion, then, a glimpse of the past and a nip to the future and see if it may not change your perspective of the present.

Meet young Thomas. Back in the rip-roaring 1980s, all the kids were doing the moonwalk to some of those wholesome, old-timey tunes and Russian was all the rage in universities. Young and ambitious, Thomas decided—along with so many others—to capitalize on the red fear that had morphed his nation into a chauvinistic ball of nerves by learning Russian. He graduated with a degree in Slavic languages, and as quickly as you can say "Gorbachev" he found himself holding down a simple, yet lucrative, translation position with the State Department.

But the borscht train couldn't run forever. The USSR became the Russian Federation, which became a cesspool where Westerners feared to tread for nigh upon a decade, and with its collapse went Thomas' quick-fix cash solution. But State is not known for its speed or its self-conscious internal reviews, and so Thomas was allowed to stay on. But he lost the ear of the Secretary and the limelight of the press corps—he lost it all. And, eventually, not unlike Milton of Office Space, he was relegated to a small desk somewhere under C Street.

Nowadays, Thomas roams the streets of Foggy Bottom, stopping any who will pass to talk about the good ol' days. Even the bums cast a pitying glance at the onetime translation rock star, now a wrinkled cautionary tale about overstaffing. And every night before climbing into bed alone, Thomas says a little prayer that the Russians will launch a stray missile, attack a Western neighbor, or do something else incredibly stupid so he would once again matter. But nobody calls anymore; nobody cares. It's a sad life, the life of a failed linguistic fashionista.

Thomas is just one of countless ghosts wandering the Earth, starved for the attention and wealth that having mastered Japanese, Russian or German once brought

Art by Taimur Malik

them. And in a few short years—when we all drive hovercrafts powered by mankind's good will, when China has been put under a biodome so the rest of the world can escape its toxic fumes, and when oil is, finally, cheap—all the speakers of Mandarin and Arabic will be much the same: hungry ghosts sporting last year's fashions.

Impossible! Blasphemy! Surely no seeds of such a future can be found in the present! But the horsemen of your linguistic apocalypse draw near. Sure, the State Department still considers Arabic a "Super Critical Needs Language," but what does that mean? State is notoriously slow to react to the changing world climate—they do not yet understand the concept of Firefox, much less the decline in the utility of Arabic. Note the case of Embassy Baghdad, an employment hub for Arabic speakers. According to a recent Government Accountability Office report, Embassy Baghdad is currently overstaffed and will have to "rightsize" (the greatest euphemism ever for downsizing) approximately half of its staff. Not even the military has a particular need for Arabic, as their 09L program reveals that they have expressed a preference for native speakers since 2003. More than that, their primary interest now lies in Pashto-speaking regions—and guess what language Columbia University doesn't offer? So it would appear that Arabic is falling out of fashion just as all of your friends are struggling to learn their alif be pes.

As for Mandarin, though, arguing for its futility would be an irresolvable argument for such a brief paper—and hence the author petitions the reader to allow his divorce from the subject. Instead, he simply recommends that readers look into the works of Minxin Pei, Yusheng Huong, Razeen Sally, and Pranab Bardhan. Ultimately, their overarching lesson is clear: China is currently an economic powerhouse, but its long-term sustainability is highly questionable.

But what now? What step to take with our journey at its end? Perhaps you should take up a steady language like Spanish—at least you will be assured a use and not a listless future as a politico-vagrant. Or perhaps you should look to the future, look to reap benefits from another region, one that is, as of now, linguistically unexploited. Or perhaps you should try learning Hausa. That way, when ethnic tensions and radical Islam explodes into a new West African Darfur, you'll be ready. In you will step, armed with a command of the Hausa language, all set to save the day—the only Hausa expert the government can find. True, it won't be a language of permanent import, but you'll corner the market right off the bat, and, in the end, that's all that really matters: paying off your student loans.

Enjoy your success, you rapacious bastard.

Mark Hay, CC '12, interned for the American Foreign Service Association this summer where he noticed some strange trends in diplomat language skills and education that have translated into a continual, nagging interest. He used to study German but switched to studying Hindi-Urdu. He can be reached at meh2191@columbia.edu.

WHAT NOT TO WATCH

By Lukas Richards

As the print media dies a slow, ink-stained death, it's taking one of the most important visible social markers of American society to the grave with it: the morning paper. For many—and especially for many at Columbia—the publication a person chooses is strongly indicative of his personal character. A lady of distinction would never be seen descending into the metro with *AM New York*, for example (if she were forced to take the train at all). Similarly, a peach-colored *Financial Times* pairs most suitably with the industrious investment banker (suit by *Brooks Brothers*), while a crisp copy of *The New Yorker* looks posh aside a vintage floral-print skirt and tortoise shell Ray-Bans on the taste-conscious student. As these time-tested symbols of status fill the recycling bin, how are we to tell who's who by the news?

Luckily, much can be gleaned from the laptop screens of our fellow information consumers. If one's browser is pointed to the online pages of *The New York Times*, we can be sure that she is well-aligned with the liberal agenda. Blogs, such as the *Huffington Post*, and a consistent stationing of the iTunes dial to *NPR* podcasts provide additional assurance. However, how are we to read a potential friend's attention to the television media?

To be sure, we all are guilty of indulging in the occasional tryst with cable news. It's alluring, it's on 24-hours a day, and, in a sort of working-class way, it's entertaining. Now, educated viewers like ourselves are, of course, generally able to resist the unabashed polemics spewing forth from the "talking heads," but the sad truth of the matter is that some Americans trust and believe—or are even inspired by—the demagoguery that saturates the polarized world of cable news media.

Most distressing of the rabble-rousers is the Fox News Channel, a Rupert Murdoch invention created with the mission of providing "unbiased" commentary and news coverage but which, in reality, leans so far right that the slightest gust of wind would leave it belly-up. Yet, for unfathomable reasons, the FNC has enjoyed striking success with the masses. On average, the top ten most-watched cable news shows are all on Fox. From Glenn Beck, the constantly crying, self-proclaimed rodeo-clown, to the "king of cable news" Bill O'Reilly, all of the FNC's hosts kill in the ratings. What could possibly be the appeal?

Todd Gitlin, a professor at Columbia's Journalism School, describes the network as the "fiery, cantankerous, prevailing voice that matches the fury of those who view the world as uncongenial." Uncongenial indeed. Fox's audience primarily identifies itself as conservative. However, there is a significant portion of the viewership that is not conservative, indicating a far more insidious reason for watching: they like to be entertained.

Much like a NASCAR race or rooster fight, Fox is mostly entertaining for its incivility. The hosts of its shows shout guests down, cut off their microphones and treat female journalists as sex objects. This ratings-oriented, distasteful display could be ignored if it weren't for the fact that the network also has an intended, and, at times, effective, political agenda.

Most recently, this could be observed through Fox News' involvement with the "tea parties," the supposedly grassroots upwellings of populist discontent with the Obama administration. Despite claiming to having had no involvement, FNC producers have been spotted agitating the masses on some footage, constructing the very outrage they then go on to report as "news." But surely American viewers, on the whole, are savvier than to be influenced by such base manipulation.

Dick Wald, former vice president of NBC News, however, claims that Fox's impact on our political system is not as big as Fox would like us to think. Additionally, Wald points out that politically committed media are nothing new. "Before World War II, the media threw just as much mud as they did now, and they were just as polarized. Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson were even slinging mud like this."

While it's doubtful that our unassailable founding fathers were ever so crass as to "sling mud," Wald's point that media bias doesn't harm democracy, at least in a broad sense, stands. But as Gitlin notes, Fox's shenanigans don't take place in a vacuum either. "The role Fox has in our media is that of a carrier of accusation," he said. "They'll throw issues out there, try to stir up the pot a bit, and sometimes things they're saying will catch on." Let's hope that pot settles soon.

In a world increasingly defined by ephemeral forms of news communication, it's clear that if you must eschew the good ol' paper, you should be very careful about exactly which digital news format you choose to replace it. Fox News is definitely not the most agreeable of characters for consideration. Yet on the other hand, guilty pleasures are the spice of life. Perhaps, in the dark of your sitting room, a little slumming with *The O'Reilly Factor* isn't so bad after all.

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CAMPUS UPDATES

Compiled by Jacqui Brown, Alex Katz, Maisha Rashid and Sadaf Shahid

Chicano Caucus

This fall, the Chicano Caucus is focusing on immigration reform. The group hosted an event on the October 5 regarding the proposed DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act, an act that "would allow illegal immigrants to begin the process of becoming US citizens if they are individuals who: have entered the USA before the age of 15, have been in the USA for at least 5 years prior to the enactment of the bill, have graduated from high school in the USA (or obtained a GED) or been accepted to an institution of higher education, are between the ages of 12 and 35, and have demonstrated good moral character." Assuming the role of advocates, they plan to support the passage of this legislation on the national level, and believe the DREAM Act could serve as a gateway to comprehensive immigration reform.

College Democrats

The Columbia University College Democrats plan to spend this year lobbying for and supporting their policy interests. They participated along with the College Republicans in the health care debate on October 7 in line with their planned initial focus on health care for the first two months of the fall semester. The group plans to then transition to poverty and hunger awareness for November and December. The Dems also plan to get involved in regional politics, in New York and beyond—including campaigning in Virginia during election week to support Gubernatorial Candidate Creigh Deeds and locally, involving themselves in the upcoming New York City mayoral election, with Democrat comptroller William Thompson Jr. trying to unseat the Republican incumbent, Michael Bloomberg.

International Socialist Organization (ISO)

The International Socialist Organization began the year with an effort to bring CU students to the National LGBT Equality March on the weekend of the 10 and 11 of October. Later in the month, they will be hosting the Northeast Socialist Conference. Columbia has hosted this conference for the past couple of years and has typically drawn a couple hundred participants from all throughout the Northeast. Columbia professors Mahmood Mamdani and Manning Marable will both be speaking and as well as non-Columbia affiliated writers and activists Laura Flanders, Heather Rogers, Frances Fox Piven, and Dave Zirin. The ISO also focuses its efforts internationally and will be reporting back from the Viva Palestina convoy, an international group that plans to gather in London and then drive across Europe to Gaza to distribute medical supplies.

College Republicans

On October 21, the Columbia University College Republicans are bringing Geert Wilders, the controversial Dutch politician, to campus. Wilders is the leader of the Freedom Party in the EU. He is extremely outspoken in Europe about immigration, Islam, and freedom of speech. His proposal to reduce the legal status of Islamic citizens in the Netherlands has been met with some support, but largely condemnation. This year, an Amsterdam court ordered for his prosecution and was banned from entry to the UK. Wilders has since focused on freedom of speech and how he has been silenced. He approached the University to speak and was rejected by the central administration events planners. The University then passed the proposal on to the College Republicans who took on the planning. The Republicans are hosting him in the name of freedom of speech, and in no way endorses his political views.

SEEING THROUGH THE FOG

San Francisco provides a model for health care that works

By Jacqueline Mauro

We all know what's going on in Washington: somehow health care, the driest of all dry political issues, has become the most incendiary topic in politics. Politicians are shrieking at the President, constituents are fired up about... something, and grown men are crying into their pillows at night.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the country, someone is paying his or her bill after a lovely meal and smiling at the fact that a surcharge is funding one of the most comprehensive and expansive health care plans in the nation.

That bill was handed to a customer in foggy San Francisco, the decidedly progressive city that has gone ahead on its own to become the first U.S. city to provide health care to all its low-income inhabitants. That's right, everyone—even illegal immigrants and the homeless. Healthy San Francisco, as the program is known, has been up and running for two years now, and so far, it's doing relatively well. But perhaps the most surprising part of the whole endeavor is the complete lack of hysterical opposition.

With all the political infighting and mass national hysteria that has accompanied the health care debate in Congress, it seems unbelievable that universal health care in San Francisco sparked almost no public outrage. San Francisco's health care plan was the brainchild of then-Supervisor Tom Ammiano in 2006. It was based on the recommendations of Mayor Gavin Newsom's Universal Health Care Council. They were a group of representatives from the health care, business, labor, philanthropy, and research communities, whom Newsom recruited to do identify and quantify the needs of the uninsured. Ammiano incorporated the plan into his Worker Health Care Security Ordinance, which the city's Board of Supervisors unanimously passed in July 2006.

