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BRET FURTWANGLER | GRAPHIC ARTIST

In my opinion

Hope IN humor



AILEE SLATER
FURTHER FROM PERFECTION

It's no secret that I'm a 20-something, female, University of Oregon student involved in the media; so it's probably also no secret that I'm a staunch Liberal. Like many Liberals involved in today's political climate, I tend to shed a lot of tears. Buckets were filled both election night 2000 and 2004. Nowadays, new holes are bashed into the wall with each anti-feminist move of the Bush administration, and neighbors cower in fear at the sound of my broken, angry cries over prison abuse, ultra-conservative judicial nominees and a No Child Left Behind Act that leaves the state of public education (behind) in a cloud of underpaid teachers and facilities.

It was therefore a surprise, most of all to me, to glance at a piece of news involving President Bush and laugh. And for the first time, I wasn't laughing at the idiocy of his logic (yeah, maybe taking away birth control and sexual education WILL prevent teen pregnancy). No, my laughter was not cynical; it was joyful. And the heartiness of joy in conjunction with U.S. Republican politicians is sure to keep my morale up for weeks to come.

At the annual White House Correspondents' Association dinner last week, President Bush and first lady Laura Bush put on what was apparently quite the comedic act. The after-dinner speech consisted of Laura Bush's playful criticisms of her husband's early bedtimes and ranching skills. She joked: "He's learned a lot about ranching since that first year, when he tried to milk ... a male horse." Laura Bush even went as far as to poke fun at Barbara Bush's disposition, claiming that the woman is more like a member of the Mafia than the grandmotherly type.

You mean the Bush clan is capable of humor outside of pronouncing words incorrectly and not knowing national factoids? Who knew?

Certainly not me. In that moment of laughter at the idea of Barbara Bush wielding a handgun and a heavy Italian accent, George W. Bush and the rest of his administration suddenly became more human. Rather than cold politicians working day and night to make my life as a liberal woman hell, they were people who ate and drank and laughed at each other's expense; just like the rest of us.

President Bush might spend the day confronting foreign politicians in a way that I deem irrepressibly stupid, but at night, he probably snuggles up with his wife to watch the newest episode of "Desperate Housewives."

Humor in its very nature is designed to bring us all down to a more human level. Just think about how fun it is to watch famous people trip over street curbs: We laugh with joy that they are just as human as the rest of us. Imagine if there were some way to systematically introduce laughter into the political sphere. Republicans and Democrats might squabble over judicial nominees during their sessions of Senate, but over dinner that evening they would drink wine and giggle to each other about the state of Senator So-and-so's toupee or laughingly ask if anyone else was hit by the highly projected spit during Mr. You-know-who's motion to vote.

"I'll show him a motion!" Bill Frist might playfully shout, slapping Minority Leader Harry Reid on the back. Reid would laugh, saying only,

"So that's why you don't want a filibuster, you old bag; afraid of getting your Armani suit drenched in that guy's spit!" Both men would then share a genuine, hearty laugh.

Imagine a similar scenario with foreign leaders. Bush and Kim Jong Il already don't connect over nuclear policies; what's to lose in seeing if these two can find common ground in humor? Perhaps the image of President Bush fumbling around a male horse with milk jugs in his hand is exactly what's needed to convince Jong Il that his country is not in danger of U.S. nuclear attack. Likewise, I can only imagine that if Jong Il were to poke some good-natured fun at the United States' plan to increase its nuclear arsenal while trying to decrease weapons worldwide, Bush might laugh. And, coming from a place of humor and happiness rather than anger and defensiveness, Bush might for the first time consider what Jong Il has to say.

It is a breath of fresh air to step back and realize that we are all human at heart. We laugh, we cry, we live, we die. Politics is of course a serious business, but it is certainly worthwhile to consider the merits of inserting humor into political discussion. If Republicans and Democrats can laugh together, then there is a glimmer of hope that they can also come to decisions together. Israelis and Palestinians may not agree on much, but can't we all attest to the fact that a genetic hybrid of Ariel Sharon and former leader Yasser Arafat would be the pinnacle of hilarity?

Maybe it's too soon for jokes. On the other hand, maybe the time is just right for world leaders to take an outlandish tumble off their soap boxes. Instead of weapons of mass destruction, how about poking one another with a little good-natured humor instead?

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Editorial

Students: Ditch the pill; head to the library

The abuse of the prescription drug Adderall isn't getting enough attention. Normally prescribed to help people diagnosed with attention deficit disorders to concentrate, Adderall has become a commonly abused medication.

Adderall can be an extremely positive influence. When used with the instruction and prescription of a medical professional, Adderall helps its users focus and remain undistracted — important factors for students in large and often noisy lecture halls.

Of course, drug abuse is hardly ever about the people who need the drug; it's about the people who want the drug. Illegal Adderall users cite an increase in concentration and the ability to study, and therefore an ease in maintaining higher grades, as the reasons some students illegally take the drug.

There aren't always concrete ways to explain drug abuse, but in the case of Adderall, it seems academic stress is a factor in abuse on college campuses. It is unfortunate that some college students place academic success above their physical health and legal sensibilities, and universities nationwide need to address that trend.

The side effects of Adderall — potential addiction, high blood pressure and loss of eyesight — are dangerous. The legal repercussions for illegally using Adderall are no picnic either: Possessing Adderall without a prescription carries the same legal repercussions as possession of a methamphetamine.

Health facilities must hold workshops and design campaigns to inform students that Adderall is a dangerous substance when used improperly. Public information is necessary in creating an informed and safe campus that is less likely to abuse prescription stimulants should be given extensive information concerning side effects, as well as the harsh consequences that come with illegally distributing it.

In addition, students must take a second look at the abuse of Adderall. It is time to swallow the bitter pill of reality and head to the library. Students without a medical need for Adderall must learn to rely on hard work and self-discipline, because success doesn't come in the form of a pill.

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