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College Voice Vol. 96 No. 10

Connecticut College

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Recommended Citation

Connecticut College, "College Voice Vol. 96 No. 10" (2013). *2012-2013*. 9.
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Two Best Picture Nominees, One Common Stereotype

CONOR MCCORMICK-CAVANAGH
CONTRIBUTOR

Argo and *Zero Dark Thirty* are two of the most thrilling movies of the last decade. Directors Ben Affleck and Kathryn Bigelow have both made films worthy of the hype they have received. At the same time, neither film is without its flaws. *Argo* features a mundane performance from Ben Affleck as the leading role. Throughout the film, Affleck lacks panache and seems to have forced himself into a role for which he was not destined. In *Zero Dark Thirty*, Kathryn Bigelow created two movies: one depicting the intelligence hunt for Bin Laden, the other depicting the raid on Bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad. The two plots are separated without the necessary threads to make the film present itself seamlessly. More importantly though, there is a significant flaw in both *Zero Dark* and *Argo*: both movies depict Muslims and Arabs from an extremely narrow point of view.

In *Argo*, Iranian people are portrayed as vehemently anti-American and irrationally violent toward the West. Of course, this depiction is accurate to a certain extent: some Iranians did and still do view America and the West in a negative light; however, to only show this side of the history does not do them true justice. The CIA ousted a democratically elected leader and inserted the pro-Western Shah. To put it in perspective, imagine if the Iranian intelligence agency, MOIS, initiated a coup and effectively ousted President Obama, and then inserted a pro-Iranian president to rescind the economic sanctions against Iran. This is essentially what happened to the country of Iran. *Argo* only included this detail as a credit in the beginning, which was quickly forgotten by most audience members once the action commenced.

In terms of pure Hollywood standards, this movie is completely acceptable. Ben Affleck created a patriotic film, depicting good (America) against bad (Iran); but one also has to consider the specific, contemporary political ramifications. Presently, anti-Iranian sentiment is as high as it was during the hostage crisis. Many right-wing politicians have become extremely hawkish in their policies towards Iran and much of the Western world has started to view Iran as an evil nation, since Bush famously included Iran in his Axis of Evil speech. *Argo* serves as an effective propaganda tool and only will further increase anti-Iranian sentiment. This increase in disapproval for Iran as a whole will only continue to inhibit U.S. efforts to reach out to Iran and to use diplomacy as an effective tool.

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How the Administration Stole Fishbowl



DAVE SHANFIELD

BEN SCHACHTEL
STAFF WRITER

Since the outset of the spring 2013 semester a few weeks ago, certain buzzwords have floated throughout the campus vernacular. The Super Bowl, class schedules, juniors returning from abroad and the return of the NHL are four that have permeated my own senior spring consciousness. Yet one word that rolled boldly off the tongues of nearly every student on campus last semester has been conspicuously absent since January 21: Fishbowl. The cancellation of this pseudo-sacred yet beleaguered bacchanalia was, along with the meteoric women's volleyball season, the headlining story of the fall semester. Students rallied around a perceived injustice handed to them by a seemingly distant and apathetic administration, and demonstrated a collective will to maintain shared governance and transparency within admin-student relations.

So what actually happened? What was accomplished? Was Fishbowl restored, in all its revealing glory? To clear the air, some Fishbowl facts, and my take on each:

The 2012 Fishbowl iteration is incompatible with the student safety standards of Connecticut College.

At the beginning of the first SGA meeting held to air student grievances regarding the cancellation of Fishbowl, Director of Campus Safety Stuart Smith made the unbiased and unequivocal statement that nudity and alcohol make for a recipe for disaster. Based on last year's Fishbowl, I would not dispute this claim. Though no concrete facts

have yet been made available, hearsay lists a near class-action lawsuit, an intoxicated student reaching for a safety officer's weapon, students vomiting on themselves and numerous sexual assault violations among the indiscretions of Fishbowl 2012.

In an effort to reform what was becoming an increasingly unsustainable tradition, College administrators, in collaboration with students, made the decision before last year's event to incorporate three drink tickets in order to curb binge drinking at the event.

To say that this plan backfired is an understatement. Though the College does have a responsibility to limit the amount of alcohol it provides to students due to safety concerns, I believe it was irresponsible on behalf of the administration to not foresee the outcome of this policy, and irresponsible on behalf of the senior class to take this as an invitation to get completely inebriated before arriving at the event. Though it was a collaborative solution, it should now be clear that enacting austere limits on the drinking habits of 21- to 23-year-old college students is significantly less effective than providing these same students with a safe environment in which to consume what they feel is healthy. Perhaps this means limiting hard alcohol, and offering only beer and wine at the event. There is no doubt in my mind that the relatively small group of students who effectively ruined Fishbowl in 2012 was "pregaming" with copious amounts of hard alcohol. Reforming the three drink ticket policy should be a focus of this spring semester between students and administrators.

