

WE MUST RESTORE OUR HISTORY

BY PAT LAVIS

The other day while listening to the news and talk of the war on Iraq as well as the peace marches that have taken place, I wondered what it would be like if I could journey back to the 1770s and 1780s in Philadelphia.

I walked into a room and our founding fathers were busy drafting the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States of America and the vital Bill of Rights to assure that our nation's populace would not live in anarchy like they had experienced. The people had suffered without free speech, their homes had been entered by British soldiers and ransacked without warrants, homeowners arrested and held without bail, without charges filed, without lawyers.

These crucial civil liberties were felt to be so fundamentally essential they were willing to sign a Declaration of Independence, which was tantamount to death if ever captured by the British. And those founding ancestors who were caught did die as well as many families at the hands of the English. But the Revolution was successful and we did establish a Constitutional form of government with the Bill of Rights.

If I walked into the room to meet the nation's founders I would find Franklin, Jefferson, Adams and Washington with tear filled eyes that our own contemporary Congress had adopted oppressive laws we call a patriot act, which with its companion homeland security, has amputated valuable freedoms from the Bill of Rights.

I saw these men were so distraught that the American people of the early 21st century were not speaking out for our government to immediately restore those rights for all persons living in the United States that were so preciously purchased in blood at Concord and Valley Forge. The sacrifices to create this nation were made to ensure that no government would ever again attempt to eradicate our inalienable freedoms which are the cornerstone that makes this land America.

Leaving our founders to return to the 21st century, I stopped at Gettysburg. My lord! President Lincoln with his head bowed to his chest weeping. Walking up close to him I could barely hear his soft voice saying, "What has happened to this nation that was conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that *all* are created equal? Did the brave young boys die in vain?" At first I thought he was weeping about the Civil War's enormous losses for union and the abolition of slavery, but his next words were for me and my generation: "I pray our elected representatives will abolish this interminable USA Patriot Act without delay and reestablish the Bill of Rights."

What have we done to our beloved safeguard against anarchy in allowing hastily Congressional action to devastate and remove the life blood of the heart of freedom? It is time to bring back that flow and demand our government officials at all levels act to repeal all provisions conflicting with the Bill of Rights. To support resolutions opposing the Patriot and Homeland Security laws that remove Constitutional guarantees. And support the resolutions at city, county, state and federal levels.

We must let it be known that there must be changes restoring the Constitution to the way it was written to guarantee that this nation is a free nation for all persons who live in it.

The two acts invade the privacy of us all by requiring that librarians report on citizens to the FBI on what books they are checking out and never be allowed to tell these people they are being investigated. Our bookshops are required to disclose who is purchasing what book. Federal agents keep track of us when we buy an airline ticket or make a credit card purchase. Enough! Yes, enough restrictions on civil liberties.

Act now to tell your congressman or woman that citizens are speaking out for the restoration of liberty and they will not be silent until liberty and the Bill of Rights are back.

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JEAN-FRANCOIS ALAUX

FREEDOM IS NOT ONLY A STATE OF BEING, IT'S PEACE OF MIND & HEART

BY SARA ALSBURY

Freedom is not only a physical state or an act, but also a state of mind. One has to follow the heart to freedom. A person can't be free unless they live through their own thoughts. This applies on many aspects and levels of life, including learning, how to dress, what to like, and who to be friends with.

Just because someone is free to live does not mean they are free to express what they think without being their own person. For instance, although some developing countries call themselves democracies, many "voters" are intimidated into voting for certain candidates. This includes a country of the Middle East that is the topic of many debates these days, Iraq. Iraq is a dictatorship, and the choice for voting is Saddam Hussein: that's with a *yes* or a *no*. If citizens do not vote *yes*, they are subject to being shot; most people are just scared out of their wits and vote *yes* anyway. That is obviously wrong and obviously not real freedom.

Freedom is something you have to psychologically gain; just because slavery has been abolished does not mean that African-Americans are not still mistreated in some parts of the United States. In the 1860s, after the Civil War ended, the 14th Amendment was passed saying that all men of 21 years and of any race except Indian could vote, but the Ku Klux Klan was a big group in the United States, the Mississippi Black Codes and Jim Crow laws also existed: they were laws which intimidated and imprisoned the "freed" slaves, stripping them of voicing their own opinions and views that affected how they voted. So, just because someone is physically free, they still have to be mentally free, free to make their own decisions and choices.

Reading a magazine that is in style and that shows different pictures of what "everyone else will be wearing" can

affect how a person makes their own decisions on what *their* style should be. It is hard to think, when you see someone wearing something that is the same as many other people, that they are choosing that style by their own original personality; there is a lack of originality in this world, something that the world desperately needs is people who *do their own thing*. To be original is to be free; doing something "everyone else is doing it," is not originality — this is because the action is not done by one's own thoughts and feelings.

