

Holy war on flame-haired comedians



LONE VOICE IN THE WOODS

BRET JACOBSON

With tensions running high and tempers about to flare out of control in the Middle East, it seems that a nice little diversion would go a long way to maintaining peace in the war-ready region. Thus, as your humble, disaffected and disillusioned young American columnist, I have several ideas on small jihads that could divert attention away from a situation that could otherwise escalate to World War III.

Now, for the uninformed, a jihad is a Muslim holy war apparently called by religious leaders when an attack is necessary to preserve or avenge their people. Obviously, I advocate ineffective jihads, limiting the liability to all parties, including myself.

For a little background, you should consider some warm-up jihads. A holy war against the imperial forces of Luxembourg might be a good way to kick off the festivities. Or you may want to try to think globally and act locally by calling for a jihad against your



local garbage men. Even a jihad against swine farmers might be a nice unity builder for the inflamed region.

Personally, I'd like to see the most aggressive anger aimed at perhaps the most despised character in America — nay, the world — Carrot Top. Some may say that the tyrannical likes of Pol Pot and Burger King

should be taken down first in the name of an almighty deity, but I suggest Señor Top because there won't be any noticeable resistance, and success builds confidence for future undertakings.

But targets are surely not enough for a jihad worthy of a top spot in the hereafter. Just as important as a goal is a plan to exe-

cute it. Here are a few steps of initiative I'd like to see those in the Middle East, on either side of the Israeli-Arab conflict, put into effect.

First, a would-be hero must bring three forms of picture identification, with proof of address, to the local munitions dump. There the desk help will take the customer through a step-by-step questionnaire to find exactly what kind of weapons will be best put to use. I recommend lots and lots of explosives. Even if you don't hit your exact target, it makes CNN every time.

Next, rent or steal an unmarked primer-gray van. Such a vehicle is treated with the same overwhelming disregard throughout the world, and allows for maximum damage during any attack. If you're not seen, you can't be stopped.

Get as close as possible to your target. In the instance of Carrot Top, you don't need to be all that close, because his gargantuan, flaming orange hair gives off a one-mile glow.

Finally, realize that all the preceding talk was of a wry humor borne of weariness of the never-ending real-world tension in the Middle East. At some point this particular conflict went so far beyond the pale of forgivable human anger that it became sorrowfully comical. But it's only as funny as this column. That's sad.

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The Niña, the Piñta, the Overrated Holiday



CAPTAIN SENSIBLE

PAT PAYNE

Bloody explorers! You pounce off to some bloody unknown land, come home with a tropical disease, a suntan and a bag of brown lumpy things, and Bob's yer uncle, everyone's got a picture of you in the lavatory! I mean, what about the people that do all the work? — Rowan Atkinson, "Blackadder II"

As you may well have guessed by the quotation above, Columbus Day is right up there in my holiday priorities with "National Whack Your Neighbor With A Salmon Day." However, since people on both sides have pressed the issue, I shall chime in.

First off, why do we hail Christopher Columbus as some sort of great explorer? His claim to fame was that, in trying to get to China, he found an extraordinarily large rock in his path. He never even got to the continent proper! He discovered the Caribbean, for crying out loud, not North America. Secondly, he wasn't even the first to make it to the Western Hemisphere. Leif Eriksson, a

Viking explorer, landed in what is today Canada and established a small colony about 500 years before Chris was even a zygote. However, the Vikings' whole "burn everything in Europe" policies left them with bad PR, so there's no Eriksson, Ohio. Almost 25,000 years before Eriksson, Indo-Asiatic peoples came over a land bridge in what is now the Bering Sea between present-day Russia and Alaska, and settled on the two hospitable continents previously unoccupied.

The only reason that we hail Columbus with a holiday is that he had the good sense to actually record what he was doing. His was a discovery by accident, and a relatively minor one at that. He just doesn't rate a national holiday. He should barely rate a paragraph or two in history.

Yet the people on the other side aren't swaying me either, in their attempts to demonize Columbus the man, instead of his contemporaries. I doubt that Christopher Columbus was a slave trader. It seems a little hard to swallow.

Historically, what were Columbus' infractions? First, he unleashed diseases unknown in the Americas on the people there. Shacking up with farm animals for a thousand years gave the Europeans immunities to these bugs. Chalk this one up to the Europeans having no idea of medicine or personal hygiene.

Second, he DID open the floodgates to Balboa, Pizarro and other conquistadors who heard the streets in this new world were paved with gold, and were determined to take everything they could carry without thought to how many natives they had to run through. This also led to people like George Custer, who single-handedly sparked a war with Crazy Horse in 1876 to gain silver in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Columbus was, therefore, indirectly responsible for Andrew Jackson's "Trail of Tears."

Still, what is disrupting a commemoration of a five-hundred-year-old event going to do? How is banishing Columbus' name from public discourse going to undo the events that transpired? The genie has been let out of the bottle. There isn't much that can be done now, save the deportation of everybody coming to this continent after 1492.

But as for a day for Columbus? Keep it, jettison it with extreme prejudice, I don't care. To paraphrase from the same program I quoted in the beginning:

The return of Christopher "Ooh, Look At What Big Ships I've Got" Columbus is a matter of supreme indifference to me.

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Letters to the editor

Cheney, Bush less moderate than they seem

Seemingly overlooked in the media evaluation of Dick Cheney is his securing the votes of the extreme right for the Republican ticket. The national press has asked Cheney about his congressional voting record on issues ranging from Head Start to cop-killer bullets. Cheney liberally alters his position on each controversial vote, except his vote against a resolution in favor of freeing Nelson Mandela.

In defending his Mandela vote, Cheney invokes "communism." Mandela communist? Hardly — then or now. Why does Cheney continue denigrating Nelson Mandela? Because Nelson Mandela is black! Cheney's stance reassures and secures the votes of the bigots and racists of the extreme right.

Cheney creates a buffer between the extreme right and Bush. Thus, Bush frees himself to appeal to fiscally conservative, white middle-class voters who otherwise will not tolerate bigotry. With Cheney, Bush gets the vote of the extreme right AND finesses the vote of otherwise sensible, kind conservatives. The vote of both groups is essential to his campaign success.

Perhaps the effect of this plan is what Bush means when he talks about "Soft Bigotry." Except, in whose cynical lexicon is bigotry ever "Soft?" The bigotry of the Republican Party is as masterfully pernicious and present today as it was in 1988 when Bush-the-father invoked Willie Horton. An antic for which Bush-the-father's campaign adviser (Lee Atwater) later apologized, but Bush-the-father never.

Like father, like son. The fruit doesn't fall far from the tree.

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