In response to student outcry, Dean Denard offered to make available the non-confidential information leading to the cancellation of Fishbowl.

When a group of students first met following reception of the email from Dean Denard cancelling Fishbowl, the primary grievance that we planned to bring before the Dean and before SGA was that no concrete reasons had been given as to why the event was cancelled. We felt that Fishbowl's importance to the senior class necessitated factual delineation of reasons why Fishbowl could not be continued. In the subsequent SGA meeting, the Dean graciously received our grievance, and promised to create a report detailing the factors leading to Fishbowl's cancellation. To my knowledge, this report does not yet exist. During the second SGA meeting, the Dean apologized for not yet having the report available, and mentioned that it would be ready shortly. If anyone has gained access to this report, please share it with the *College Voice*.

Dean Denard finally admitted an ounce of wrongdoing in the process of evaluating and cancelling Fishbowl.

It became a heated point of contention in the two SGA meetings addressing the cancellation of Fishbowl that Dean Denard did not feel as though she had done any wrong throughout the process of evaluating and cancelling Fishbowl. Although President Higdon mentioned at the outset of the second SGA meeting that the decision had been made by "senior administrators" and that Dean Denard was simply the bearer of bad news, the responsibility to explain how the de-

cision was made to the student body fell squarely on her shoulders as she was the only senior administrator available at both of the SGA meetings.

Listed close behind our student group's initial grievance that we were given no concrete reasons behind the cancellation, was the issue that no students, including SGA president Taylor Gould and the senior class council, were involved in the process of making the decision. Connecticut College's administration and student government operate within a framework of shared governance, in which students, faculty and administration collaborate to make decisions that affect the future of the College. I believe I speak for others when I say that I was appalled at the way in which student leaders and eventually the student body was handed down the outcome of the Fishbowl decision.

Dean Denard initially justified this method of decree with a student safety argument, which is somewhat legitimate. Though students are involved with most decisions at the College, the administration has a responsibility to the health and safety of the student body that extends beyond its responsibility to involve students in decisions. That being said, the absence of students in the meetings examining Fishbowl was, in the eyes of the student body, an affront against our ability to take care of ourselves and to participate in major college decisions that directly affect us. During the discourse of the SGA meetings, it became clear that if students had been presented with the (still unavailable) information that the senior administrators saw, they would have agreed that the event needed to be altered, if

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Editorial

On Shared Governance and Student Rights

My senior year has so far been characterized by feelings of being “over” the whole college thing, and intense nostalgia for a social scene that has ebbed ever since freshman year. I think to a certain extent every member of the class of 2013 feels this way, which is perhaps why we reacted so violently last semester to the cancellation of Fishbowl.

The uproar affectionately named “Fishbowlgate” caused a major controversy over the College’s core tenet of shared governance. The cancellation of Fishbowl, frankly, wasn’t surprising. For a new administrator unfamiliar with our school’s traditions, a naked, drunken run across campus most likely appeared disgusting, barbaric and most importantly, dangerous. Fishbowl was a lawsuit waiting to happen, and the College seized the opportunity to put in motion a plan to abolish the event – a plan that, in all honesty, has likely been in the works for years. The impetus and authority to permit this change were just not available until the arrival of Dean Denard.

The blatant disregard for student input in this particular decision, however, was astonishing. It made me question the value of shared governance entirely – is it just another flashy slogan for admissions propaganda? How much do students actually influence decisions and to what extent is mutual respect functioning between students and administrators? Ideally, shared governance relies on mutual respect, which stems from not only communication, but also consultation.

The idea of respect is central to Connecticut College’s Honor Code. In a recent email conversation with Dean Sarah Cardwell, she told me that following matriculation, students are expected to behave with “integrity, civility and respect.” Administrators, however, don’t sign the Honor Code meaning that tech-

nically, they are not bound to uphold the three values stated above. This was a common critique brought up by students and alumni in assessing whether or not Dean Denard had the right to cancel Fishbowl. The bottom line is: yes, as an administrator, of course she has the right to overrule shared governance at any time. However, because we as an institution regard the tenet of shared governance so highly, it seems only fitting that students and administrators alike should be held accountable to the same school laws and values.

Furthermore, we are not simply governed by the Honor Code; the Honor Code actually replaces certain rights that we would be afforded if we attended a public institution. Because Connecticut College is private, the rights of students are liable to limitations or alterations.

Consider the following case in the context of that information: a case that occurred around the same time as the Fishbowl cancellation, and invokes some of the same concerns about mutual respect and shared governance.