Healthy San Francisco (HSF) bypasses health insurance companies completely. Instead of offering insurance, HSF lets any San Franciscan who makes under 500% of the federal poverty level (about $52,000 per person) choose a "medical home" among a network of public health centers, community clinics, and private medical centers. After being assigned a physician at a clinic, participants have access to a wide range of medical services: everything from preventative care to substance abuse treatment is covered under HSF.

Payment for the program is based on a simple sliding scale. Participants pay a participant fee that is dependent on two factors—their income and source of health care (employer or personal). The highest fee is $450 for those participating individually and $150 for those signing up through an employer. In both individual and employer sign-up cases, participant fees are a healthy $0 for those making less than $10,800 a year. For some services, participants pay an additional copay depending on income.

All of this costs money, of course. The program is funded in two ways. First of all, the city and county of San Francisco channeled all health care subsidies that had previously funded its community clinics into this one centralized initiative. In addition, medium or large businesses that do not already provide health insurance to their employees are required to pay into the pot for each hour of labor. Small businesses of up to 20 employees are off the hook; larger businesses have to pay up to around two dollars an hour per employee.

This Employer Spending Requirement (ESR) is perhaps the most problematic part of the plan. The Golden Gate Restaurant Association, a coalition of San Francisco restaurants and HSF's main critic, has sued the city, claiming the ESR violates a federal law, Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA). ERISA forbids states and localities from mandating that employers pay for their employees' health insurance. The discussion is very technical, and the suit is currently bouncing around various courts. It is scheduled to go before the Supreme Court some time soon.

However, while they opposed the mandatory business fees involved in the HSF plan, most businesses claim to support the idea of universal health care

for workers. "Through the political process ... our message was clear and consistent: make health care affordable," states the web page of the Golden Gate Restaurant Association. The Golden Gate Restaurant Association has sued the city over its financial requirements of businesses, but it says it generally supports universal health care in San Francisco if it could be paid for by an increase in sales tax, which would tax consumers.

From a public health perspective, the plan has been a great success. Just looking at the numbers, the program meets expectations. Out of an estimated 60,000 uninsured San Franciscans eligible to be covered under the program, about 40,000 have signed up in the first two years. Even as the city expects to keep expanding the program into the near future, the Department of Health plans to be on budget for the upcoming fiscal year, even as the program has faced cuts.

In the public realm, the program has garnered widespread admiration from the majority of San Franciscans; recent studies have shown high levels of satisfaction with HSF. A study by Kaiser Permanente, an independent not-for-profit insurer, of HSF participants found that "ninety-four percent say they are satisfied with the program overall, and nine in ten say they would recommend the program to a friend."

Much of the costs leveled against businesses—notably restaurants—have been offset by restaurants adding a surcharge to their bills. Restaurant patrons now receive a little note tagged at the end of their meal receipts stating, "We have added a 4% surcharge to your bill to provide health care to our wonderful servers." Rather than disdain or resentment, these notes have inspired stereotypical San Franciscan warmth. A Zagat survey found that "61% [of San Franciscans] say they're still willing to pay even higher tabs to support worker health care and wages" than restaurants are asking them to pay now.

Best of all, many of the fears of financial ruin have been largely dispelled—employment and profits have not been effected. According to a study by Ken Jacobs, the Chair of the Labor Center at the University of California, Berkeley quoted in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, businesses have seen no negative consequences since the implementation of the HSF's employer mandate in 2008: "the city's growth rate across all employment sectors was similar to or better than other Bay Area counties." And though San Francisco faced a decline in employment due to the recent financial crisis, Jacobs demonstrates that it "shrank less than other counties."

HSF's minimal financial impact is huge victory for supporters who are hoping to expand the model, because it effectively counters restaurant owners' claims that the program would hurt restaurant competitiveness and customer satisfaction.

A major problem with the program thus far is that there are too few doctors for too many patients. Nationwide there is a shortage of primary physicians, and the same holds true in San Francisco. Especially with the state of California cutting budgets and hospitals handing out pink slips due to the economic downturn, the strain on the system is getting intense. In an unfortunate coincidence, Healthy San Francisco experienced a large up-tick in participation at about the same time that the economy came crashing down on all of our heads.

In a discussion with Lisa Johnson, Medical Director for Quality Improvement Programs within the city health department's community programs, she spoke of the difficulties facing Healthy San Francisco during this time of economic crisis. She told me that the program has been forced to make adjustments to deal with rising costs and falling funding, but that even so the city is dedicated to maintaining quality of care. It is constantly innovating how it provides care and thanks to the savings due to the streamlining of funding involved in Healthy San Francisco, it looks like quality of care is on track to remain stable even through these hard times. The Annual Report estimates that the program's revenues will actually exceed expenditures by about $2 million.

Clinics are challenged to increase their capacity to absorb their newly enrolled patients and have been actively working to adopt innovative practices in order to maintain quality of care. Some of the

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom has been a staunch advocate of the city's universal health care program.

innovations include disease registries to support good care for people with chronic illnesses like diabetes and asthma and group treatments. Though it may sound blasphemous to Americans accustomed to privacy, Healthy San Francisco believes certain medical procedures are appropriate for a group. Answers to routine questions like how to get care at clinics, preventative questions, and so on are now being offered by trained Medical Assistants and nurses. According to Johnson, they oftentimes have the cultural background and language skills to more effectively provide information.

Just how did San Francisco manage to dodge the heated debate overtaking Washington today? To get a plan like Healthy San Francisco off the ground, says Michael Sparer, a Professor of Health Care Policy at the Columbia Mailman School of Public Health, requires overcoming four potential obstacles: interest groups, institutional politics, basic culture, and political culture. Without the confluence of these four things, voters would be up in arms and progress would come to a resounding halt (sound familiar?). In San Francisco these four variables managed to converge in support of the initiative.

There are some cultural stereotypes about San Francisco that are a little bit exaggerated: not everyone is a pot-smoking hippie. That said, the notion that San Franciscans are generally more liberal than the average American is certainly true—in the last mayoral election, the top seven candidates belonged to the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, the Peace and Freedom Party, the Green Party, the Marijuana Party, and the Socialist Party. San Franciscans are also culturally more willing to "spread the wealth." According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics, in 2006 the average charitable donation in San Francisco was $7,046, compared to a national average of $4,109.

That spirit of generosity contributed to the minimal backlash against the health care proposal. Danika Ingraham, assistant manager at The Ark, a San Francisco toy store, said she is unwaveringly supportive of paying extra for health care for other workers, including illegal immigrants. "I think everyone should have health care," she said. "I think it's really important. I don't get upset about paying a certain percentage for it."

Americans when considered as a whole tend to adhere to a more individualistic political ideology, according to Professor Sparer. They don't want to feel like they're being forced to give up their cash for someone else they don't know, or who they don't feel doesn't deserve it. In fact, California—although not San Francisco—was the epicenter of the anti-tax revolt in the late-1970s, culminating in Proposition 13, which put a cap on property taxes and required a two-thirds majority in the state legislature for tax increases. That said, "the U.S. doesn't have just one political culture. There is a strong sense of community-based service and of locals taking care of their own," says Professor Sparer, "so who knows." A model like San Francisco's might appeal to those who shun federal interference and prefer to be cared for by local community-based providers.

San Francisco also managed to avoid the kind of political infighting going on in Congress right now due to its almost exclusively liberal political climate. The congressional Democrats, though they have a majority in Congress, are having a tough time keeping a handle on their own party members, especially over issues like the public option. Sen. Roland Burris, D-Ill., won't vote for anything without a public option, while Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., won't vote for any bill with it. Representatives and senators alike are defecting. Meanwhile, congressional republicans have essentially vowed to resist any bill put before a vote.

In San Francisco, the main political struggle—if it can even be called that—was between Tom Ammiano, the very liberal Supervisor, and Gavin Newsom, the generally business-friendly mayor. Though Ammiano could have gotten the ordinance passed in its original form, he compromised and acquiesced to the mayor's demands to make it a bit more business-friendly, including by making the minimum number of weekly hours worked 12 instead of 2 before employers had to pay for an employee's health care.

Institutional politics were not a problem in San Francisco because there was a relative unanimity of thought on the project's utility and little need to grandstand, since opposing health care would get no politician very far.

So, the only opposition came from businesses, in the form of the Golden Gate Restaurant Association's lawsuit. Their

lawsuit claims that the employer spending requirement violates ERISA. While as Sparer notes interest group issues are "basically the same everywhere," in San Francisco businesses are to a large extent beholden to the dominant political culture. Even the Golden Gate Restaurant Association is careful to make the disclaimer that it basically supports the ideal of universal health care, although not the idea that business should have to pay for so much of it. A survey of owners and senior managers of companies with fewer than 100 employees in California by Small Business for Affordable Health Care found that "80% of those who expressed an opinion felt that employers should pay something to provide health care to their employees—four times as many as those who felt that employers should not have to contribute anything (20%)." In less progressive places, such a plan might face far more overt opposition from the private sector.

This sentiment does not necessarily hold true nationwide. Proposals based on "pay or play" models like San Francisco's, which require employers to pay for health care, face stiff opposition in Congress. The bill currently under consideration by the Senate Health committee includes such a proposal, but the Senate Finance committee bill does not. It was over this sort of mandate that John McCain attacked Barack Obama during the campaign, claiming it would hurt businesses, and lose people their jobs. . Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., and many others have gone on record alleging that an employer mandate "would force many small businesses to eliminate jobs."

The only advantageous aspect of initiating a similar plan on a federal level is that the potential ERISA limitations would not apply, as the act only says that states can't impose employer mandates on their own. That would remove what may be the largest stumbling block for San Francisco's plan.

Gavin Newsom, among others, has touted Healthy San Francisco and the Employment Spending Requirement as a model for a national health care system. Its simplicity and absolute universality are huge advantages over the models in Congress presently. However, some impressive roadblocks exist.

Professor Sparer admits, "This system is only replicable in communities with a robust safety net" like San Francisco, and the absence of this kind of safety net is a major hurdle to potential imitators. The plan requires that there be institutions and professionals willing to serve the new influx of patients already in place. Even before Healthy San Francisco was enacted, there was a very extensive network of community clinics that already served a large number of San Francisco's poor.

San Francisco has long had a comprehensive network of clinics offering low-cost care to residents on a sliding scale basis, funded by a patchwork of county, state and federal funding. The 2008-9 HSF Annual Report estimates that of those signed up for Healthy San Francisco, about 70% had already been receiving care from community clinics. Many of these patients were able to continue with the same medical providers without any disruption of care.

For the most part, community clinics and community-based service can be found in most of the country, though rarely as extensively as in San Francisco. They also receive a large amount of federal aid, which could be channeled into a more streamlined plan, like they've done in San Francisco.

Still, plans as robust as San Francisco's may be slow to appear. Business is generally good in San Francisco, and it may seem employers and patrons can "afford" to pay a little extra. Elsewhere, the potential cost of losing jobs and hurting business may be viewed as far too great a risk. Conventional wisdom tells us that if employers face a higher cost of labor, they will hire less, or give fewer hours, pay lower wages or fail to survive. If they pay lower wages, this means that those paid the minimum wage are likely to lose their jobs, since their wages can go no lower. However, that theory failed to play out in San Francisco, and there's no saying for sure that the same wouldn't happen in the nation as a whole.

For Healthy San Francisco to be expanded beyond the city limits, one path would be for the federal government to simply scale it nationally. All low-income Americans could sign into a single system and get a home hospital, physician, and individualized cost structure. They would then be able to go to any hospital in the United States and receive care. It is an attractive prospect: Americans would not be required to buy care, but private insurance would remain an option. Large employers would be required to subsidize insurance, and the rest would be paid for by rechanneling the existing federal expenditures. That would, of course, come with tremendous logistical challenges for the federal government—it would entail overseeing public hospitals and clinics, private hospitals and community clinics while administering costs fairly and assigning every American to a medical home and a physician. And the biggest hurdle to such a program would obviously be that it is completely politically implausible to dramatically overhaul the current health care system and so greatly expand the federal government.

"With all the political infighting and mass national hysteria, it seems unbelievable that universal health care in San Francisco sparked almost no public outrage."

The other path to expansion would be to "let 50 flowers bloom"—or, rather, some 3,000 flowers. If every state or city tried to follow the guidelines and lessons from Healthy San Francisco, and federal funding were allocated according to local needs, the Senate debate could be neutralized. However, not all local systems will work as smoothly as has Healthy San Francisco, and such a system of funding would be, inevitably, convoluted.

