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■ In my opinion

THE CARTMAN CONNECTION

It may happen tomorrow. It may happen Friday. It may be happening right now as you read this. Hopefully it does not happen after my deadline today, making this intro outdated. But if it does happen, it may well be as early as this week. I am talking about the possible indictment of White House officials in the Plamegate scandal.

In other news, Comedy Central has been playing a countdown of Cartman's 25 Greatest Moments to amp up viewers for tonight's season premiere of South Park.

I've been following both stories, and as I eagerly await well-deserved indictments and well-written satire, I have noticed a few similarities. Basically, Karl Rove and Eric Cartman are freakishly similar.

Both are chubby, arguably pure evil and definitely vengeful. Neither is opposed to exploiting others for personal gain. Both feel a sense of entitlement that seems unfounded to the rest of us. Both play off the fear and ignorance of others. Both Rove and Cartman's friends know these things, and allow them to pursue their outrageous plans.

There are very specific allusions to Karl Rove through the character of Cartman. Take for example, episode number 95, "My Future Self n' Me." Cartman is the man behind "The Parental Revenge Center of Western America," the place where Butters and Stan go to seek revenge on their parents. As it turns out, Cartman's only plan involves smearing poo all over the parents' homes. Karl Rove is, likewise, known for his smear tactics, especially revenge. President Bush's nickname for Rove is "Turd Blossom." The Parental Revenge Center of America with Rove taking Cartman's place as leader.



ARMY FETH
RHETORIC CHECK

In "The Passion of The Jew," Cartman leads a neo-Christian movement. The basis for his beliefs is the movie, "The Passion of The Christ," which he has seen 34 times. Cartman starts a "Mel Gibson 'The Passion' Fan Club", and recruits evangelical Christians to join his mission. It was Karl Rove's strategy to target evangelicals during the 2004 election. The Christians Cartman gathered simply wanted to celebrate their rebirth, while Cartman ultimately wanted them all to go see "The Passion of The Christ" again. Karl Rove wanted deeply religious citizens to vote for George W. Bush. Both Rove and Cartman exploit people's genuine religious beliefs in order to further their own self-serving causes.

Revenge by Rove and Cartman is also often grossly disproportionate to the harm they endure. An episode rated by viewers as one of Cartman's greatest moments was "Scott Tenorman Must Die." In this episode, Cartman is fooled and humiliated several times by Scott Tenorman. Each time, it is because Cartman has done something stupid and has been caught or called out on it. In the end, Cartman devises a successful plan ending with tricking Tenorman into eating his own dead parents, then getting his heroes (Radiohead) to laugh at him when he finally breaks down. The plan is brilliant, well thought out and completely ruthless.

Outing Valerie Plame as a CIA agent is an equally disproportionate revenge. Plame's husband, Joseph Wilson, traveled to Africa and wrote an essay about the absence of "yellowcake" uranium. His article accused the Bush administration of "exaggerating the Iraqi threat." Soon, Robert Novak leaked the fact that Plame was a CIA agent. This may be treason. By leaking the information, Rove endangered the safety of Plame, Wilson, and their families. He also ruined the career of a woman whose job was to track weapons of mass destruction. Rove's plan was equally well-planned, evil and brilliant.

Both Cartman and Rove do not directly execute revenge, but rather manipulate others to do their dirty business. Rove used journalists to do something he knew was illegal. He counted on them to protect him if they got in trouble, because good journalists are supposed to ensure the confidentiality of their anonymous sources. And if they do squeal to avoid jail, like Novak, then they appear cowardly. If they don't squeal even with permission, like Judith Miller, they appear overly-loyal and biased. Either way, the institution of journalism is tarnished by this. Branding the media as untrustworthy is a major underlying theme in Rove's quest to control America. If Rove is indicted and convicted though, he is almost certainly assured a pardon by President Bush.

Much as they are similar, we have to remember that Cartman is not real and Rove is. Most of the time, Cartman ends up getting what is coming to him by the end of the episode. Let's hope Rove gets what is coming to him at the end of this two-year drama.

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■ Guest commentary

We need a Democratic Party, not just an Anti-Bush Party

Six weeks after Katrina, rescuers are still reporting no signs of the Democratic Party. Even back in Washington, where mobs of rich, white Republicans are amassing atop the Capitol building frantically awaiting Coast Guard airlifts out of a city awash in a flood of cronyism, corruption and incompetence, Democrats are nowhere to be found.

Recent post-Katrina and post-indictment polls find Republican approval ratings reaching new lows. Surprisingly, Democratic approval ratings are tanking as well. Simply standing by as the other guy falls down is no way to appear taller.