Most members of the community are aware of rumors that the Connecticut College Swim Team has been undergoing investigation for hazing charges. An incident related to the investigation that occurred in early December is, by now, also fairly common knowledge. After a Title IX investigation cleared the team of hazing charges in October, the team was, without notice, summoned to a room in Blaustein for questioning. The team members were not informed of what they were being accused nor of any rights that they were afforded; they were unable to speak to each other while waiting for individual interrogations, stripped of all electronics, escorted to and from the bathroom and advised that the Honor Code prohibited them from speaking to

their parents or coach about the night’s events. The interviews were recorded without student consent. Some team members were held for over ten hours.

Clearly, outside the Connecticut College bubble, this type of practice would have been considered an infringement on basic legal rights (the 6th amendment, anyone?). At a private institution, however, students relinquish certain rights especially as they relate to disciplinary proceedings. This fact is by no means kept secret; on page 16 of the Student Handbook the College admits that: “[The Honor Code, Student Code of Conduct, Student Bill of Rights, and Adjudication Procedures] are not based on, nor are they intended to, mirror the rights or procedures in civil or criminal court proceedings.”

Normally, this system benefits Connecticut College students because the College generally punishes offenses on a smaller scale than would the New London police (especially in relation to alcohol offenses). However, as the Honor Code governs disciplinary situations for students, it is again troubling that the administration doesn’t sign a similar pledge to govern its own actions when overseeing disciplinary cases. Of course no administration pledge could eradicate the inherent power dynamic between students and administrators. But shared governance can hardly be shared if both parties are legally bound on unequal footing. If we assume that other instances like the swim team interrogation have occurred in the past, and that unilateral administrative decisions, like the cancellation of Fishbowl, may occur again in the future, it is time to re-evaluate the rights that we are afforded and the reciprocal nature of those rights.

-Meredith

THE COLLEGE VOICE

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Letters to the Editor

(Your opinion goes here).

As always, we welcome letters to the editor. If you’re interested in writing a letter, please read below.

Letters to the Editor:

Any and all members of the Connecticut College community (including students, faculty and staff) are encouraged to submit articles, letters to the editor, opinion pieces, photographs, cartoons, etc.

All submissions will be given equal consideration.

In particular, letters to the editor are accepted from any member of the college community on a first-come, first-served basis until noon on the Saturday prior to publication. They should run approximately 300 words in length, but may be no longer than 400 words.

All submitted letters must be attributed to an author and include contact information.

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The editor-in-chief must contact all authors prior to publication to verify that he/she was indeed the author of the letter.

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On the Administration and the LGBTQ Community

My name is Sarah Kosofsky. I am a graduate of the class of 2012 at Conn, and I have to say, I’m happy I graduated when I did. My friends at Conn who have not yet graduated often inform me of what is happening back at the college, and I have to say, they are not the only ones unhappy with the administration.

This isn’t about Fishbowl, although it does have to do with the disregard of Conn’s shared governance. This is about something that happened that may or may not reach the attention of all the students on campus, because it only affects a select few. It affects people like me: those in the LGBTQ community.

Professor Jen Manion, the director of the LGBTQ Center, is leaving in the spring for sabbatical. Professor Manion is an amazing asset to the community, as she is oftentimes students’ first introduction into the LGBTQ community and is always a beacon of support for those that need it. I do not doubt for a second that Professor Manion has heard the personal, sometimes heart-wrenching stories of *hundreds* of LGBTQ students, like myself.

What stuns me is that Dean Denard has assigned a replacement director in Jen Manion’s place without consulting Pro-

fessor Manion herself. Rather than speak with the one person on the campus who truly knows the needs and the expectations of the students in the LGBTQ community, Dean Denard has gone ahead and picked someone who none of the students are familiar with, at least not on a personal level. And if Denard goes ahead and claims that she spoke with student leaders in the LGBTQ community, I can assure you that she hasn’t. I’m friends with quite a few, and they feel like they’ve been undercut.

One might think, as the Dean of the College, that Dean Denard might spend a decent amount of time trying to do her best to work with a minority group on campus who much of the time feel as if they have the odds stacked against them. Instead, Denard has alienated a group already at risk for alienation, disrespecting the LGBTQ community and a leader they hold dear.

If it weren’t for the LGBTQ center and Jen Manion’s support of us, I wouldn’t be writing this as an out lesbian. I wouldn’t be writing this at all, because I’d still be scared of what being gay means. I’d still be closeted to my friends and family, and I’d be miserable. The Center and its leadership are important, and should be given much more credit than the pathetic amount

of attention Denard has given them.

At best, Denard has shown she’s lazy, at worst, she’s shown a callous attitude towards the LGBTQ community. For an administrator at Conn, either is shameful.

To the students:

Alumni like myself hear you. This is unacceptable. Keep demanding better.

To the administration:

Your students are angry and unhappy with your actions. Your alumni are angry and unhappy with your actions. It wasn’t this way a year ago.