In the end, Professor Sparer says, "Do I think that local communities on their own can solve that national health care crisis? No. Do I think that local communities helping with the crisis can help? Absolutely." San Francisco has helped not only its citizens, but also a nation in debate, by showing that universal health care can be achieved. Jobs don't have to disappear, businesses don't have to suffer, and politicians don't have to scream. An experiment like HSF's can be duplicated, given the right mix of conditions. But it requires a particular political structure that is capable of suppressing interest groups, and a particular ethos. San Francisco managed. Perhaps it is unique or chose a fortuitous time. Perhaps not. In either case, it is indeed a grand experiment, probably a bit crazy, but so far, surprisingly effective

Not bad for a bunch of pot-smoking hippies.

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LETTER TO A YOUNG CANDIDATE

Lessons learned, after graduation, from a young idealist

By Jimmy Dahroug

Dear young candidate,

A few years back I, too, was a hardworking, idealistic college student who, like many politically active students, thought I might run for office one day. Friends of mine would join me to discuss politics as I tended bar after class at the West End (now Havana Central). We talked about political races the way most people discussed football stats. To us, watching Meet the Press on Sunday mornings was as exciting as Monday night football (well, almost as exciting). The idea of running for office one day was something we all dreamed about. I know now it is very different from what we pictured. I had the unique experience of running for the New York State Senate only one year after leaving college. Amazing as it was, the experience came with its share of ups and downs. I'm writing this letter to you—the new young idealist whose turn it is to ponder entering politics—to share some of that experience.

Four years of campaigning have given me almost a lifetime of good, bad, and just plain wild experiences. I've met Presidents Clinton and Obama. I've been accused of cheating on my wife (even though I've never been married). I've received support from Hillary Clinton and Alec Baldwin. Once I even sang "Love Shack" at a karaoke bar to raise money for my campaign. There's nothing quite like politics.

I'm not a state senator today, but what I gained from my candidacy is invaluable. Grateful as I am for my education, I learned more as a grassroots candidate than any class or campaign internship could teach me. I won a party primary against a popular local politician and a wealthy businessman. I also lost to a longtime incumbent state senator—twice. But I've learned from all of it.

There's a lot that can be improved in our political system. The best thing that can be done to improve it is to bring young idealists like you into the fold. I'm writing this letter hoping to help you navigate the road to running for office. I don't have all the answers (or I'd be writing you from Albany!), but perhaps I

can provide you with some insight. As a matter of full disclosure, I am a Democrat—but regardless of political affiliation, I hope this letter is helpful to any hardworking young person interested in public service.

MONEY

I'm reluctant to say so, but money must be the first topic I address. All of the mailings, radio spots, TV commercials (in some races)—everything to get your message to voters must be paid for. When I first discussed a possible run with my friends as a student, we simply had no idea how much of a role money plays in politics. We shared certain conceptions about campaigning—meeting voters, debating opponents on the issues, getting good stories into the press, you name it. Early on when a campaign veteran told me I needed a serious emphasis on fundraising to pay for mass mailings, I naively dismissed his suggestion, telling him I would knock on doors to really get my message out. "Well Jim," he responded. "Let's do the math. Say you want to target about 35,000 homes. You've got 4 months until Election Day. If you walk almost every day that means you've got to target close to 300 houses a day. Good luck with that."

The incumbent State Senator I was running against had started with over $100,000. I had over $100,000, too—in student loan debt. So I had to get to work.

The basic method of raising money is "dialing for dollars." You, the candidate, must personally call friends, family, contacts, and donors to other, established politicians, many of whom you don't personally know, to ask for money. I certainly don't come from a wealthy background, so the idea of asking people for their hard-earned money couldn't have been more counter-intuitive. Family and friends certainly weren't used to being solicited either – so you can imagine how awkward that was. I remember thinking "I know this call isn't fun for you. I wish you knew how much worse it feels to me on the other end!"

My first attempts at making these calls were nerve-wracking, but like everything else in life, practice makes perfect. Along the way, I gained quite a few stories for the grandkids. You're supposed to call everyone you possibly can—including (and some say especially) family. Asking family was toughest for me. I remember calling one notoriously temperamental family member (who MUST remain nameless for fear of death). Knowing how stormy she could be, I was cringing as my assistant dialed the number. I asked myself, "What's the worst that could happen? She'll just say no." I ended up getting a harsh lecture about how horrible a person I was to ask any family member for a donation. Although you sometimes get a nasty response (even from family members), most rejections tend to go much more smoothly.

"Four years of campaigning have given me almost a lifetime of good, bad, and just plain wild experiences."

Eventually I had a breakthrough. My new fundraising director taught me to change my very approach to fundraising. Instead of "begging" for money, I was going to share my energy with potential donors. Calls were still nerve racking; I remember him mouthing suggestions as I pumped a potential donor up over the phone, peppering them with recent campaign accomplishments, describing our shared values—leading right up to the ask: "I would be so grateful if you could support our campaign with a contribution of X dollars, so we can make this happen." The pause between the end of my pitch and the person's response often felt like an eternity. But, over time, positive responses dramatically increased in frequency.

My new fundraising consultant actually made dialing for dollars fun (well, almost). I'd pump myself up to make calls and he'd cheerlead—mouthing words of encouragement, pantomiming boxing moves, even telling jokes—anything in the background to keep me upbeat.

All of this emphasis on fundraising may, frankly, sound absurd to you. But, as one Senator memorably encouraged me: "You've got to raise more money—no more of the fun stuff—no knocking on doors, no press events, no meeting voters. Not until you raise more money." This particular senator's version of "tough love" was harsh, perhaps, but it was purposeful—he knew this was the only way I could win.

THE INTERNET

The incumbent senator I was running against, Caesar Trunzo, was about 80 years old—I, on the other hand, was 25 at the time. Trunzo could raise money the traditional way from special interest groups and PACS at a ferocious clip. My opponent collected high-dollar checks, while I ended up raising smaller amounts from a wider group of newer donors that added up. The internet, however, did allow me to reach friends from student council in college, graduate school—even as far back as kindergarten. If I didn't have an email address or phone number I mined data from Facebook, Myspace and other social networking sites.

While the internet tool won't replace the traditional paper invitations that go out for fundraisers (yet), the efficiency is amazing. With a solid website and the ability to send mass emails you can ask for money and volunteers, as well as update supporters at the click of a mouse. Your campaign, which should always look to spend cash efficiently, can save enormous sums of money. And turnaround time is far quicker than "snail mail" or even waiting on calls. You'll know who's attending your events or coming down to volunteer as soon as they call or email you back.

Time and time again, my campaign used the internet to find ways around disadvantages. Early on in my campaign I had many avid volunteers but I didn't have the resources for a phone bank so they could call voters. So I had an idea. They could get together at one supporter's house or on their own and call friends from their cell phones. It was 2004, and just about everybody had a cell phone. So we emailed excel sheets of numbers to individuals and groups to call through on their cell phones. We called it "Donate your minutes for Dahroug." Apparently we were onto something: Four years later the major presidential campaigns were using the concept to have supporters call voters from lists and scripts they could download onto their home computers!

Use of the internet helped my campaign

win a major endorsement. In 2004, just as I began campaigning, former Presidential candidate Howard Dean announced a campaign to support a farm team of grassroots candidates across the country. Every few weeks Dean and his group Democracy for America (DFA) would select twelve candidates from thousands of applicants across the country. The "Dean Dozen" as they were called, were a diverse group of socially progressive and fiscally responsible candidates running for anything from Governor to School board. Barack Obama, then a U.S. Senate candidate, was selected in the first group of candidates. Each selected candidate received Dean's endorsement, a generous contribution, and perhaps most valuably, an email blast touting their campaign to Dean's supporters across the country, asking them to donate and volunteer. Our prospects seemed dim because by mid-summer DFA was only going to announce one final round of winners—and there were thousands of candidates across the country still applying. So I used the internet again, emailing everyone from politicians who endorsed me, former Dean volunteers, to friends from grade school asking them to send in emails to the contest on my behalf.

The aggressive courtship and the personal touch paid off and our campaign was selected. Our shoestring campaign for the state Senate was suddenly receiving small donations from across the state and even the country. I remember one rough morning checking my emails and seeing we received $500 from someone on the upper east side of Manhattan—my morning suddenly got a lot better.

YOUR VISION

Candidates owe it to themselves and to voters to be true to themselves. Now, I'm not suggesting you be tactless, or uncouth, but you can respectfully tell the truth. Speaking of the truth, most candidates don't give voters enough credit. It's been my experience that voters know they may disagree with you on some things and will still vote for you anyway.

I've had plenty of loyal supporters who disagree with me on some things. They liked the fact that I respected them enough to tell them the truth about what I believed. And they would rather elect someone who would do what he thought was right (even if they disagreed) than what was politically beneficial. I once encountered a voter while I was campaigning who said "I'm a hard-core conservative but I'm voting for you—and you're the first Democrat I'll vote for." His reasoning? The man liked the fact that I was independent from my party on spending and wanted term limits. But more important to him, I owned up to our differences when he asked me.

Despite the fact that they get a bad rap, consultants serve a valuable purpose for most campaigns to get their message out. To me this is what it comes down to: bad consultants try to change who a candidate is and what they stand for. Good consultants stay true to their candidate. They build a campaign around who he or she is, what he or she is, and promote his or her strengths. But, at the end of the day, final decisions are your responsibility. You have veto power and sometimes you've got to use it. And you've got to make the final call even if they don't always agree.

My biggest regrets were the few times I didn't go with my better instincts. One evening, a consultant and I were preparing a solicitation email to go out to our email list the next morning. Our pitch to donors was that if I was elected, we could put an end to 40 years of Republican rule. The email was written almost to perfection. All we needed was an eye-catching subject line to ensure people opened it. An advisor of mine was certain he had the perfect subject line: "A world without Joe Bruno..." Joe Bruno was the Republican Majority Leader.

Something about it just didn't feel right to me. For starters, it just didn't seem like my style. I could be aggressive against opponents but it was usually with a more civil tone. But it was a long day—and a long week. I was exhausted and just wanted to get it done so I could finally get some sleep. Besides, my advisor was dead certain it would get attention.

My advisor couldn't be more right. Senate Majority Leader Bruno's wife had just passed away that week. I was so busy I only found out from a friend after he received the mass email! Needless to say, I was mortified. The damage was not as bad as we thought. Luckily, many people understood it was an honest mistake.

