

opinion

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BROADSIDE

George Mason University's Student Newspaper

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CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

In *Broadside's* Feb. 9 issue: "Meet Mr. and Ms. Mason," Ricky Malebranche is referred to as 'Ricky Malekebranche.'

In *Broadside's* Jan. 26 issue: Letter to the editor, "Musings of Student #G00—", Jaime Cooper is referenced as Dean of Students. Cooper is Associate Dean of Undergraduate Academic Affairs. Pam Patterson is Assistant Vice President/Dean of Students for University Life.

Broadside apologizes for these errors.

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Broadside is a weekly publication printed each Monday for the George Mason University and surrounding Fairfax community. The editors at *Broadside* have exclusive authority over the content that is published. There are no outside parties that play a role in the newspaper's content, and should there be a question or complaint regarding this policy, the editor in chief should be notified at the information given above.

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Have something to say?

E-mail opinion@broadsideonline.com with your submission or letter to the editor!

Letters to the editor may not exceed 200 words and opinion submissions may not exceed 800 words.

TOM BREEDEN

Student Media Copy Editor

Technically, an opinion cannot be wrong. It can, however, be completely unfounded, poorly argued and absolutely pretentious, which is not the kind of opinion that belongs in the opinion section of a newspaper. I would hope this is not even the kind of opinion that would be held by an open-minded, free-thinking, perspective-seeking student at George Mason University.

Tragically, my hope is in vain as many students often submit to *Broadside*, articles that are polarized on political and social issues and tend to ignore or demonize alternate perspectives altogether, in addition to speculating wildly and coming to some serious conclusion based off of one or two facts cited earlier by the article's author.

The news section of any reputable news publication assumes a level of objectivity in order to inform and present observable, noteworthy facts; to tell it how it really happened. This is fair. While our experiences and understandings of the world are often personal and subjective, it's important for the sake of communication and dialogue that we refer to the

shared elements of our reality and, I would argue, a 'good' opinion would need to draw heavily from some universal aspects of truth if it has any hope of being widely accepted and practicable. And certainly, this is the ultimate goal of an opinion.

Because an opinion is something that is not verifiable, either immediately or ever. It is a tool we use to wield and direct the empirical in order to support the alleged 'good' or 'evil' of any given scenario or decision. As a community (on local and global levels) we strive to define and achieve a 'greater good' for ourselves. We hope to describe the world how it ought to be, based on how it is, on what is observable and scientifically viable.

Describing the world as it 'ought to be' is the ideal aim of social scientists, of economists and of political scientists. Operating somewhere between the theoretical and experimental practices of natural sciences and the experiential and provisional studies of humanities, social scientists fit irrational man into the structured chaos of our universe. They combine what we believe and desire with what we expect and need. They do this by considering trends, noting consistencies and

JOHN KOBLAN

Broadside Contributor

These are the facts. "Over the last 13 months, our economy has lost a total of 3.6 million jobs—and continuing job losses in the next few months are predicted. By comparison, we lost a total of 1.6 million jobs in the 1990-1991 recession, before the economy began turning around and jobs began increasing. We lost a total of 2.7 million jobs in the 2001 recession, before the economy began turning around and jobs began increasing." President Barack Obama's recent town-hall at Fort Meyers, Florida illustrated these statistics. Henrietta Hughes, a former Lehigh Acres resident, has been struggling since her son lost his job in 2003. Then they lost their house.

"I have an urgent need," Hughes told the president. "We need something more than the vehicle and parks to go to. We need our own kitchen and our own bathroom, please help."

"Listen, what's your name?" asked the president. "It's Henrietta Hughes," she said.

Obama was so moved he got off the stage and went to her.

"We're going to do everything we can," the president told her. Florida Representative Nick Thompson (R-73rd) compassionately offered the woman a three bedroom, two bathroom home his wife used to own. He said she is free to stay there, rent free, as long as she needs.

Obama also said "when the town is burning, we don't check party labels. Everyone needs to grab a hose." Thompson was someone who put humanity before bipartisanship. He should be applauded for his compassionate act.

However, not everyone is joining the president to put out the inferno. "Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich says House Republicans are 'very, very pumped' that they stood united to oppose the \$819 billion economic stimulus plan that swept through the Democratic controlled House last week without a single Republican vote."

"I agree with the decision of Senator [Lisa] Murkowski and Congressman [Don] Young to vote NO on the package,"

most any social, economical or political affair and will subsequently determine our role under this domestically conformist umbrella.

In terms of historical significance, the events witnessed by the current youth generation such as September 11, the Iraq War and our present economic meltdown will be coupled with monumental happenings such as Pearl Harbor, The Depression, Kennedy's assassination and Vietnam.

Unfortunately, the dense cloud of American consumerism and other media tactics pollute young people's minds with the illusion that a standard of satisfaction is achieved by simply conforming to societal norms and submitting to the belief that the day by day occurrences in America qualify as "acceptable".