And to Dean Denard:

As a result of your actions in the first semester of this school year, I have never in my life seen more anger directed at an administrator. This last act of yours has me reeling from incredulity. You have made yourself a queen in a place that had no throne. I know that I, and many others at Conn, feel that your actions don’t represent or match the college’s spirit and mentality. Perhaps it is time to truly engage in the tradition of shared governance and listen to what students are saying; otherwise, it might just be that Conn isn’t the right fit for you.

-Sarah Kosofsky Class of 2012

A Response to “Food Sustainability”

In the November 12 article, “Dining Services Moves Towards Concrete Food Sustainability Change”, Rolfe initiated an important conversation about sustainability. What is never stressed enough is that sustainability is a spectrum of options. You don’t need to do everything, but you must do something. One exercise that can help is to reflect on your personal food ideology, or foodology. Do you eat meat? What kinds and how often? How much does your distance from production matter to you? Do you have any other dietary restrictions? Consider the following foodologies as starting points:

Does supporting your local economy make your mouth water? Then you’re probably a Localvore! A great deal of the chicken in dining halls is sourced regionally as are fruit and vegetables from regional, small-scale producers. You can also find fresh produce right from the Sprout! Garden. Similarly, much of the seafood served comes right from Stonington Fisheries. Coffee Grounds and Blue Camel Café purchase many of their ingredients and goods from only local, independent businesses.

Is meat not your thing? Then a plant-based diet is probably for you! Freeman Dining Hall is 100% vegetarian with

vegan options and similar choices can be found regularly in the other dining halls. Looking for a snack? While all cafés typically have vegetarian options available, Coffee Grounds serves only vegetarian and vegan baked goods!

Even the Carnivores group can still be sustainable! The red meats and most poultry in the dining halls unfortunately cannot be considered sustainable, and therefore I urge you to avoid these choices and get vocal about what food options are important to you. Still craving beef? Have a group of friends pitch in for some local or organic burgers and hot dogs and fire up the grill! There are several around campus that can be reserved through ConnQuest. Also, Jazzman’s Café at Ruane’s Den serves 100% certified organic meats!

Once your meal is over, then what? Conn students proudly run an on-campus composting program that creates soil for the Sprout! Garden. Food waste from Harris is donated to the piggery at Secchiaroli Farm in Waterford. If we all make the effort when we can, our society as a whole will move closer towards a sustainable design.

-Molly Conlin Class of 2013

News & Features

FEBRUARY 4, 2013

THE COLLEGE VOICE

Ernie Hewett: Connecticut Man of the People

FRED MCNULTY
WEB CONTENT EDITOR

Connecticut College might seem like an insular community at times, but it still rests within Connecticut's thirty-ninth assembly district, which represents half of the city of New London in the Connecticut state legislature. The elected official who calls the citizens of the thirty-ninth district his constituents is Representative Ernest Hewett, informally known as Ernie. Ernie Hewett graciously agreed to conduct a phone interview with the *Voice* in early December about his life, his views on legislating and his role as an elected official.

Ernie Hewett says he did not originally intend to become a politician. Born in North Carolina, Hewett moved to New London to work as a welder at the General Dynamics Electric Boat factory in Groton. After twenty years of work there, he was laid off. According to Hewett, on the same exact date four years later, he was elected to his first position in government: mayor of the city of New London. "I don't know how it happened; I really don't! All I know is when the challenge came along, I accepted [it] – and the rest is history." Prior to this, Hewett served on the city council for six years.

Hewett continued his role as mayor of New London for eight years before losing reelection by only fifty-four votes – an incredibly tight margin. "I was done with politics and there was no problem ... I was okay not being an elected official," he recalls. Hewett said that he had no intention whatsoever of running again, and was content with the outcome.

After a one-year hiatus from politics, Hewett saw an opportunity to run for state representative in the Connecticut legislature. "I said, 'You know what – what the heck? Might as well try it.'" Hewett did not dwell on the circumstances of his past – his focus seems to be oriented toward the future.

Representative Hewett said that his main inspiration lies in the Connecticut legislature's ability to help those in need. He noted that he likes the ability of his constituents to contact him with problems. Hewett used the example of one woman whose "son was incarcerated and was moved 150 miles away from the city of New London, and just



Representative Ernie Hewett

PHOTO FROM WEB

wanted to get him back closer so they could actually visit in prison." He also enjoys his ability to be a role model with the capacity to encourage youth away from a life of crime.

Hewett serves on the Judiciary Committee in the Connecticut legislature. When I asked him what issues were most important to him, he did not hesitate to mention those surrounding criminal justice. "One of the biggest mistakes that any [...] young person can make today is doing something that would give them a felony on their record. To me, the saddest thing is that once they get that felony, it takes forever to get it off," he noted solemnly. "You can go to jail and get a Ph.D. if you want; if you're not able to come out and get a job then you'll likely end up going back to prison."