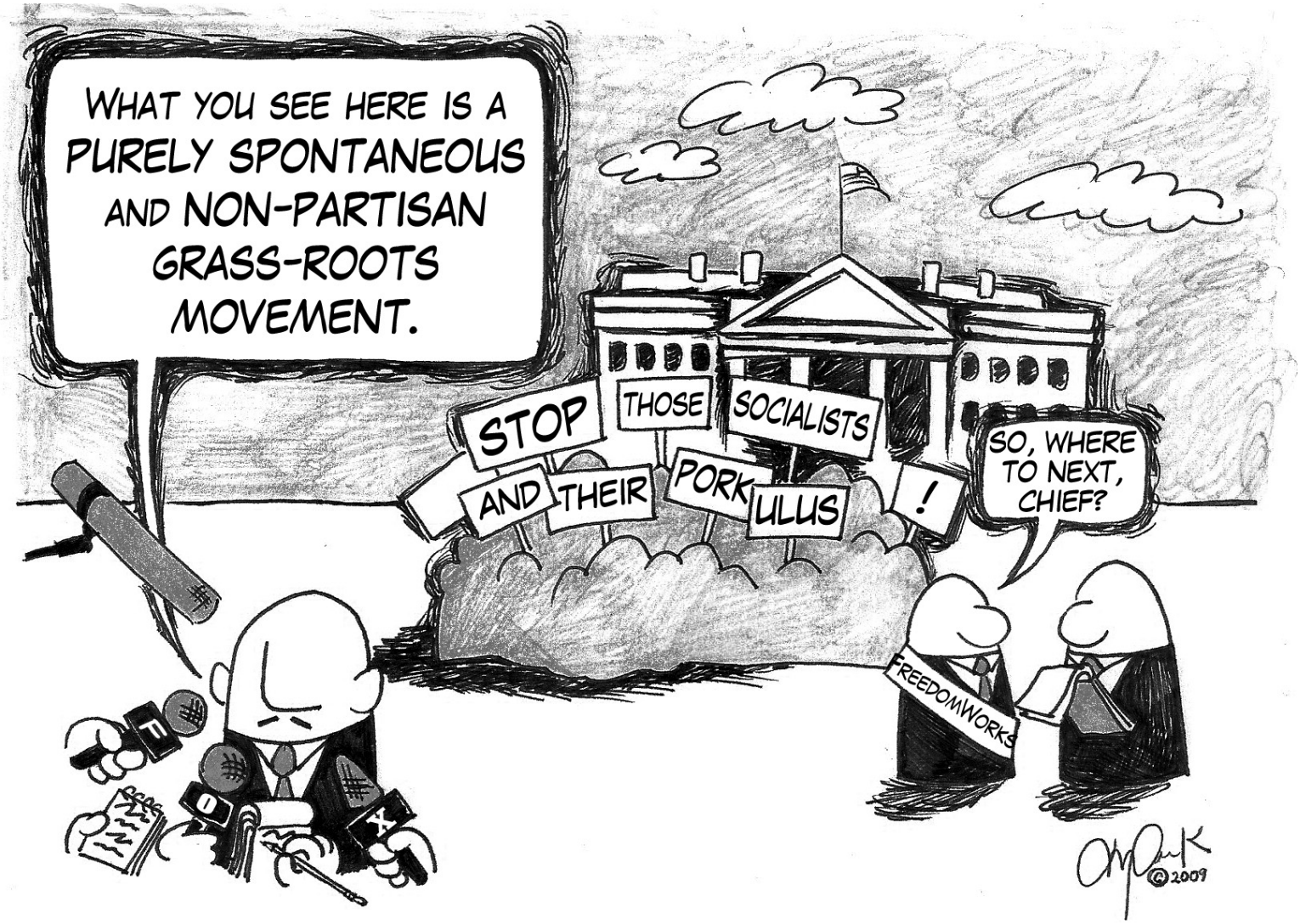
But it just reinforced my conviction that candidates need to listen to their gut. My advisor was actually doing his job; he thought it was a good idea at the time and argued for what he thought was best for the campaign. The trouble was that I didn't do my job because I didn't listen to my intuition.

With the fervid fundraising, the high-pressure, win at all costs atmosphere, and the relentless demands on your time and well-being, it's easy for a candidate to lose sight of what's important. Stay true to yourself, trust your instincts. Keep the passion that inspired you to run for office in the first place. Keep your core values. You can lose a race. If you lose your sense of self, you lose everything that's important.

Good luck,
Jimmy Dahroug

"I remember one rough morning checking my emails and seeing we received $500 from someone on the upper east side of Manhattan—my morning suddenly got a lot better."

Jimmy Dahroug, GS '03, currently serves in the Suffolk County Executive's Administration on Long Island. He was a candidate for the New York State Senate in 2004 and 2006. He can be reached at jdahroug@gmail.com.



Art by Anne Park

READING THE TEA LEAVES

Conservatism's defining moment

By Ross Bruck

After a summer of intense partisan political protests and a series of bold, left-leaning initiatives pushed by the new president, it comes as no surprise that conservatism has united to gain traction in recent months. With a Democratic majority in the House and the Senate, it may be a surprise then that a June 2009 Gallup Poll showed that conservatives are currently the single largest ideological group in the United States: with 40 percent of those surveyed describing their political views as conservative, versus 35 percent as self-described moderates, and 21 percent as liberals. Another Gallup Poll conducted in September revealed that 53 percent of those surveyed "believe that the government should promote traditional values in our society," up from 48 percent last year. Clearly, something significant has been underway recently.

The ongoing Tea Party protests began last spring when, on April 15, half a million people in over 800 locations across the country gathered to protest high taxes, big government, the increase in national debt, and a slew of other issues, with a name that refers to the Boston Tea Party. Since then, a multitude of other protests have taken place throughout the nation, the most prominent of which took place on September 12 when over 75,000 people marched from Freedom Plaza to the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. It was the largest conservative protest ever held in the nation's capital.

Another issue around which conservatives have organized is the health care reform debate. After the introduction of America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 and other healthcare reform propositions during the summer of 2009, numerous

members of Congress have held town hall discussions to either criticize or exalt the various visions of healthcare reform. These town hall meetings have also suffered interruptions by outspoken citizen-critics of the proposed reform schemes breaking out in vitriolic tirades against not only the policies, but also the Congressmen who champion them. These events have gained widespread attention from the media as a barometer of the current partisan political climate.

President Barack Obama's approach to policy-making has actually prompted this grassroots conservatism. Prior to his taking office, many viewed him as a moderate, largely due to the efforts of his campaign and various media outlets. Since he has taken office, however, he has pursued what is arguably one of the largest leftward pushes in terms of domestic policy since Franklin D. Roosevelt. As a result, however, his approval rating has dropped and his Presidential Approval Index (taken by subtracting the percentage of surveyed who strongly disapprove of the president's job performance from those who strongly approve of the president's job performance) stands at -6, complemented by statistics of 32 percent strongly approving and 38 percent strongly disapproving according to a Rasmussen Reports survey released on September 23. Approval ratings of the federal government, which has greatly expanded its mandate under Obama's administration, are perhaps even more eyebrow-raising. Sixty-six percent of people surveyed said they are angry at the policies of the federal government. Rasmussen Reports also suggest that people are even angrier now than they were during the Bush administration.

Analysis of the conservative resurgence has fallen strictly along partisan lines. In his April 13 column in *The New York Times*, Paul Krugman wrote, "The tea parties don't represent a spontaneous outpouring of public sentiment. They're Astroturf (fake grass roots) events, manufactured by the usual suspects. In particular, a key role is being played by FreedomWorks, an organization run by Richard Armey." Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi chimed in, claiming that "It's not really a grassroots movement. It's Astroturf by some of the wealthiest people in America to keep the focus on tax cuts for the rich instead of for the great middle class."

Conservatives, on the other hand, vehemently insist that these movements are organic and spontaneous, with Glenn Reynolds, a conservative blogger and law professor at the University of Tennessee, claiming, "These aren't the usual semiprofessional protesters who attend antiwar and pro-union marches. These are people with real jobs; most have never attended a protest march before. They represent a kind of energy that our politics hasn't seen lately, and an influx of new activists."

The reality, I believe, lies somewhere in the middle. The anger and frustration of the movement are real and representative of the feelings of many Americans across the nation. The protestors, and those who support their ideals, believe fervently in the ideology they espouse. The logistics and organization of these protests, however, are clearly coordinated by larger political entities, with the three biggest being Freedom Works, DontGo, and Americans for Prosperity.

Undoubtedly, pundits are attempting to capture the energy of the movement in order to boost their relevance and book sales, and conservative politicians are hoping to ride this favorable wave into the 2010 elections. It is important to remember, however, that in spite of some of the unsavory and sensationalistic practices employed by laypeople and political elites alike, there is a genuine passion for the ideals that conservatism offers. Promises of change that have remained largely undelivered have left Americans feeling frustrated and confused. There is an undeniable deep sense of dissatisfaction with how affairs are being conducted; the conservative movement has offered a necessary alternative and an outlet for expression.

This burgeoning conservative movement has held a clear importance in the current political climate, but its exact significance for the long-term remains unclear. The GOP suffered heavy losses across the board in the most recent election, lacks leaders who can truly unite the party, and is in want of a cohesive set of ideological beliefs. With the party in such a weak position, the outpouring of conservative values embodied by the Tea Party movement and town hall meetings is not only an opportunity to make gains, it is also a lifeline which the Party must seize in order to remain relevant in the near future. But what exactly is the ideological and strategic nature of their posturing?

Ideologically, the protests represent a call for a return to traditional conservative ideals of free-market capitalism, individual freedoms, small government, low taxes, and fiscal responsibility. The meaning of conservatism, though, has become distorted over the years and still remains more than a bit ambiguous. Conservatives are beset by one major problem in which their Burkean belief in restraint and traditional conservative ideology cannot be reconciled with the current system of governance. One of conservatism's main tenets is to value the tried-and-true over drastic reform. In the mission statement published in the premiere issue of the *National Review* by William F. Buckley, Jr., he wrote about conservatism that, "It stands athwart history, yelling 'Stop,' at a time when no one is inclined to do so." Modern conservatives are faced with the conundrum of post-New Deal economic and social policies cemented into the establishment, being at odds with many of their fundamental ideals.

In order to differentiate the GOP from the Democratic Party and win elections, conservatives in recent years have strayed

"Undoubtedly, pundits are attempting to capture the energy of the movement in order to boost their relevance and book sales, and conservative politicians are hoping to ride this favorable wave into the 2010 elections."

from their fundamental ideology and strategy. The GOP has shifted its ideology from the political embodiment of true conservative ideals, such as capitalism, individual freedoms, small government, low taxes, and fiscal responsibility, to the practice of corporatism, obstructed liberty, expansion of the federal government and the federal debt, and fiscal irresponsibility. Sociologist Daniel Bell asserts in his 1960 book titled *The End of Ideology* that since Democrats and Republicans concurred on foundational principles such as the government-business partnership and a bipartisan Cold War, the American political system became about "managerial procedures rather than ideological commitment."

Instead of a commitment to Burkean realism, conservatives have taken on a more revanchist posture. In *The New York Times*' "Week in Review" editor Sam Tanenhaus's new book, *Death of Conservatism*, Tanenhaus writes, "The paradox of the modern right" is that "its drive for power has steered it onto a path that has become profoundly and defiantly un-conservative." During the Bush presidency, conservatives railed against the liberal elite characterizing them as being out of touch with American values. Christian fundamentalists, who proved to be some of Bush's greatest allies, aggressively advocated the collusion of church and state. In 2001, he introduced his $1.35 trillion tax cut package. Informed by a neoconservative foreign policy, he took America to two very costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. By the end of his presidency, he had left a puzzling legacy that was, as Tanenhaus writes, profoundly and defiantly un-conservative. This background explains why the current reinvigoration of the conservative ideals represents an immeasurably important shift in the desires of the American public and should reshape and ground the GOP.

Evidence that the party has yet to readopt true conservatism is the large discrepancy between faith in the Republican Party and faith in the Democratic Party. According to a June 2009 Gallup Poll "almost 4 out of 10 (38 percent) Republicans and Republican-leaning independents have an unfavorable opinion of their own party." When it comes to the percentage of democrats and democratic-leaning independents who disapprove of the Democratic Party, however, the statistic stands at just 7 percent. The Democratic Party clearly represents the ideology of its constituents more accurately than does the GOP. It is incumbent upon the movers and shakers of the party to devise a unifying agenda that average Americans can rally around.

Perhaps now is the "defining moment" for Republicans in which they will be able to find a new philosophical footing by adopting at least some truly conservative beliefs. Such a change would allow the GOP to maximize the political gain derived from the reaction against the initiatives of President Obama and Congress. Many on the left currently criticize the GOP for being too oppositional. They urge Republicans to moderate their views and criticize *constructively*, claiming that a failure to do so will lead to further electoral disappointments. It is time for the GOP to recalibrate itself ideologically and to return to its classical conservative roots if it wishes to rise from the ashes and once again be Grand. Independent of the party itself and its current limitations, it is clear today that the desires of the American public in the current political climate embody a strong desire for conservatism and its ideals.