To illustrate the validity of this statement, let's analyze the capacity of a global catastrophe

as it relates to America's class of youth in comparison with Iraq's class of youth: According to a *Reuters* news source a positive and almost celebratory Iraqi news headline reads "Iraqi government figures showed 138 civilians were killed in January, lower than the 238 people killed in each of the months of December and October, previously the lowest monthly tolls."

Pause for an instant and attempt (because it is impossible for any of us to measure how it really feels) to create a visionary reaction of America's youth to a statement of such extremes. Upheaval, panic, contempt; those are a few words that dance around my mind—none of them seem to be synonymous with positive or celebratory.

This is merely one number in a massive database of statistics that would drive the average 17-year-old American to kiss the stars as a token of appreciation.

experimenting with known and unknown variables. The apathetic aside, we all have ideas about how the world ought to be and these ideas are based to varying degrees on personal experience and enculturation. However, I think it's reasonable to assume that some of us lack the knowledge and experience required to form a relevant, comprehensive opinion.

If I had the option of reading an article written by an economics major or a communication major about the recently passed, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, I would definitely prefer the former. Not to discredit communication majors who have their own brand of knowledge, but I think my preference makes obvious sense.

An economics major should have more to say about the stimulus package, biology majors should have more to say about eukaryotes and prokaryotes, and history majors should have more to say about the Age of Enlightenment giving way to Romanticism.

My point is that you should have some background knowledge before writing an opinion article about complicated political and economic issues. I don't actually believe it's necessary to major in

an area before writing an article about a specific topic but I do believe you need to have serious interest in the area. You should be well versed in the subject and you should be able to present both sides of an issue before arguing your preference for one.

If your opinion demonizes the antithesis, I would seriously doubt your ability to consider the viewpoint of the 'other.' If your opinion is so polarized that you can only support extreme viewpoints—if you associate President Obama with the savior or the antichrist, if you foresee some grand, national utopia or abysmal plummet—I couldn't help but suspect some fantastic bias.

Writing an article for the opinion section of a newspaper is a responsibility. I hope one would feel obligated to present an insightful, fair assessment of the world as seen through the eyes of an informed, active member of a community. One takes on the role of an interpreter, an optimistic arbiter. Not a critic, not a commenter, no mere observer.

The opinion section of the newspaper is the town hall discussion; it is the pragmatic extension of the theory. It is the culture that separates wise man from an upright ape. At least it should be.

her PAC? "If Sarah Palin seeks out sophisticated policy advisers and takes sophisticated positions, she will be very formidable," Gingrich said. "Gov. Palin has an advantage in Iowa (where the 2012 presidential campaign may officially begin) because she is popular with the fundamentalist wing of the party."

In this economic crisis, we need more leaders like U.S. Senators Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Susan Collins (R-ME) and Arlen Specter (R-PA) who braved the Rush Limbaugh call-in audience and put their country first.

We need fewer leaders like Gingrich, who makes remarks about our national downward spiral and Palin, who makes hints at a 2012 presidential run.

These two remind me of a modern day Nero, fiddling away while Rome burns. Hopefully you, the voter, will remember who tried to put out the fire to save the country while others played to the fundamentalist wing of their party for selfish political gain at the expense of the people they supposedly represent.

consumerism at the expense of the labor of adolescents that would most likely make sacrifices to unethical lengths if it meant temporarily experiencing the luxuries we expect on a daily basis.

If you have read this assertion and simultaneously developed emotions synonymous with guilt, I ask you respectively to disregard every word you just read.

Guiltiness leads to promulgating short-term action which places us in a rut of complacency. I am not asking, but moreover proving that we as the voice of the future need to make a significant effort to institute a change.

It does not have to happen tomorrow, in a week or even a year. It is unrealistic to expect that. However, if this proclamation is failed to be recognized I can officially throw up the white flag, a tactic that should come naturally to many people in this country.

Red, White and Grey: A Letter to the Misguided Ear of A Complacent Generation

ROBERT SALAND

Broadside Contributor

Beginning with the emergence of our young nation into the global limelight, America's youth has entered a coma of insolence from which only a beast can awaken.

Absent are any fathomable theories that give way to why or how our country's "Generation X" ended up in this pit of regression. However, bold warning signs have been implied for years through the influential works of literary manifestos including F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemmingway and Hunter S. Thompson.

The elite minds of these gentlemen acquired the capacity to hurdle social norms in an effort to positively challenge an archaic school of thought that rendered this costly predicament. When a political or social squall appeared to linger over the American horizon, individualists such as the

literary activists above made certain their voices would not be shadowed among the inconsistencies of the American youth culture. At this juncture, I would like to revive a level of concern that is necessary to address the ignorance of our country's youth.

There is no imaginative excuse as to why the current generation of youngsters should bear no regard to the national and global events that involve our country—it's hard to find one that does not. I know it goes against ethical code to startle anybody out of their La-Z-Boy, but I would be overjoyed to invite adolescent to the realization that these noteworthy events are not solely impacting our safeguard commonly referred to as the United States.

The world that is opportunistically at our glutinous fingertips (due to capitalism and democratic ideals), absorbs the ripple of