One of Hewett's goals is to work toward a future where people who have been incarcerated have a greater chance of succeeding in society after they have been released from prison.

According to Hewett, his chief legislative accomplishment was the passage of a controversial DNA collection bill. This would enable police to collect DNA from people on serious felony arrests. Hewett noted his disappointment that the bill had not passed in the manner that he had originally intended. The Hartford Courant's Capitol Watch blog described the new bill by stating that a person would have needed to be convicted of one crime and then arrested for a second before their DNA would be collected. Hewett was, however, optimistic that this legislation could be expanded upon in up-

coming legislative sessions.

Regardless of how personally important to Representative Hewett this bill may have been, he made sure in the interview to elaborate on his continued efforts to bring more municipal aid to New London. "If [the city] had to collect all the money from taxes to balance their budget," he began, "there wouldn't be enough, mostly because there are not enough homeowners needed to pay the taxes to balance the budget." Despite tough economic times both nationally and within the state of Connecticut, Hewett tells me that this has been one of the most important continued fights that he has fought. He repeatedly stressed how critical he felt his constituents were to his job.

Representative Hewett told an anecdote from one of his re-

elections to the state legislature. "One of my opponents one year got a giggle out of me hanging around the donut shop for a lot of time in New London," he fondly recalled, "and I said, 'You know, there's a reason I hang at the donut shop: [...] that's where the people are.'" Hewett does not believe that citizens of New London should only see him during his campaigns. Half-jokingly, he remarked, "I don't make promises, but I do promise that I will do everything I can to help [my constituents] solve their problems."

Representative Ernest Hewett's commitment to his constituents was exemplified by the entire nature of this interview. While I had originally intended to interview Hewett in person, his brother had fallen ill. Hewett had rushed to his hometown in

North Carolina to be with him. Sadly, during the trip, his brother passed away. Nevertheless, Ernie Hewett kept true to his word, allowing me to conduct the interview over the telephone.

Representative Hewett believes that legislators best help their constituents by building relationships with the people with whom they work. "Your word is all you have. If you are someone who cannot be relied on because of your word, you won't get a lot of things done in Hartford [Connecticut's capital city]," he informed me, "So it's about building relationships and about building trust amongst your colleagues." He said that this principle could be found in every aspect of government life, from the presidency all the way down to the state legislature. •

Advice on Avoiding Deadly Flu Outbreak

SAMANTHA GRAINGER
SHUBA
STAFF WRITER

Every year, Americans are bombarded with information regarding flu season. Winters are the worst; it seems like everyone is sniffing, coughing or throwing up. It seems unlikely that 2013 will be anything special. If you are one who shares this attitude, it is time to dispel any misconceptions. This is one nasty flu virus, and every person is susceptible.

There are a few different strains of flu that have been circulating this year, but according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the most active strain is H3N2. If this acronym looks familiar, it is because it is not a new kind of flu. This strain was prominent during the 2003-2004 flu season, and if anyone remembers (like I do), it was quite a nasty year. In 2013, H3N2 is back with a vengeance. Luckily for us, this time we're ready.

Well, we're as ready as we

can be. The CDC has developed a vaccine that matches ninety percent of the flu strains that are circulating right now. This is an excellent match—probably one of the best yet. Now is the time to get it if you haven't already, because it has a very good chance of providing protection that was unavailable in the 2003-2004 season.

Now for the scary statistic of the day: the flu virus kills 36,000 Americans per flu season. That is roughly 100 people per day. Statistics on the CDC website show that most fatalities are elderly people, young children or babies and people with underlying health problems that weaken the immune system (e.g. HIV/AIDS). Even with this information, the overall number of fatalities is still a frightening statistic, especially considering the widespread availability of flu vaccines.

One of the many problems with the H3N2 virus is how quickly it is spreading this season. Though it is still early in

the new year, thirty-eight out of the fifty states are at a flu trend level that is considered to be "intense," according to the CDC. This is awfully high, even for a flu season. The other problem with H3N2 is that the virus has morphed to include symptoms similar to Norovirus, one of the nastiest stomach flus I have ever seen. Symptoms include an upset stomach, high fever, body aches, and just generally feeling miserable.

So what can you do? The CDC has two easy steps for avoiding the flu this year.

The first is to get the flu shot. Conn offers free flu shots at the Health Center (\$5 if you do not have student insurance). Walgreens and CVS in New London offer them as well; they are free with insurance. Otherwise, they are around \$35. Flu shots can be scary, and there have been stories about getting the flu from the shot, but in most cases, it is more helpful than harmful. The shot really is worth getting because this year's vaccine matches the current strain so well.