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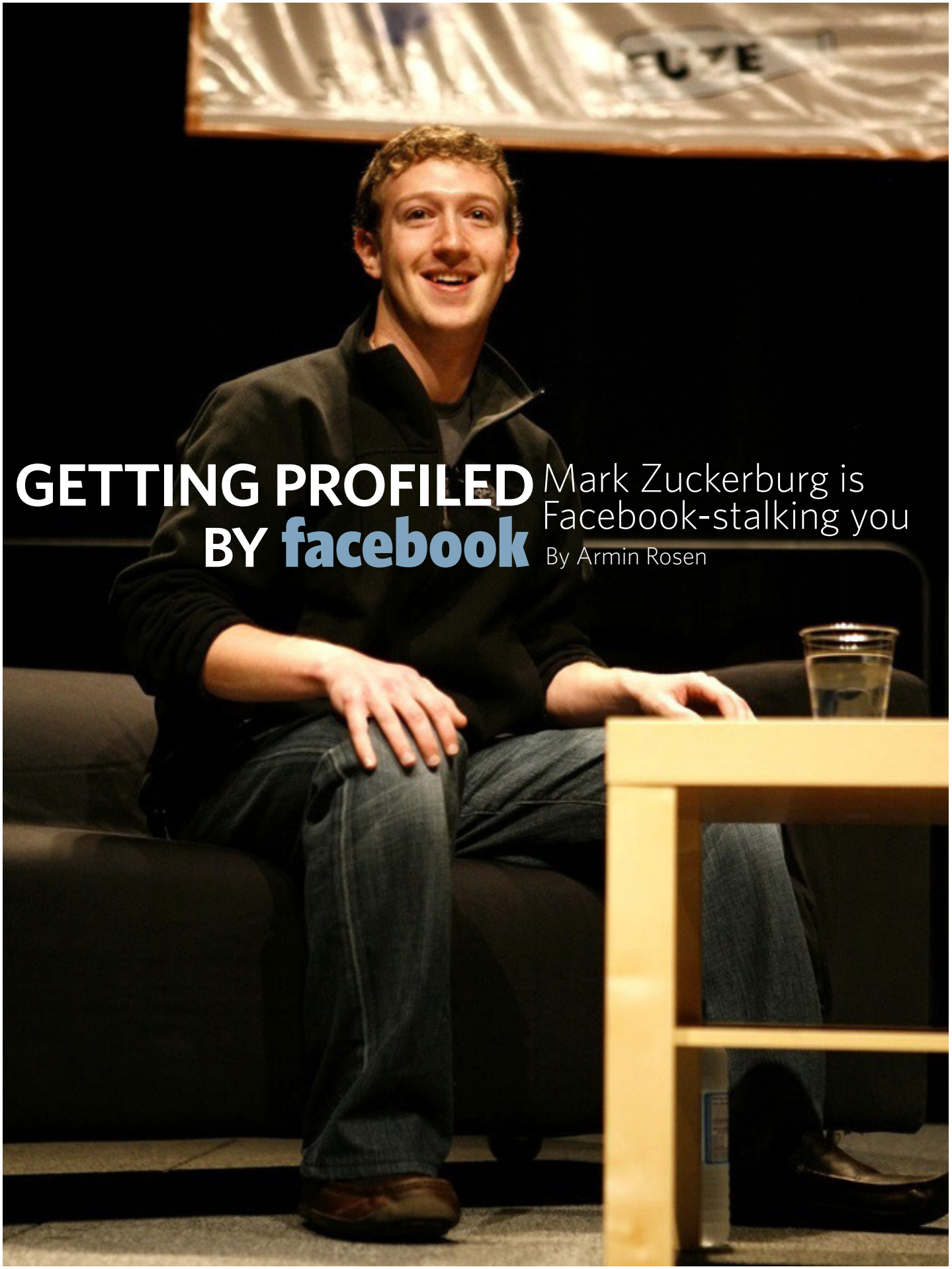

GETTING PROFILED BY facebook

Mark Zuckerburg is Facebook-stalking you

By Armin Rosen

Its veracity be damned, the conspiracy theory explained to me by Columbia Law Professor Eben Moglen was just plausible enough to be deeply unsettling, probably because it involved that most ubiquitous of generational signifiers: online social networking. It went a little something like this: back when Mark Zuckerberg needed startup capital for a certain internet venture, he attracted the interest of two downright sinister sources of funding: cyber-libertarian futurists, and the intelligence community.

Representing the latter was Accel, a venture capital firm and early Facebook investor headed by a former board member at In-Q-Tel, a congressionally-chartered firm that expedites government investment in civilian technology for the intelligence community. Conspiracy enthusiasts view Facebook as serving two complementary and deeply unnerving purposes.

They argue that Facebook acts as an extension of the Theil-Paypal view of the internet as a space for radical capitalist experimentation, a development working against the cooperative, even socialist ethos espoused through the Free Culture and Free Software movements. Inspired by the theoretical work of thinkers like Lawrence Lessig and the legal work of Moglen and others, they argue that software should be treated as a public trust and managed by individuals who aren't motivated by profit. For them, Facebook is the anti-Wikipedia—the latter of which has yet to be monetized in spite of being Alexa's sixth most-visited site on the web.

Representing the former was Paypal founder and current Facebook board member Peter Theil. According to the *Idler*'s Tom Hodgkinson, the entrepreneur and hedge fund manager is also an arch-libertarian and futurist philosopher who views the internet as a venue for unfettered human freedom, if not human perfectibility. He believes that an internet in which capital and information can travel with uncontrollable momentum and speed could bring on a libertarian utopia which will trickle into and later overwhelm an outmoded, still-fettered external world. Writes Hodgkinson in the *Guardian*, "Thiel is trying to destroy the real world ... and install a virtual world in its place."

At the same time, the social information so vital to Facebook is also invaluable to those in the business of social control. Facebook users, Moglen hypothesized, are participating in a massive social modeling experiment conducted for the benefit of the CIA. Analyze enough of the data at Facebook's disposal, the professor claimed, and human action would become completely predictable. Eventually, America's intelligence apparatus would begin to know Facebook users better than they knew themselves.

Facebook was sitting on the kind of information that could turn once-perplexing questions of human nature into mere equation-fodder, which was as hypothetically useful to the CIA as it would be to advertisers or social scientists. Only later did I realized that the alleged CIA connection was offered not as a fact to be investigated, but as an intellectual provocation, a thought experiment spurned by the alarming reality that 300 million people had signed away their most intimate information without any sense of where that information could go, how that information could be used, and who could have control of it.

"Even without overt CIA or techno-futurist collusion, Facebook has resulted in the greatest accumulation of social data in history."

As Michael "Six" Silberman, an Informatics Ph.D. candidate at UC Irvine and SEAS '08 explained, Facebook's use of our personal information can only be surmised through the website's terms of use, which grant it complete ownership and control over everything that's ever appeared on it. "There's no way to have a political, technical understanding of Facebook beyond the legal documents available to us," he said in reference to the website's Terms of Service. In order to know what Facebook is really doing with our personal information—Are they analyzing it? Giving it to sociological researchers? Selling it? Handing it over to the government? Just sort of letting it sit there?—we would need "an insider who's willing to post a bunch of internal documents or wikilinks," a Facebook employee willing to expose any misuse of the information the company owns and controls.

Even without overt CIA or techno-futurist collusion, Facebook has resulted in the greatest accumulation of social data in history. And it's offered little accountability for how it's being used.

In a sense, though, we already know how it's being used: this past September, a class-action lawsuit forced Facebook to stop using Beacon, a program introduced in late 2007. Supposedly Beacon tracked information from 44 partnered websites and relayed it to the Facebook pages of logged-in users and their friends. If a user made an eBay purchase while logged into Facebook it would appear on his (and everybody else's) newsfeed; if he visited Gamefly frequently, he could expect more videogame-related targeted advertising on his homepage.

In truth, Beacon was tracking users' purchases and surfing habits when they were logged off of Facebook, and was doing so without giving them the option of turning the "beacon" off. According to a November 30, 2007 article in *PC World*, "users aren't informed that data on their activities at these sites is flowing back to Facebook, nor given the option to block that information from being transmitted."

In December 2007, Facebook admitted to using Beacon to track the web history of users that were logged off of the site. That month, Zuckberger announced that users would now have to opt into Beacon, a change he explained in a revealing blog post:

> When we first thought of Beacon, our goal was to build a simple product to let people share information across sites with their friends. It had to be lightweight so it wouldn't get in people's way as they browsed the web, but also clear enough so people would be able to easily control what they shared. We were excited about Beacon because *we believe a lot of information people want to share isn't on Facebook*, and if we found the right balance, Beacon would give people an easy and controlled way to share more of that information with their friends. (emphasis mine)

Zuckerberg couches a breakthrough in invasive online advertising methods (Beacon's real accomplishment) in the language of the participatory web—in this blog post, Beacon isn't an advertising program, but a tool for enhancing social connectivity. Beacon is even offered as a benign corrective to what Zuckerberg audaciously views as one of his project's built-in flaws: there's actually information that falls outside of Facebook's purview. It also happens to be exploitable information—both, in Zuckerberg's presumptuous terms, include "information people want to share."

For Zuckerberg, Beacon's social utility was intrinsically connected to its success in helping Facebook acquire information that "isn't on Facebook." Beacon was an expansion of the social and economic space in which Facebook could operate. It was an expansion predicated upon the assumption that users would passively accept the idea that their social networking website's interests were somehow in lockstep with their own. This is a statement that Zuckerberg could safely assume as self-evident. Sharing information is a good thing, if not a deeply-held generational value, whether you're thoughtlessly posting drunk photos on Facebook or advocating for communally-managed open-source software. Only incidentally is it a vein that advertisers can lucratively mine.

The success of the class-action suite—as well as the rapidity with which Zuckerberg apologized for his handling of the Beacon launch—suggests that the website isn't beyond external influence. But the Beacon row highlights the awesome power that Facebook possesses, while the blog post itself demonstrates Facebook's worrisome attitude towards the source of that power: the information with which we're constantly entrusting it.

This is especially troubling in light of a recent study conducted by MIT students, demonstrating that a statistical analysis of a person's Facebook friends could help accurately predict that person's sexual orientation. One can only wonder what a similar program could determine about a person's religious or political beliefs, or whether a similar kind of friends-list analysis could one day become the social equivalent of a drug test—a quick and easy means of coerced transparency.

It is one of this decade's ironies that a kind of voluntary erosion of privacy has coincided with an increased consciousness of civil liberties—indeed, the Patriot Act and warrantless wiretapping opened up a discussion on transparency focused around the government's powers vis-à-vis the personal information of the citizens living under it. The Web 2.0 revolution ushered in an era of large business interests whose values seemed to be aligned our own—Youtube, Facebook and Google are structured to improve our access to information; Google's goal seems to be the aggregation of practically all information in existence. Skepticism of the public sector's interest in its citizens coincided with optimism towards what the private sector could do with the information we were constantly handing over to it. Bush's domestic anti-terror policies provided an unintended justification of Theil's techno-libertarianism; a promising online world seemed to be winning out over a cynical "real" one. How else to explain the sensitivity towards privacy in one realm, and the complete obliviousness to it in the other?

"Skepticism of the public sector's interest in its citizens coincided with optimism towards what the private sector could do with the information we were constantly handing over to it."

Of course, this is a dichotomy that doesn't really exist—the "real world" is everywhere, and online entities can't be trusted simply because they appear to exist outside of it. Those who embraced Web 2.0 must now decide what they are going to demand of the architecture that they helped to build. Perhaps there's an open-source solution, as proponents of Free Software argue—a Facebook where anyone with the ability to program can become a kind of mini-Zuckerberg. Or maybe the solution is less radical, as programmer Ron Gejman, CC '10 argues. "Once you put something out there you should expect it to be out of your hands," he says. "We should embrace it, we should have more legal protections in place, and we should be very judicious in what we put online."

Gejman's solution is to accept as a starting point a world in which information runs wild, and in which we're not capable of knowing where it ends up. In a sense, we don't have any other choice, since that's exactly the world that Facebook and its users have helped create.

But there's a slightly darker read you could put on this: in 1992, philosopher Gilles Deleuze speculated that technological innovations would lead to "societies of control." In his mind, Foucault had proven that technology and individual freedom were in constant conflict and that a rapid acceleration in technological development was about to make things a whole lot worse.

But his postscript is jarringly equivocal. "What counts," he wrote, "is that we are at the beginning of something." Facebook is only 5 ½ years old. And once it's publicly traded, the company with a generation's worth of social information will be thrust into the ranks of Microsoft and Google, and will become more accountable to its bottom line than to Web 2.0 idealism. Microsoft was once a serial antitrust violator, and as Moglen pointed out, Google has cooperated with the Chinese government's crackdown on online dissidents. As Facebook gets bigger, the possibility of reining it in becomes more and more faint. But at this point, what truly counts for the first Web 2.0-socialized generation is that we are only "at the beginning of something." Whether Facebook ushers in an actual rather than hypothetical cyber-dystopia is very much up to us.

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CHANGE JAPAN CAN BELIEVE IN

What happens after a seismic election?