In school a certain method of teaching may cause a student to have problems with learning, or if a teacher uses personal opinion in class it may cause students to have slanted, unbalanced information. For example, in some small schools in the Deep South it is still taught that the Confederates should have won the Civil War and that slavery shouldn't have been abolished. Many thoughts such as that are passed down in families that fought in the Civil War for the Confederacy. To this day the South still hates William Tecumseh Sherman of the Union for his "March to the Sea" that destroyed many cities in Georgia.

Teens today are becoming themselves more and more. As you look around the population of the Junior and Senior classes of Astoria High School, more than 60% of students dress how *they* want to dress, or are friends with people *they* want to be friends with. There are no longer as many social barriers deciding who can hang out with whom, just by judging class based on money, brains or beauty.

Just because a "cool" person says something is cool, should not mean that everyone else thinks that particular thing should be deemed "cool" or "in style." The common cliché comes to mind, "If everyone jumped off a bridge, would you?" Obviously, that is a little unrealistic, but true in many cases today. Take the 1980s group the Rajneeshes. Many people joined the so-called cult-like group, alienating themselves from the outside world and trying to take over nearby cities. The Rajneeshes poisoned customers at a few restaurants in a nearby town called The Dalles, Oregon, to illegally influence an election in their favor. Many people just went along for the ride because their friends were doing it, a true example of "jumping off the bridge."

Although a United States citizen can say that they are free, this does not mean they would be free to just do whatever; there are systems and laws in this country that are necessary to make the government run the way it is intended. The people run this government and the voices of the citizens are heard.

Overall, people have to follow their hearts and listen to their gut instincts. It may sound like a cliché, but it's true. Go out into this big world and express yourself; be free, vote

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MILLENNIUM HOPES TURNED TO DUST

By LACEY HOYER

We all had high hopes for this new century and millennium. When I stood on top of the Astoria Column hill, counting down the seconds until the year 2000 three years ago, I could envision a whole new world.

I looked out over Astoria and could see the ocean, dark in the distance, and I had no fears at all for this small globe we all live on. That was before terrorism struck our country and before George W. Bush was President.

Less than a year later when it became certain George W. was to become our President, I was positive our country and the rest of the world were heading into murky waters. Thoughts of war rang in my head as I looked at his smiling face, and I knew this man would stir us away from the peace that had reigned through most of my life and right back into the fray that his father started. And look at us now — I was right!

The President rushed almost immediately into war. The events of 9/11 are tragic and horrific, and I think we all want the ones responsible for that day to be apprehended and justice to be served on them. Unfortunately, our military is performing what is known as "Total War", which means that we are striking out against Afghanistan's whole society. America is not just punishing those terrorists responsible for the deaths of 9/11. They are punishing all Afghani citizens, young and old, guilty or innocent.

This murder of humans is still going on. It has been more than a year now and every day our military slaughters more. President Bush will also declare war on Iraq because of lust for oil and rumors. We have all sat in front of our televisions or scanned newspaper articles with cold eyes, learning of United Nations' disapproval of this war, watching weapons inspectors find nothing and then being accused of falsifying information, and listening to the President try and slither his way into another war.

War with Iraq will not only be (so far) uncalled for, but it could very well unleash a demon. Hatred within our world has skyrocketed during the past few years. Our President, ethnocen-

tric as he is, keeps pushing our nation further into the grave that he keeps digging. He is digging deeper with each new attack on innocent civilians in Afghanistan, digging further down with each bullied attempt to gain allies for a preemptive attack against Iraq and hollowing out this grave with each refusal to solve this problem in any way but war.

The demon that will rise and place us in that grave is anti-Americanism. If we keep making enemies, someday they will rise up against us and place each of us neatly into the earth. Someone might declare a "Total War" on us, and then we will all be targets of hatred. Will our children know peace? Will they know how to love despite racial, cultural and ideological differences? Not if we keep going to war. Not if we keep making enemies.

I met a man named Leonard on a train trip last Christmas, and he confided to me that he just wanted to "blow all Afghan people up." I wonder, now that President Bush is turning his evil eye upon Iraq, if Leonard would like to blow all Iraqi people up as well? Thanks to clever propaganda many American citizens tend to think this way. America is the great shining liberator, saving the world from terrorists and weapons of mass destruction.

At one point, propaganda likened Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein to Adolf Hitler, and this war we fought to the one we fought gallantly in the 1940s. Although that is incorrect, I could think of another likeness to World War 2. It is us, the American people — and we are like the German citizens during the rise of Hitler. Some of us can see something bad happening, and some cannot. But those who can see are powerless to stop the man who will ultimately ruin their nation.

If America is still around in another millennium, I hope that the new one can turn out the way I had hoped this one would. I hope that there is peace and that all children could learn what love is, and that all life is valued — not just American life.

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