The second thing the CDC suggests is that people wash their hands more frequently and avoid spreading germs. College students are going to have to work especially hard on this one. It doesn't help that simply by being in college we are exposed to more germs than exist in a kindergarten classroom. Communal bathrooms and dining areas and poor hygiene in the case of many students adds up to basically living in a human Petri dish. My advice? Carry hand sanitizer with you and wash your hands whenever you can. Though the flu is awful, pinkeye, scabies and mono are just as unpleasant, and are also pretty easy to find on campuses across the country. I think I've made my point: please wash your hands.

The flu season is in full swing, and many might think that if they haven't gotten sick yet, they won't catch it at all. However, I would caution that when it comes to the flu, it is so much easier to just get the shot rather than suffer through the symptoms. •



Gun Control Debate Beyond Realm of Insanity

COREY SCAROLA
STAFF WRITER

In another step of what can only be a ruthless quest to destroy what little legitimacy it has left, the National Rifle Association (NRA) disseminated an ad advocating armed security in schools in the aftermath of the horrible tragedy at Sandy Hook in December. It is their belief that if we had armed security guards at every school in the country, shootings like that wouldn't happen because there would be "good guys" on site to stop the shooter.

The ad explains how President Obama's kids enjoy constant security every day, including, of course, when they are at school. The folks over at the NRA then point out Obama's belief that we shouldn't have armed guards in schools (which we shouldn't). To the NRA, this is a contradiction; this is Obama saying that his kids are more important than ours, and that his deserve protection but ours don't. And that is supposed to make us all very angry.

Before I respond to all of that, I have to say this: I love reasoned debate. I think it is entertaining, intellectually stimulating and, above all else, important to the forward progression of any enlightened society. Respectful disagreement often results in a healthy compromise and a tempered response.

I say "respectful disagreement" and not just "disagreement" because in order for there to be a productive, reasonable discussion of an issue, each side must have a degree of respect for the rationale of the opposing side. However, when it comes to this particular debate, I have to say that recently I've found it decreasingly possible to respect the stance of the pro-gun side of this issue.

This is not because I am uncompromising. No, it is because the NRA's side of the debate — if we can still even refer to this as a debate — forfeited its right to be respected when it abandoned logic in favor of misguided, manipulative emotional appeals and intellectual fallacy. I cannot and will not give any weight to a faction that will say anything to rationalize a position that tacitly condones the perpetuation of violence and death. Their argument today is based on nothing but false presumptions, historical inaccuracies, unfounded paranoia and unchecked dogmatism, and should be treated as such.

The NRA's most recent ad is a farce for two reasons. One is that they have dragged President Obama's children into a debate that should be civil and courteous. His children have nothing to do with the issue, and if I were in the President's shoes I would be more than a little insulted that the



NRA would target my children and their safety in an attack on my own political beliefs. In fact, if the NRA keeps up with this argument, they may well need their guns after all. I doubt Michelle Obama will take too kindly to having her kids thrown under the bus like this.

The second reason this ad's argument is invalid is because it wrongly assumes that the condition of every child in the country is the same as that of President Obama's children. If that assumption were true, it would mean that every kid in the country was a high-profile target of country-wide hate groups, political extremists of every kind, and both foreign and domestic terrorists. Now, if that really were true, I would be willing to put armed security on the table for discussion, but it could not be farther from the truth.

We should also consider the message that our kids would receive if we posted armed security in schools.

We would essentially be saying that the acceptable solution to violence is more violence, while admitting that, as a society, we have failed to protect children and, as a result, must now treat every neighborhood like a war zone. And, in the event a shooter does try something with armed guards present, what would ensue? A firefight in a high school, or an elementary school, or a daycare, in which any number of people may be hit in the crossfire. And, really, how much better would that be? The only reason to do what executive vice president of the NRA, Wayne LaPierre, so adamantly suggests would be

if we had a real reason to believe that all of our kids are in great danger at all times, which we do not. Therefore, such a measure is both irrational and unnecessary.

Even if we did take that measure, it would be treating a symptom and not the disease itself. Ironically, the disease itself is made worse by the NRA's continual fight against any new firearms regulations. This ad is really just an attempt to defend a position that can no longer be rationally defended. Because the fact is that no one needs to own an assault rifle or a shotgun or anything more than a small calibre handgun. No more than that would be needed to defend your home. If you are a genuine, licensed hunter, that's a different story, but the average citizen should not be able to own any more than a handgun. Further, that handgun should not be allowed anywhere in public and should be used only during a real emergency. Even that, some would say, is pushing it, because according to the American Association of Pediatrics, a gun in the home is about forty-three times more likely to be used on a friend or family member than on an intruder. So when you get right down to it, guns aren't really necessary at all. But that doesn't stop gun advocates from voicing flawed and outdated arguments about why they can and should own guns.