By Yurina Ko

"This is a historic election," pronounced the morning newscaster. "This country is going to change," announced a political leader. He posed in front of campaign posters that read, "This is change we can believe in." To an American audience, these phrases would immediately conjure up images of President Barack Obama's election in November 2008. But here they referred to Japan's lower house elections on August 30 2009, leading to Yukio Hatoyama's victory on September 16 as the new prime minister.

I heard the first quote at home in Tokyo on the day of the elections. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which has governed Japan since 1955, appeared, for the first time, to be seriously threatened by its opposition, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). The DPJ is to the left of the LDP, but has never succeeded in getting a majority in the lower house.

While Taro Aso, the LDP then-prime minister, displayed his infamous smirk, Yukio Hatoyama, representative of the DPJ, approached citizens with his slogan, *Seiken Koutai*—Regime Change. Other parties that strove to oust the LDP had used similar slogans, but voters connected with this one. The DPJ used this phrase with unprecedented boldness, shaking the public's half-century-old devotion to the LDP.

It was not an accident that the DPJ borrowed much of this rhetoric straight from President Obama's campaign playbook. During President Obama's campaign, Japanese Obama impersonators became popular entertainers. Coincidentally, a port city named "Obama" cheers for the American president for all his accomplishments to this day. With a similar effect, CNN's report of the Japanese elections also noted, "Hatoyama touted a Barack Obama-style message of change."

"This time, it's really not about whether or not the DPJ will win," one Japanese man said to me. "It's a question of by *how much* the DPJ will win."

Although newsreels anticipated that the DPJ would win the election, the degree of the victory was astounding. The party won 308 of the 480 seats in the parliament's lower house, reducing the LDP to a significant minority of 119 seats. (The DPJ already held a majority in the upper house.)

"People kept saying, 'You're going to be a part of this historical change,' and of course this gets people excited," said Sayuri Shimoda, a Columbia College senior who was able to participate as a Japanese citizen. Shimoda also attended Obama's inauguration last fall in Washington D.C. "[In D.C.] You could really feel people's optimism that things are actually going to change..." but, Shimoda added, "I don't see things changing that drastically in Japan."

CHANGE AS REJECTION

Seiken Koutai was the ideal way for LDP members disappointed in the lack of prime ministerial stability to signal their disapproval. "In America, change is perceived as a good thing," Barnard senior Mari Mizoguchi says. "But for the Japanese people, change means something different. In this case, it's about being different from the LDP."

Many Japanese people were frustrated that, since 2006, every year has been another game of musical chairs among LDP representatives for the prime minister seat. After Junichiro Koizumi finished his third term in September 2006, Shinzo Abe took over—the first prime minister of Japan to be born after World War II. Nationalistic and classically conservative, Abe made significant political reforms, the most famous one being his decision in January 2007 to upgrade the defense agency to an actual ministry. But eight months later, he suddenly resigned due to poor health, with an approval rating below 30 percent. Yasuo Fukuda was then elected, but resigned a year later. His last words to the public were, "I am different from you." Then came Prime Minister Aso Taro in 2008, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, who wanted to fund a manga museum, using the national budget at a time when Japan was running a high deficit. Enough was enough.

CHANGE AS ALTERNATIVE

"This election marked the end of the postwar political system in Japan," said Professor Gerald Curtis of the Columbia University Political Science department. Professor Curtis has published many books on the Japanese political system and currently teaches a course on Japanese politics. "There's no going back to what Japanese politics was prior to August 30." Curtis noted that the DPJ's fresh approach changes Japan's economic and political priorities.

To name one of the most controversial policies, the DPJ plans to give approximately $130 every month to families with children under 15, in order to combat the low 1.3 child per family birthrate. "We would like to engineer a huge policy shift to change Japan into a country where society as a whole supports childrearing," says DPJ Secretary General Katsuya Okada of what is now known as the "child allowance program."

The DPJ also plans to eliminate highway tolls all over the country in order to increase domestic consumption and make it easier for domestic businesses to transport goods to the different regions. Interestingly, according to a poll conducted in Kyushu, a southern region of Japan, 54.7 percent of big businesses strongly disapprove of this plan.

The left-leaning newspaper Asahi Shimbun revealed that a total of 83 percent of respondents expressed uneasiness about DPJ's plans. 55 percent expressed disapproval of the childhood allowance program while a whopping 67 percent expressed disapproval of the highway toll elimination plan. Another paper, Sankei Shimbun, despite its conservative perspective, showed that 65.4 percent disapproved of eliminating highway tolls.

On the other hand, the approval rating for Hatoyama's cabinet skyrocketed to 75 percent by mid-September. It seems incoherent that the Japanese people would vote for a party whose major domestic policies garnered such high disapproval ratings. Curtis says, "The DPJ is changing Japan's economic priorities." Change means alternative, but is it a better or worse alternative? While data shows that most Japanese people see the DPJ's plans as a worse alternative to what the LDP had done, it will be interesting to see whether the DPJ can actually achieve these promises and prove itself to be the better alternative.

Americans interested in U.S. foreign policy should keep their eyes out for the DPJ's stance on the longstanding U.S.-Japan relationship. Hatoyama has made it clear that he and the party are seeking a "more equal relationship" with the U.S. Japan may be the second biggest economy next to the U.S. and its strongest economic partner. Under Japan's postwar constitution, Japan "cannot use force as means of settling international disputes," and under the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951, the U.S. military serves as Japan's main source of national security, which means U.S. military bases are scattered all across the country even today.

Hatoyama is not proposing to change the Japanese constitution in any way. So what does it mean for him to want a "more equal relationship" with the U.S.? "The DPJ is much more determined to not let the military issues drive the alliance," says Curtis. "[Hatoyama and his cabinet] will change the relationship with regards to the American troops in Okinawa."

The issue of U.S. bases in Japan is not as prominent on the mainland. But on the Okinawa islands, located in the southwestern region very close to

Obama's "change" rhetoric has held a deep resonance with the Japanese, and impersonators of the President are not uncommon.

Taiwan, this is still a major concern. This archipelago suffered not only the most ferocious on-land battle during WWII, but was also under U.S. military occupation for 27 years, 20 more years than the occupation of the rest of Japan. During this long period of time, the U.S. established fourteen bases that take up twenty percent of the small island. The tragic memory still deeply rooted in Okinawan society and the numerous U.S. bases suggest that the occupation has not actually ended. When I drove through Okinawa last summer, I always had a military base in my peripheral vision. "It's about time to reduce the huge American presence in Okinawa," says Curtis.

In 2006, the LDP and the U.S. agreed on a U.S.-Japan realignment pact that includes expanding the Futenma Air Base in Okinawa, home to about 4,000 U.S. Marines as well as a part-time United Nations air facility. Hatoyama wants the U.S. to consider a renegotiation, partly for economic reasons, but also as a step to establishing a "more equal relationship." Hatoyama wants to move Futenma off the island completely and eventually work on decreasing the number or size of the other bases in Okinawa. Another Pacific island, perhaps the U.S. territory of Guam, may have to take on the burden. In September, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton suggested that while "Washington sees the 2006 agreement as the basis for the realignment," it is "ready to continue negotiating on that matter."

CHANGE AS A TESTING PERIOD

"What's the first thing that pops up in your mind," I asked undergraduates and graduate students at Columbia who participated in the Japanese elections, "when you hear *Seiken Koutai*?"

Students at SIPA who have experience working for the Japanese government split into two groups, one uncertain about the DPJ's ability to govern and the other hopeful and excited about change. Those in the latter group, along with Mizoguchi, believed that this regime change is "a trial period for the DPJ."

Ryu Murakami, a Japanese fiction writer who wrote on the Japanese elections for the New York Times last month, suggested that the Japanese people are "merely experiencing the melancholy that any child goes through as adulthood approaches." Japan is fully aware that it is changing, but uneasy and uncertain about actually going through it.

Support is one thing, but optimism is another. Japanese students have no idea how this new, inexperienced party will handle unexpected situations, but we do know that the DPJ is serious about changing Japan. After years of LDP's failures, perhaps it is about time that the DPJ takes a shot at fixing issues like the economy and the low birth rate. Regardless of whether these changes will succeed, "Japan will change," says Curtis. "And I see it as a good thing."

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MORE THAN A WAR ZONE

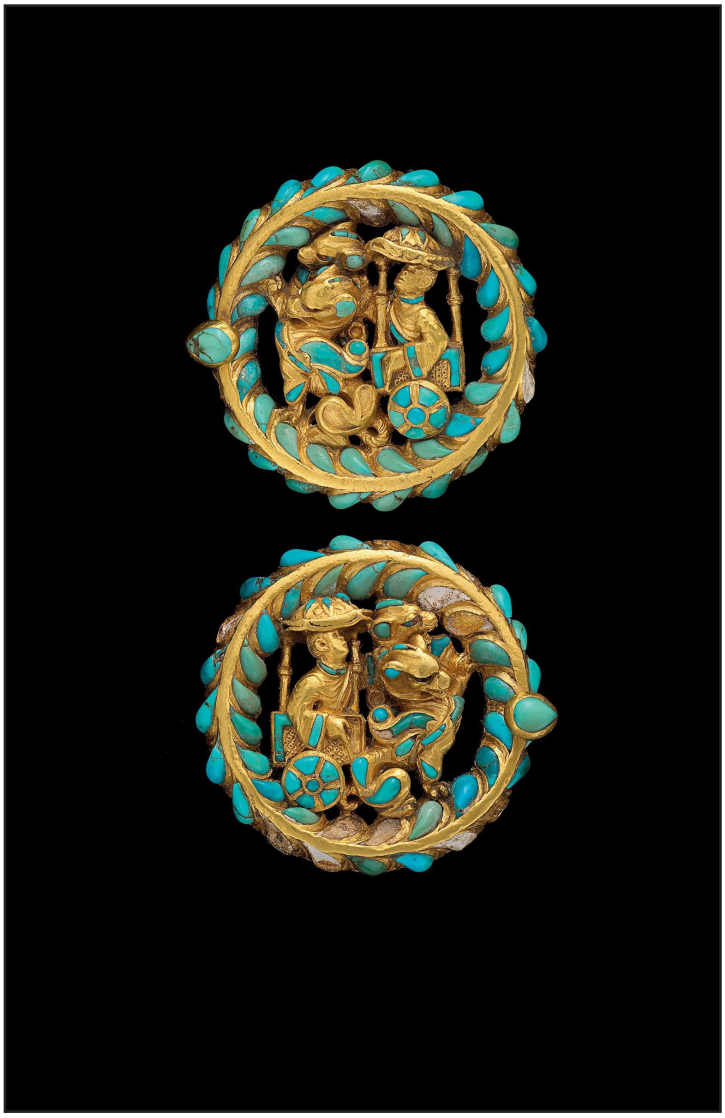
By Jacqui Brown

Even after eight years and counting of violent engagement with Afghanistan, few know the depth of Afghan history. Somehow, this onetime crossroads of the Silk Road has been ignored by the West for the majority of the modern era. The art exhibit "Afghanistan: Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul," put together by the National Geographic Society and currently touring North America, offers an excellent introduction to that colorful history and a chance to view some extraordinary art.

Due to its location and large deposits of precious resources, Afghanistan's history is in equal measure astounding and horrific. Its Central Asian glory--amazing location, lush green hills, and lots of gold–has seduced Westerners from Alexander the Great to Leonid Brezhnev - and most recently, George W. Bush. Once viewed as a quick means to avenge Middle Eastern terrorism, the American mission in Afghanistan is quickly falling into the same trap that has ensnared past invasions of this war-hardened country. Ralph White wrote in *Political Psychology* in 1990 that aggressors lose largely because they "fail to expect the fierce, tenacious resistance of their victims" due to "a lack of realistic empathy."

Afghanistan's culture of tenacity and incredible natural resources have been combined to produce a wealth of art. The pieces of art, which were displayed at the Met until September, offered an amazing variety, diversity, and grandeur. The art, all from about 4,000 years ago, comes from four ancient Afghan sites that were either excavated or in the process of being excavated when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. These treasures were housed in Kabul's National Museum of Afghanistan, but the Museum suffered heavily from Soviet bombing in the 1970s and 1980s. Courageous museum workers saved a small fraction of the precious art during the initial bombing, hiding it in the sealed vaults of the Presidential palace. Thought to be lost, the artwork was uncovered in 2003, intact.

