

Most world leaders need better safety nets

OUR OPINION: Protection of high-level officials is vital to global and national security

Americans were recently horrified when a 25-year-old Jewish law student was able to walk up and fire point-blank at Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin as the leader was leaving a peace rally in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Nov. 4.

Many Americans remember where they were and what they were doing when John Hinckley Jr. nearly succeeded in taking Ronald Reagan's life as the former president was leaving a Washington, D.C., hotel in the early '80s. Incredibly, news footage from that assassination attempt actually shows Hinckley's arm and hand coming up with the pistol and firing the shots.

Almost two generations have gone by since John F. Kennedy was shot and killed in his personal limousine as the presidential motorcade made its way through downtown Dallas, Texas. Again, thousands of American citizens remember exactly where they were, what time of day it was, and what they were doing as the president died on that fateful day.

Perhaps one reason why so many Americans still remember the way Kennedy died, the way Reagan nearly died, and the way Rabin lost his life, is that we don't expect world leaders to fall victim to the same random violence that takes the lives of so many "regular" human beings every day.

We just don't think our leaders are as vulnerable as other people.

Americans are used to being the global leaders in high-tech areas such as space

travel and "spying on the bad guys." We have powerful satellites and an entire army of intelligence operatives whose job is to watch out for America's national security. The United States also has the CIA and FBI to help protect our leaders.

Most of us know just enough about presidential security to be mystified and baffled by it. We might not know exactly how the president and other important officials are protected, but we believe the protection process is carefully detailed and invariably carried out by highly trained professionals.

Someone walk up and shoot President Clinton? Not in America.

Actually, it is possible in America.

Earlier this year a man wearing a trenchcoat walked up to the iron fence surrounding the White House, whipped out a machine gun, and started peppering the presidential grounds with gunfire.

Before that incident, a man crashed his airplane into the White House lawn in a scenario that could have come right out of a Tom Clancy novel.

Just when we think our leaders and officials are safe, someone figures out some bizarre way to slip through the net of protection.

When there is no net, as was the tragic case in Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, we are shocked.

The movie *In the Line of Fire* featured Clint Eastwood as a veteran bodyguard who was willing to "take a bullet" for the president.

Unfortunately for Israel, for Yitzhak Rabin and for the rest of the world, no one was close enough to the man to step in front of his bullet.



Women's studies: closed for discussion

Several years ago, an article in *Commentary* magazine argued that today's university was not a forum for open debate, but rather an institution that discards any and all oppositional views.

The author wrote: "[Modern academia's] partisans have little sympathy either with open discourse or with analytic procedures that fail to guarantee desired conclusions."

No, there is no secret society of tenured, totalitarian teachers waiting to indoctrinate young minds. And yet, for all of the courses at the University that attempt to promote freedom of expression and respect for opposing views, there are a few saddening exceptions.

Nomi Pearce's Women's Studies 101 class should be put at the top of this list.

All of her students give Pearce high marks for her exposition on issues, such as the societal devaluation of women. However, when the topic of abortion comes up, many women believe that Pearce shifts from instructor to advocate.

These women feel that Pearce has ignored classroom pluralism in her mistaken assumption that the terms "feminism" and "pro-choice" are synonymous.

The result has been the marginalization of all students who do not adhere to Pearce's simplistic classroom position on abortion. These people range in beliefs from pro-choice to pro-life, including one student who has had an abortion.

Their objections stem from a slide show presentation given by All Women's Health Services several weeks ago.

In attempting to achieve its goal of "demystifying women's bodies," the presentation instructs its viewers on giving cervical self-exams, illustrates menstruation and discusses the wide range of pubic hair patterns. One frame promises to provide a "new view of the clitoris," and then shows a woman masturbating to the point of clitoral erection.

No, these weren't the objectionable pieces.

However, once the topic of abortion was addressed, the presentation was no longer concerned with "demystifying women's bodies." Instead, it insulted women's minds.

After watching the presentation, one would think abortion is the easiest operation known to woman.

The narrator refers to abortion as a "come-and-go procedure." The viewer is told that most abortions take only three to five minutes and that All Women's Health Services knows the "truth" about abortion.

All Women's Health Services and Pearce's version of this abortion "truth" is illuminated by one of the presentation's last slides. A thin, beautiful woman is seen smiling with clean, white teeth. With every blond hair in place, the Barbie Doll waves to the camera as she exits the abortion clinic. The viewer is told that this woman has had an abortion just moments before.

This is the only picture of any post-abortion woman.

This propagandistic caricature is as misrepresentative as it is destructive.

No person, pro-choice or pro-life, claims that abortion is an enjoyable experience. The depiction of the abortion procedure as being equivalent to a three-to-five-minute dental cleaning simply does not reflect the reality of struggle that so many women endure before and after the procedure.

Pearce betrays her students in attempting to sell them a smiling Barbie that demeans women in the most insidious of ways.

In addition to only inviting the abortion clinic for this presentation, Pearce has assigned several pro-choice readings in class, one of which argues that abortion is equivalent to any other form of birth control. Meanwhile, there have been no pro-life readings, and Pearce has rejected the request of one student to invite a mainstream right-to-life group to offer an alternative perspective.

During our interview, Pearce said, "I don't think a balance is what I was looking for."

It is this form of pedagogy that subverts the entire education process. Certainly every class will be structured around a professor's ideology. But there must always be a genuine attempt on the part of the instructor to provide a range of perspectives in class.

Stating one's opinion and then providing balancing ideologies is one thing; silencing all views that differ from the instructor's, while conducting a pro-choice rally in class is quite another.

The danger in Pearce's advocacy is manifest in the silence it creates. The notion that abortion is a "come-and-go procedure" was heard. The voices of women who require many hours of post-abortion counseling were silenced.

Barbie was heard. Complexity was silenced.

All Women's Health Services was heard. Feminists for Life was silenced.

It's ironic that the women's studies department has worked so hard to create this silence, when soldiers for the women's movement have fought so many years to give women a voice.

The instructors for next term's 101 classes are Lisa Albrich, Lisa Bornstein, Sheila Page Edwards and, of course, Nomi Pearce. If you are considering taking the course, call these women and ask them if they plan to invite All Women's Health Services.

Ask them if other perspectives will be invited, studied and respected.

Remind them that marginalizing students for the indoctrination of their agendas is destructive.

Remind them that smiling, Abortion Barbie Dolls insult and demean women just as much as their Mattel counterparts.

Remind them that propaganda never empowers.

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