One of those arguments is to say that the right to own a gun gives citizens the ability to protect constitutionally-guaranteed rights from governmental infringement. Well, gun enthusiasts, I hate to be the one to

burst your bubble, but if the government wanted to take your rights away, they would be able to do so. And that revolution that you like to shout about starting would amount to nothing. Our country has the best trained, best equipped and most advanced military in the world. We have snipers trained to hit a target from over a mile away, Abrams tanks, unmanned drones that can strike anywhere within minutes and much, much more. Our air force discontinued the production of the F-22 Raptor because it was so advanced it was actually unnecessary given its high price and the fact that the plane it was designed to replace, the FA-18 Superhornet, is already leaps and bounds ahead of the planes possessed by any other country in the world. You're kidding yourself if you think your semi-automatic AR-15 would be a match for that.

All this talk about patriots rising up and defending their rights against government oppression is just that: talk and bravado. It is a lofty assumption that the government would even be able to pass legislation that curbed your rights in the first place. Congress is too deadlocked to stop arguing over even the simplest issues, like allocating the resources for relief efforts to help victims of Hurricane Sandy. I think the Constitution is safe.

And even if the Constitution were liable to be altered right now, it wouldn't be the first time. It would actually be the twenty-eighth time, because it has already seen twenty-seven amendments — in other words, *changes* — to it. Supporters of the Second Amendment act like the Con-

stitution is a divine document and to change it would be the highest form of blasphemy. In reality it is meant to be changed. The founding fathers created the amendment process specifically because they knew that the Constitution wasn't perfect and might need to adapt to changing times as parts of it became obsolete. And it's not a stretch to say that the Second Amendment has become obsolete. It reads, "A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." It states a purpose, and is, in my opinion, the only amendment that actually states a purpose. Its purpose, when it was ratified, was to ensure that the newly formed United States would be able to defend itself from foreign invaders. When the Bill of Rights was ratified the United States did not have a standing army, and the people were allowed to own guns in part for their own defense, but largely because they would be called upon to act as a military in the event of a war.

Now we have a military, and we don't need civilians and their guns to fill that role anymore. And as for self-defense, I think it's safe to say that the founding fathers did not foresee the invention of semi-automatic weapons, and if they had, their opinions on the issue may well have been different. The deadliest weapon back then was the average musket, which took about a minute to reload after a single shot and was unreliable at best in terms of accuracy. It's not really the kind of weapon with which you can go on a shooting spree. The Constitution can be changed. It started out as a document that indirectly condoned slavery, and that was rectified. So why not this?

Finally, the fear that banning guns would only keep them out of the hands of law-abiding citizens while criminals, who commit most of the crimes, would still have access to them is simply untrue. Look at the statistics on gun violence in Canada and in most European countries where people, and oftentimes law enforcement as well, are not allowed to carry firearms. The gun crimes in those countries can be measured in the dozens, whereas ours can only be measured in the thousands.

So yes, President Obama and his family have protection, but so do you. While you may not have a Secret Service that follows you and yours around wherever you go (because, again, you don't need that), you do have law enforcement agencies like the police, FBI, firefighters and the military. Why do you think that they exist? To protect us, and we should let them. The President himself doesn't carry a gun; he trusts those that protect him to do their jobs. And so should we. •

Theorizing Conspiracy Theories

CONNOR CHAN
STAFF WRITER

Over the past few weeks, the Internet has been flooded with skeptical videos and conspiracy theories concerning the events that occurred last month at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut. The allegations from skeptics include charges that the news media suppressed information about the existence of multiple shooters, that a six-year-old victim is actually still alive and that crisis actors were employed by the government to play the roles of grieving family members. Initially, I reacted to this conspirator-content in the same way I did to the actual shooting: by tuning it out and trying to focus my attention on anything else. Call me insensitive, but when it comes to the brutal deaths of children and the idea of malicious foul play on the part of our government, I prefer to keep it all out of sight and out of mind.

Instinctively, I assumed that these conspirator postings would be along the lines of those associated with such

theories as 9/11 being an inside job, Paul McCartney being dead or the moon landing being staged. However, upon caving and actually watching some of the content, I found that it wasn't all nearly as deranged as I had expected. In fact, the sources for the content of these videos and theories almost all derive from the same news footage that anyone else was able to watch during and after the shooting. So where does all the doubt come from?

Simply enough, the 24-hour news media, in all its overeager glory, was responsible not only for (eventually) getting the facts about Sandy Hook straightened out, but also for initially providing its viewers with unbelievable amounts of incorrect and misleading information. The missteps were significant: the shooter was falsely identified at first, the shooter's mother was incorrectly reported to have had ties with the elementary school and there were several reports that claimed there were one or two other shooters involved. However, what else is to be expected when a microphone is shoved into the face of every adult and child

who may or may not have witnessed something suspicious happening? It seems to be a ridiculous gamble to interview everything that has a pulse and hope that all the information being broadcasted will somehow be accurate.