While the works on display are heavily influenced by Persian, Indian, and Greek art, all are distinctly Afghan. Especially noteworthy were artifacts from Begram, a major city along the Silk Road that flourished during the first and second centuries. An Aphrodite figurine was found at Begran surrounded by images of Persian deities, complete with Indian beauty mark and wings



Silk Road finery comes to New York

made of gold from Bactria. Additionally, the exhibit included artifacts from Tepe Fullol, a Bronze Age civilization that engaged in trade with Mesopotamia, India, and the Northern Steppes. A bowl with geometric designs excavated at Tepe Fullol dates back 7,000 years.

The most stupendous, awe-inspiring works are from the burial site of Tillya Tepe. Tillya Tepe was once a burial mound for a warrior and five princesses from a nomadic Central Asian clan. Within the mound, luscious gold jewelry, belts, and decorations surround them. A collapsible solid gold crown was made for each of the princesses so that it could be more easily packed.

Upon entering this section of the exhibit, the low lighting makes sense—absolutely everything is gold, with a bit of turquoise thrown in. It appears to have been retrieved directly from the center of the earth and brought to emanate warmth, eliciting awe that man could have wrought such beauty.

Not only do these objects display the cultural wealth of Afghanistan, but they also reflect the culture of the ancient world. Putting aside their staggering beauty, it seems as if the curators of this exhibit recognized that the power of these objects lie predominantly in the lessons that they might teach a Western audience. By placing heavy emphasis on gold, the curators indicate that Afghans, then and now, cannot be erased, though terror in their country might be.

The Afghan culture, indeed, is tenacious, after centuries of war. Their nation has been under siege longer than the span of American history. The curators of this exhibit have not only brought together a stunning array of art, but they forced their predominantly American audience to contemplate the brevity of American hegemony in the context of the culture whose art speaks of history, and richness in all senses.

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A Gate at the Stairs, by Lorrie Moore
Alfred A. Knopf; $25.95, 322 pages

ADOPTING A NEW TONE

Lorrie Moore attempts cultural commentary.

By Daniel D'Addario

Lorrie Moore is one of America's great contemporary writers, despite and because of her willingness to go silent. Moore's admirers – this reviewer included—have been hankering for a new Moore book over the eleven years since her short story collection *Birds of America*. That book was laden with puns, extended-release metaphors, and at least three memorable characters. With her new novel, *A Gate at the Stairs*, Moore takes an unexpectedly blunt political turn, eschewing the wit and grace for which she had been appreciated. Moore's literary odyssey demonstrates that there's no better way to become a legend than by staying out of the limelight, and no worse way to disappoint than by stepping forward and revealing you have nothing to say.

To be fair, Moore's absence from literature's limelight did end a bit before A Gate at the Stairs. In June 2008, after Hillary Clinton had left the Presidential campaign, Moore wrote a brief, weird appreciation of Clinton for *New York*, filled with cloudy metaphors and contradictions. She compared Clinton to, alternately, an animated raccoon, Mick Jagger, and the witch in Snow White. A writer whose short stories largely deal with the neuroses young creative or academic types, often catalyzed by romantic misadventure, had been stymied. She writes that she became obsessed with the 2008 Democratic primaries and that friends jokingly (?) tried to get her to rehab. *A Gate at the Stairs* is a further manifestation of this obsession, proving that when dealing with issues in which one is engrossed, good art is not usually the end result.

Indeed, *A Gate at the Stairs* simultaneously addresses issues of adoption, race, class, war, terrorism, and education, doing justice to none. Hardly afraid of overstuffing her book with plot, Moore incorporates into her story a college student who might be a terrorist and a young man shipped off to Afghanistan. These topics could alone be grist for a significantly longer book, but are here engaged only when the main action of the book runs dry. Moore is skittishly afraid of describing events too directly, and instead sets up a debate of sorts between two of her characters: Tassie Keltjin, a college student emotionally adrift, and Sarah Brink, the worst sort of liberal woman. Sarah vacillates between treating Tassie, her nanny, with too much intimacy and with high-handed disdain. Sarah doesn't quite know the role a nanny or child should play in her life, nor the quagmire she's getting into, though. This vacillation informs Moore's decision to treat the entire adoption process with contempt. An unpleasant leitmotif sees adoption workers repeatedly reassuring Sarah as to the relative lightness of her prospective baby's skin.

We know Sarah is unpleasantly liberal for several reasons. She lies to an adoption agency about her ability to work from home (she is – tsk! – a restaurateur, making indulgent dishes with herbs and angry, unladylike calls to her sous-chef), she feels comfortable calling her housekeeper "the cleaning gay" (and feels comfortable having a housekeeper, for that matter), and she adopts a mixed-race child and changes her name. Sarah is stunned to encounter racism in a town with "cruelty-free tofu," which, as a buzzword for effete liberalism, simply lacks the wit for which Moore is so renowned. (Did "a town with lattes, Volvos, and The Nation" seem too subtle?) Conversely, We know Tassie is the salt of the earth because she observes all of these things in a plainspoken manner, ever-so-perplexed at just how Sarah runs her life. Moore is perplexed, too, and in her past writing, she always had a good handle on the characters she had created. Either Moore has lost her touch (this can't quite be true as this book is, if nothing else, compulsively readable) or that she just neglected to make the older, liberal woman a human, leaving her instead a signifier, a raccoon-cartoon metaphor whose greatest significance lies within Moore's mind.

There's a mean streak of passive-aggression running through A Gate at the Stairs, largely hinging on the question of adoption. Moore has lost the warmth of her earlier works. Her short story in Birds of America about a pediatric oncology ward is one of the most empathetic works of fiction one could hope to read. Where did Moore's belief that people are basically good go? Sarah means well, but she's an utter failure as a mother, and melodramatically awful at child-rearing (in ways that, if described, would spoil the pulpy twists) that this novel becomes a sort of fantasy of what a certain breed of adoptive mothers are like. "We are pioneers... We are doing something important, unprecedented, and unbearably hard," says Sarah, of raising a multiracial child in a white family.

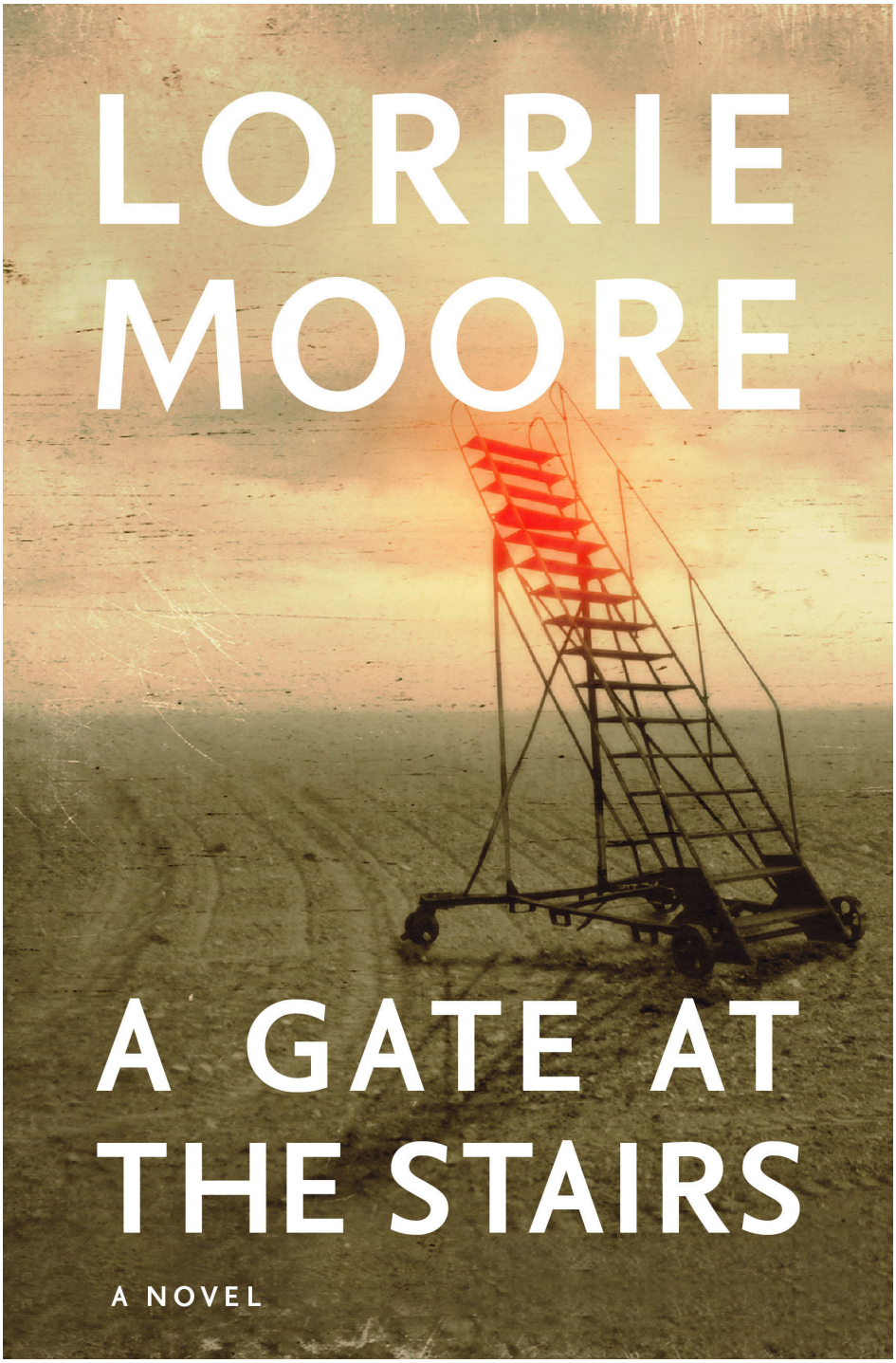
Her husband jokes that they ought not call the girl Condoleezza, though Sarah considers naming her "Maya or Leontyne or Zora, something that honors the heritage of black women." This novel is not a comedy – too many people die, there's too much tense import attached to every thought that passes through Tassie's mind – but Moore can't be serious. Can she?

None of Sarah's beliefs are necessarily wrong - adopting a child is fraught with challenges, though certainly few adoption advocates are so zealously, openly racist as those Tassie silently takes note of. The logic behind Sarah's thoughts, which she always seems to blurt out, is nonexistent, though half the time, she's a pie-in-the-sky optimist, and the other half, she's unrealistically defensive of what is becoming a more and more common decision. If Moore's agenda was to paint this decade's liberals as vacillating even in their most altruistic decisions, she succeeded. Sweet Tassie isn't so sophisticated: "I was tired and wasn't exactly clear what Sarah was talking about," she says, at the end of another of the endless string of Sarah soliloquies. And why should a novelist want to have a protagonist who feels anything more than exhaustion, who understands her milieu with clarity?

Moore is clear to a fault, though. Transparent, even. And when, at novel's end, Sarah's largely invisible husband resurfaces to (spoilers ahead!) ask Tassie on a date, his marriage having been crushed under the weight of Sarah's isolating do-gooderism, Moore's skewed understanding of the motives of adoptive parents, and her own motives in creating this novel, become even clearer. Moore is here to remind us What Really Matters: war, when Moore feels like talking about it.

Tassie's major academic demand is a class on musical scores of war movies (Moore can still skewer academia well), and her brother is the novel's soldier in Afghanistan. However, like the Brinks, he's a mere puppet of the narrative, showing up and saying the right things so that Tassie may observe him and make cryptic pseudo-observations about American life. His thoughts, though, are treated with great respect by the novel, even though they're as flimsy as the Brinks' observations. When he dies, he leaves the novel in dignity; the Brinks survive, and storm out in disgrace.

The title of A Gate at the Stairs refers to a gate in the Brinks' home, blocking access as a safety measure for their new baby, a sign of care that Tassie imbues with psychic significance. The gate blocks Tassie's entry into the life of the home. Lacking access to the inner lives of the Brinks, their nanny feels free to think of their innocent actions as monstrous in the moments she chooses to share, the couple's discomfort together and Sarah's copying Tassie's distinctive perfume. There's no other dimension in which we have to view the Brinks but one that privileges plainspokenness over sophistication - and why is one inherently better than the other? Thus, we see the Brinks' divorce, and the seizure of their child, as uncomfortable but right. Justice is served on the home front, even if it can't be in America's ongoing war.