The Democratic Party has spent the last almost five years doing little more than aiming cannon fire at the Republican armada, albeit justifiably. But as those once unsinkable Republicans finally take on water, Democrats, for years having offered no big ideas of their own to set them apart and keep them afloat, are sinking right alongside.

Political parties win elections by winning the battle of ideas. They win by offering a vision, even if that vision is sadly little more than one of safety and security. They don't win

control solely because their rivals seem to be losing it. They don't win by being the lesser of two evils. History shows that when faced with a choice between evils, voters will always choose the evil they know.

Democrats must move beyond being the anti-Bush, anti-Republican party. If that were all it took to win elections, John Kerry would be in the White House, and Democrats would be in control of the Senate.

However justified, the Democratic Party's anger-driven, single-minded focus on the person of George Bush, rather than his palpably unjust policies, has been their undoing. An anti-Bush platform cannot hold the weight of all the pressing national needs deserving of center stage. An anti-Bush platform only serves to confirm the negative nature of politics, and harden the assumptions of powerlessness many feel to change what is.

An anti-Bush platform presumes the president as the cause of all our problems rather than representative of them. Democrats must wake up to the fact that George Bush is just a man, and as certain as no man is an island, no man is either a nation.

Democrats must let go of the fallacy that winning the 2006 and 2008 elections will simply be a matter of doing a better job mobilizing their base. Democrats must instead learn to mobilize and persuade, rather than simply mobilizing the persuaded. They must face up to the fact that there is no great, untapped reserve of liberal voters out there. The supply has passed its peak, and Democrats must explore for other sources of energy.

To have any chance of capitalizing on the Republican Party's self-inflicted wounds, Democrats must lay out a positive agenda beyond just kicking the Republicans while they're down. Voters, especially the large swath of voters in the moderate middle, are waiting to hear from Democrats about positive, visionary ideas that address multiple problems simultaneously while strengthening progressive and American values. Simply continuing to be the anti-Bush Party will only sink the hapless Democratic Party further into the minority.

Todd Huffman is a pediatrician, writer and a registered Democrat living in Eugene.

■ Editorial

Prisoner's abortion is protected by Constitution

Abortion has long been a hot-button issue for the U.S. Supreme Court, and the topic has garnered attention lately during the process of filling vacancies on the court. But here's a new take on the issue: Does a woman's right to abortion extend to prison inmates?

The court this week determined that one woman serving a four-year jail sentence for a parole violation can have an abortion while imprisoned.

Missouri officials originally denied the woman's abortion request, arguing that state citizens should not be required to fund an inmate's abortion. A 1986 Missouri law makes it illegal to use public funds, employees or facilities for encouraging a woman to have an abortion not necessary to save her life.

The Missouri woman, referred to by the court as Jane Roe, sued the state after it denied her requests for an abortion, and U.S. District Judge Dean Whipple ruled that the Supreme Court has specified women have a constitutional right to abortion, according to news reports. He ordered the state to transport her to St. Louis to have an abortion.

We agree with the ruling in this case on several grounds.

Regardless of her position as an incarcerated citizen, Roe remains a citizen of the United States. Roe v. Wade made it explicitly clear that a woman's body is her own domain under privacy rights granted by the 14th Amendment. Later, in Planned Parenthood v. Casey, it ruled that the right to an abortion is a "liberty" protected by the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment.

But how does Due Process apply to prisoners? It may seem that Roe gave up some of her rights by violating the law. Prisoners generally give up many rights to privacy. They can be searched, and they can only converse with outside people at certain times. Yet as mandated by the eight amendment, prisoners cannot be treated in cruel and unusual ways; the court has interpreted this to grant prisoners with rights to many types of medical treatment.

Moreover, in Turner v. Safley, the court decided that "when a prison regulation impinges on inmates' constitutional rights, the regulation is valid if it is reasonably related to legitimate penological interests."

Preventing Roe from getting an abortion is clearly not based on a rationale that is content-neutral and aimed to achieve efficient and safe prison operation. Thus Roe's constitutional right to have an abortion should stand.

It is clear that Roe was denied an abortion because of the personal or philosophical values held by Missouri officials. However, constitution law should always trump moral (read: religious) ideals of whatever government is currently in power.

As Supreme Court nominee Harriet Miers moves closer to a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, the constitutionality of abortions may become a key question. Should it prove true that Miers is, as some avidly claim, a sharply religious person with strong emotions against Roe v. Wade, the Senate should carefully consider what role she would play in any future abortion-related rulings.

We applaud the court for not reviewing this obvious case, and we hope it will retain the same logic should Miers be added to its ranks.

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