

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

'New American Century' is way more fearsome than Saddam

Does anyone imagine that Osama bin Laden isn't laughing insanely at the idea of young Arab children sitting in their living rooms watching images of American GIs fighting Muslims in the streets of Iraq?

Could Osama bin Laden possibly share the Bush administration's excitement about regime change in Iraq? After all, it's the only way Islamic militancy stands a chance of taking hold in that country in ways that it never could under Hussein's iron-fisted secular dictatorship. Hussein has been stepping on bin Laden's Iraqi Muslim brothers for more than 30 years.

Bin Laden set the trap, and think-tank refugees from the American Enterprise Institute walked U.S. troops into it.

While serving in the first Bush White House 12 years ago, current administration officials and advisers Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Donald Wolfowitz, Richard Perle and William Kristol developed a foreign policy doctrine that called for using unilateral U.S. force to preempt perceived threats to U.S. dominance and make the Middle East safe for democracy. Glaringly absent from this list is Colin Powell, the only current top administration official who served his country in Vietnam.

When the first President Bush saw the plan, the experienced diplomat, former CIA chief and World War II combat veteran threw it into the Oval Office trash can like a rotten piece of okra. It was considered too costly in lost American lives, plundered economic resources and ruined international relationships. It also risked a huge potential for backfiring.

It's now about 18 months after Sept. 11, 2001, and the pre-emption doctrine has been dug up, dusted off and is being implemented in the guise of protecting American citizens from an Arab regime that has never convincingly been linked to the Sept. 11 attacks. Iraq is a country that our own CIA believes poses no imminent threat.

This doctrine is now being promoted through a "non-profit educational organization" called "The Project for the New American Century." Signers to this plan include Gary Bauer, William J. Bennett, Steve Forbes, Dick Cheney and Dan Quayle. Check out their frightening conclusions at www.newamericancentury.org.

We wish the best to the innocent Iraqi civilians and America's brave fighting men and women, most of whom come from the working-class and minority communities that President George W. Bush flies over on his way to his sprawling Texas ranch or his family's Connecticut vacation compound.

But support for the troops is an invalid justification for stifling dissent. Michael Moore "outraged" some Americans with his comments at the Oscars. But did anyone catch the painful irony on TV the very next evening? While military-age "First Cousin" Billy Bush hosted the Miss USA Pageant on NBC, another network was broadcasting footage of GIs fighting for their lives and being taken prisoner in Iraq.

Some might find that glaring inequality of duty to country more offensive than a "Pope-and-Dixie Chicks" potshot launched at the president.

Remember: "These Colors Never Run." But our president used family connections to hide in the relative safety of the Texas Air National Guard while his less-well-connected peers were fighting, killing and dying for their country in Vietnam; now he and a group of overreaching ideologues (all of whom had their own excuses for avoiding the Vietnam draft) have sent a new generation of America's finest to fight overseas in the name of another misguided political "domino" theory.

Too bad that won't fit neatly on a jingoistic bumper sticker.

Editorial policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com.



Steve Baggs Emerald

Supreme tolerance

It was the summer of 1995. Supreme Court Justice Steven Breyer checked his schedule for the first oral arguments of the term. They coincided with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Probably the most important holiday in the Jewish calendar. Breyer planned to stay home that day. Chief Justice William Rehnquist said no.

We don't meet on Christmas, Breyer noted. But if the court honored this request, Rehnquist claimed, why it would have to respect the beliefs of Muslims and Buddhists, too. Breyer replied that he thought the court should respect the religious holidays of any justice. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg echoed Breyer's request. Rehnquist refused to budge. You can listen to tapes of the arguments, he responded.

Then providence intervened. The chief justice's ailing back started acting up. Doctors recommended surgery. He missed a meeting. The other justices postponed oral arguments.

The Rehnquist Court has not been sympathetic to minorities, religious and otherwise. During its first term, Rehnquist wrote an opinion affirming military regulations that forbade Captain Simcha Goldman, an Air Force psychologist and rabbi, from wearing

his yarmulke while on duty. During its last term, the court refused even to hear the case of Zeinab Ali, an employee of Alamo Rent-A-Car, who moved her to the back of the office because she wore a hijab, or head scarf, to work. What's next, the back of the bus?

The most famous religious freedom case of our generation took place in Oregon. Alfred Smith, an Klamath tribe member, was fired from his state job for taking peyote as a sacrament. Oregon, represented by then-Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer, wanted only to deny Smith unemployment benefits from the state. But the court went much further and denied Smith the right to practice his religious ceremony at all.

Which brings us to the present day. On April 1, the Supreme Court began hearing oral arguments for *Grutter v. Bollinger*, the challenge to the University of Michigan law school's consideration of race in admissions. The first question before it is whether diversity is a "compelling state interest."

After reading about Goldman, Ali and Smith, my answer is absolutely yes.

Their cases show that America's diversity makes it a challenge to govern and work together. But Breyer's story reveals diversity may help solve these challenges.

Last fall, I sat in Constitutional Law, listening to arguments about affirmative action. Not a single black student was present. Not surprisingly, the discourse was rather dry and limited. My classmates are bright and thoughtful. But no amount of theorizing can replace the experience and perspective of minorities

on laws intended to help them.

I don't believe only minorities hold the key to certain questions. But I believe anyone who interacts with people of different backgrounds will learn more about their world and possess greater empathy for all kinds of people.

Eugene is the largest, most diverse place many students have ever lived. The University itself is a crucible that tries to emulate the diversity and cultural richness of larger cities. Those wishing to prosper on bigger stages like Portland, Seattle or San Francisco would profit from absorbing the different perspectives and experiences of their peers.

Diversity is not a magic cure, but too many people have suffered for lack of it.

Don't just take my word. Go to the local movie theater. "Watch Rabbit-Proof Fence," "The Quiet American" or "The Trials of Henry Kissinger." Each historical film tells the suffering of darker-skinned people under the rule of whites who had very little knowledge of their subjects.

Is it too much to hope for diversity among the "experts" who shape foreign policy and carry out regime change? Will it take long for diversity to trickle up?

Perhaps not. On Oct. 6, 2003, the Supreme Court will not hear any oral arguments "so that Yom Kippur may be observed." One small step for atonement, but a greater step for tolerance.

Contact the columnist at philiphuang@dailyemerald.com. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.



Philip Huang
 A different light

CORRECTIONS

The Web address in the story about author David Loftus' book ("Eugene native bares male thoughts on pornography," ODE, April 1) should have been printed as www.david-loftus.com.

The ASUO elections story about Executive candidate Christa Shively ("Melton/Morales, Shively/Bae tickets tout ASUO experience," ODE, April 1) incorrectly identified Shively as being chairwoman of the Associated Students' Presidential Advisory

Council. She is not the chairwoman, as the board does not have that position. The Emerald regrets the errors.

CLARIFICATIONS

Monday's ASUO elections story about Student Senate Seat 1 did not have a byline. It was written by news editor Brook Reinhard.

The Online Poll announced in Monday's paper inadvertently was not posted to the Web site. It is in place now at www.dailyemerald.com.

Letters to the editor for ASUO election candidate races

Letters to the editor can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. For space and time limitations, letters in support of candidates for ASUO office are limited to 200 words and must be submitted by 5 p.m. Friday, April 5 in order to run before the primary election. Authors are limited to one submission each. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.