Who knows what Lorrie Moore was hung up on in the eleven years it took her to complete *A Gate at the Stairs*, but one only hopes it is now out of her system, just as she purged her feelings about Hillary Clinton onto the pages of a magazine. An expansive novel taking on the way we live now should be a fair fight, at least. Pitting straw-man and -woman liberals against the power of Moore's formidable wit and Tassie Keltjin's insidiously winning innocence simply makes everyone looks bad.

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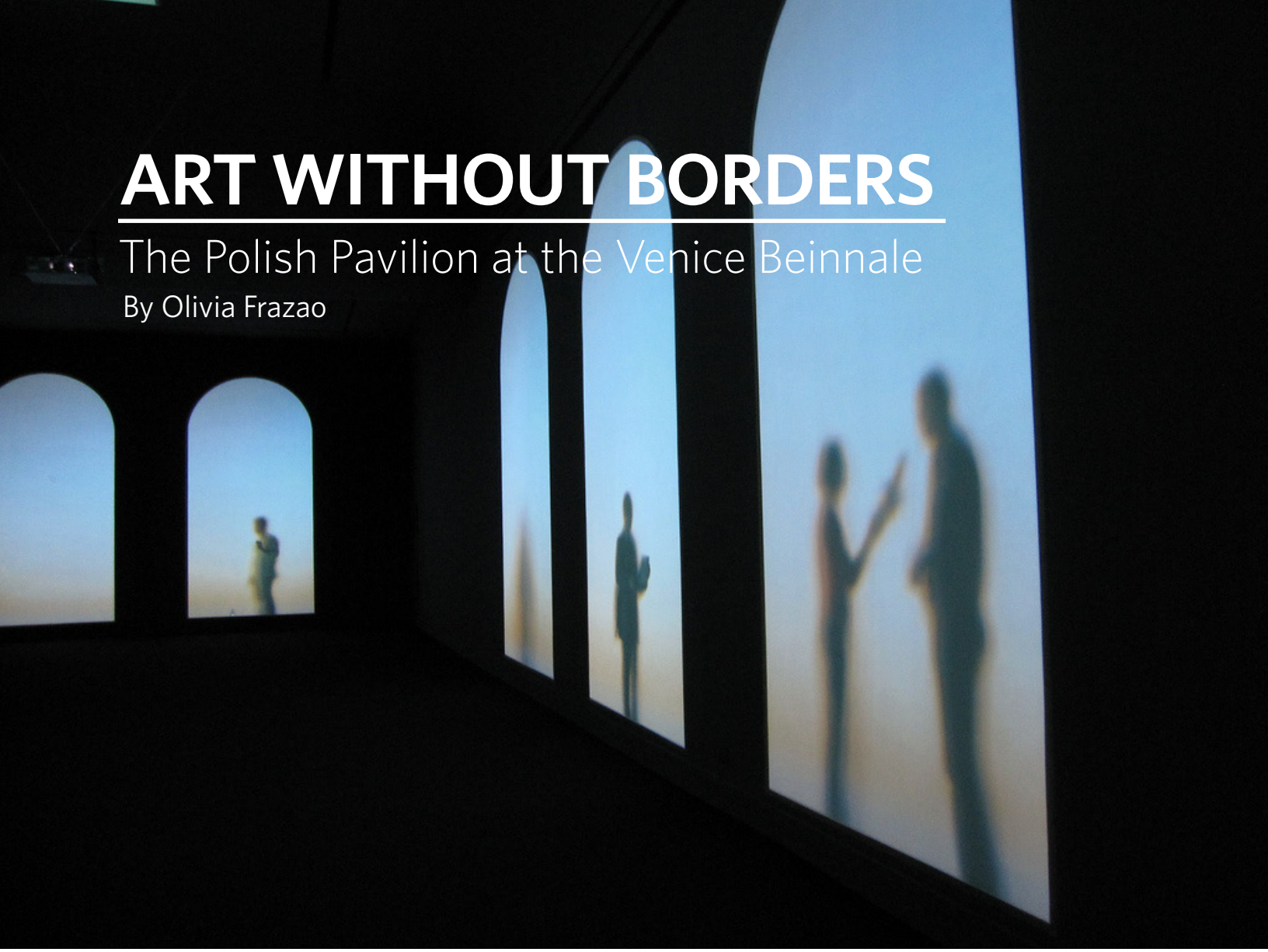

ART WITHOUT BORDERS

The Polish Pavilion at the Venice Beinnale

By Olivia Frazao

The first thing I notice upon walking into the exhibit space is that it is very dark; the room is large and empty, save for a few other viewers. In rows, displayed on the walls surrounding me are enormous projections of long windows, which reveal dark shadows and silhouettes of people moving on the other side of the windows. The silhouettes of what appear to be two male figures engaged in conversation as they stand with their backs to the window immediately catch my eye. Above them, a shadow rests upon the ceiling: a group of people, their sharp edges and lines a stark contrast to the way in which their bodies seem to melt into one another, hunch over as they appear to be staring down at me. I cast a quick glance around the room. There appears to be a dozen or so of these shadow-people moving and living through the windows.

My interest piqued, I reach for one of the headsets which rest on a wall behind me. Through the earpieces, I hear a conversation between two people, the words swirling multifariously in a language incomprehensible to me, and through the other piece, an English translation. I realize I am listening to the voices of the two men I noticed when I first walked in. "They caught me today. I am being deported." "I can't get my papers in order." "I haven't seen my family in over six years."

I am at the Polish Pavilion on the Venice Biennale, an art festival which takes place over the course of six months. The Biennale occurs every two years and attracts international and contemporary artists who wish to showcase their work in art's global epicenter. This year, it will remain on display until November 22. The central theme binding all the works together, "Making Worlds," is quite open-ended.

I was particularly struck by the pavilion of Polish artist Krtysztof Wodiczko. His interpretation of the year's theme merged the realms of art and politics in such a manner that I became unsure of where one ended and where the other began. The piece I mentioned earlier reflects the political and social reality of modern-day Europe. As the caption on the entrance wall of his pavilion explained, the protagonists of his exhibition are immigrants who "not being 'at home' remain eternal guests, strangers deprived of rights who remain mute, invisible, and nameless to communicate, gain a voice or make a presence in a public space."

The focus on immigration conjured up a reality I had witnessed firsthand while studying abroad in Italy last semester. Economic and political disequilibrium between Western and Eastern Europe

has spurred the immigration of less wealthy Eastern Europeans to the more affluent West. These Eastern European immigrants are often so eager for a better life that they disregard the issue of legality, and many of those who settle in the "New World" run great risks. It is an archetypal but tragic story: these immigrants leave their families and risk their own safety over the course of the trip. Once they've reached their desired destinations, though, they find themselves unemployed and in constant hiding from authorities who wish to deport them. There are linguistic and cultural barriers which hinder communication between them and those who "belong" in those countries, legally and socially speaking. Social assimilation is next to impossible.

As I stand before the exhibit, I wonder why it has called to mind these reflections and thoughts. What is it about his work that has prompted me to sift through recollections and experiences I have accumulated over the course of my entire lifetime? I gradually realize that it is precisely this self-reflection that Wodiczko has sought to elicit: it is not the art he is framing, but my emotional awareness of the issue. And this framing is multifaceted: Wodiczko, through controlling the images I see and the soundtrack I hear, has thoughtfully crafted a version of reality which causes me to rethink my own thoughts and feelings through the artist's chosen perspective.

Wodiczko, by having me frame myself and observe myself seeing reality through the perspective forced upon me, makes me fully conscious of what it is to ignore other people's individuality and humanity, of the shadows that other people have become. He places me inside the inner sanctum, while the "outsiders" peer at me through the hazy glass. I am the "insider," I am the culprit. But I hold no prejudice. I support open labor migration, open borders, and poorer countries joining the EU.

Do I? Art, through emotion, self-discovery, and provocation, is a medium of communication through which people can achieve a deeper, more personal, type of political awareness. The viewer may feel threatened by what he sees, accused, guilty, or confused. It will make him think twice, look again, and look inside. Art cannot create political change in itself. Instead, the artist provokes, and the viewer reacts.

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THE LAUGH HEARD FROM THE WEST BANK

By Aseel Najib

My grandfather's voice over the phone was quiet, but I could picture his mise-en-scène clearly. Sitting on his favorite chair in the veranda, he would be sipping his tea, occasionally pressing his glasses back up over the bridge of his nose to better watch the sun set over his small West Bank town of Nablus. He waited patiently as I fumbled through our tried-and-true conversation topics: family, the weather, regional politics. Finally, in a desperate attempt to revive our conversation, I asked for his thoughts on Barack Obama's proposed freeze of Israeli settlements.

His response was a long, rumbling laugh. It emanated over the phone, deep and resounding, and when at last I thought it was (thankfully) over, my 74-year-old grandfather sputtered and coughed and proceeded to laugh some more. What surprised me about his laughter was its genuineness; my old crosspatch of a grandfather truly saw humor in Obama's attempts to stop the expansion of Israeli settlements.

Israeli settlements are technically defined as "civilian communities" existing outside of Israel's geographic boundaries. The international community maintains that any settlement that has been established in the West Bank is an illegitimate one. Yet, there are currently more than 280,000 Israeli citizens who call the 121 West Bank settlements home. The underlying assumption surrounding the institution of these communities is that the land upon which they have been built belonged to Palestinians pre-1948. However, the fact remains that today the existence of these settlement projects are in violation of Article 49 of the Geneva Convention, which states that "an occupier may not forcibly deport protected persons into occupied territory."

Furthermore, the way in which the Israeli government has implemented the settlement policy has grossly disregarded the basic human rights of Palestinians. For one, Israel claims that the reason for the establishment of road blocks and checkpoints between Palestinian villages and cities is the maintenance of the safety of Israeli settlers. But it has had the effect of essentially cutting those cities off from one another and making travel between them for work and school much more difficult, and in some cases, impossible. For another, the establishment of these large communities, in such proximity to Palestinian towns and cities, leads to an unfair and discriminatory distribution of vital resources between them. This has a devastating impact on the fundamental living standards of Palestinians, including, but not exclusive to, their right to an adequate standard of living, housing, health, education, and work.

It is important to note that Obama's push for a "settlement freeze" is not inclusive of pre-established Israeli West Bank settlements. Noting its timing is also helpful; talk of a settlement freeze reached its climax during Fatah's Sixth Conference, and most Palestinians, sans their respective cynical laughs, believe that the US is pushing for this settlement freeze in order to keep their faith in Fatah alive and prevent Palestinians from supporting Hamas, the more "radical" of the two Palestinian leadership groups. Finally, Palestinians are well-aware of the fact that even as Netanyahu discusses the potential terms of a settlement freeze, he has also condoned the continued building of 800 settlement units in the West Bank.

Yet, Palestinians are also well aware of the fact that the continued Israeli appropriation of Palestinian land poses a serious threat to the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state, on both a literal and ideological level. For example, this summer, Israel passed legislation banning the word *Nakba* (i.e. the word "catastrophe" referring to the establishment of Israel and eradication of Palestine in 1948) from Israeli textbooks, and precluding the Palestinian names of villages from being written on signs and roadmaps. Thus, not only does Israel wish to physically arrogate what was once "Palestine," it also seeks to erase the entire concept of a "Palestine" from the global imagination.

When there exists an endeavor to excise the notion of a Palestinian state, it is with good reason that Obama's commitment to a settlement freeze is received with laughter rather than a sincere response.

Aseel Najib, CC '12, is an associate editor of *The Faster Times*, and a research assistant at the NYU Law School's Brennan Center for Justice. On-campus, she serves as the vice-president of Turath. She is a senior editor of the *Columbia Political Review*. She can be reached at najib.aseel@gmail.com.

CALL FOR PITCHES: December 2009 Issue

Dear all,

We hope you've enjoyed our first issue. Maybe it's inspired you to contribute to our magazine. The content in this issue should give you a good idea of the type of writing and art we're looking for and the sections that we need to fill, but we're always looking for original ideas. if you've got a compelling idea, send it our way.

Thanks,
Catherine

PITCH INSTRUCTIONS

Pitches are due by 11:59 PM on Friday, October 23. 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 outline or even a rough draft, we will more seriously consider your pitch. Remember that the issue will be published in early December, so your topic should not be overly time-sensitive, though it should have a contemporary resonance.

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.

4. If your specific article idea is not accepted, would you be willing to write for any of our other sections (humor, campus politics, news, arts)? If so, which ones?

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