There were plenty of holes in the Sandy Hook story when it was first being reported and those holes are what the "truthers" movement is now exploiting to get their points across. There are even allegations of victims' family members and survivors reading off scripts and conspiring to cover up information, all of which ultimately boils down to a large-scale mistrust of the news media. Though it's easy to dismiss and disprove at least some of the points raised by the Sandy Hook truthers, it's a lot more difficult to ignore the criticism of the news media that they evoke.

When something as catastrophic as the tragedy in Newtown occurs, it's instinctual not only to want answers, but to want those answers delivered immediately, which is what the major news networks are responsible for do-

ing. Journalism has thus evolved into a unique business.

Networks and publications are constantly fighting for speedy, accurate, quality coverage of big stories. But what is at stake? Is this competition completely turning Americans off from relying on the work of journalists? As we saw with Sandy Hook, speedy coverage does not equal accurate coverage and sacrificing one of those traits for the other is problematic to journalism as a business; slow reporting loses viewers and readers, and inaccurate reporting leads to an ill-informed, distrustful public.

The one thing common to every skeptical question and theory that I've seen regarding Sandy Hook is condemnation of the way in which the story was reported. For the truthers, the way in which reporters constantly updated and revised the facts of the story on the day of the shooting is a cause for suspicion. It's easy to say that news outlets simply need to be more careful in their reporting, but what consequences do big-name networks and publications actually face for publishing errone-

ous details? Though the checked facts may all eventually come out when the dust settles, the Sandy Hook truthers are proof that iteratively updating and changing the details of a story is not a harmless process. We are quickly losing trust in the media.

Although it would be easy to point the finger at websites like Facebook or Twitter for perpetuating false information and increasing the demand for instant updates, I believe that social media is only part of the problem. People should be able to trust professional journalists, whose jobs are to inform the public with verified facts. There shouldn't have to be a question of whether or not the content of a story is truthful. However, with speed becoming more and more important in the business of journalism, it looks like the struggle to reconcile fast reporting with accurate reporting will continue to lack a solution. And as long as that struggle persists, the news media will have to deal with such consequences as truthers and conspiracy theorists questioning the validity of their content. •

Opinions

THE COLLEGE VOICE

FEBRUARY 4, 2013

The Hidden World of IT in a Presidential Election Campaign



The Story of a Narwhal vs. an Orca

JAMES ROBINSON
STAFF WRITER

Following Election Day, Americans everywhere alternately breathed sighs of relief and disappointment. For the average American, the election was over. It would no longer dominate the news cycle, and people could move on with their lives—at least for another four years. But, while it soon became old news for most, it didn't for a select group of people lucky (or unfortunate) enough to work in one of the gigantic, powerful and fairly messy machines that are American political campaigns. For those people, there was still work to be done to disassemble everything and reflect on which factors had made the campaign a success or a failure. Obama's reelection was far from a landslide victory. This was an election that could have easily tipped in favor of Mitt Romney, making both campaigns' every effort even more important.

Recently, controversy has erupted concerning the fate of one such part of these campaigns: their technological property. The Obama campaign's success can be attributed in part to its vastly superior use of IT resources to leverage "big data." The term "big data" has become so popular in recent years that it has become dangerously close to being a cliché. It refers to the trend in the tech industry to use massive amounts of data relatively efficiently in ways that were previously unrealistic to implement.

Companies like Google, for instance, rely on dealing with large amounts of data and delivering it at mind-blowingly fast speeds. The type of functionality Google provides requires a large amount of infrastructure, design, programming and upkeep to create and maintain. What's so remarkable about the past election is that it's the first time that serious computing resources have been so important in getting a candidate elected. The result of elections has always been, and will always be, primarily determined by the popularity of the candidate, but the way that campaigns are helping their candidate gain that popularity has been changing radically.

The Obama campaign compiled a "dream team" of programmers hand-picked from top-tier Internet companies like Google, Facebook and Twitter and dubbed it Team Tech. The developers hired had experience in a work environment with a fast-paced tech startup feel and deploying internet-based products. Despite the team's wealth of skills, the task they faced was daunting by any standard.

They had to create a complex infrastructure at a lightning pace. According to Ars Technica, a leading tech news source, "Scott VanDenPlas, the head of the Obama technology team's DevOps group, [explained] it in a tweet:

"4Gb/s, 10k requests per second, 2,000 nodes, 3 datacenters, 180TB and 8.5 billion requests. Design, deploy, dismantle in 583 days to elect the President. #madops"

If nothing else, the Obama campaign's success has been a great testament to the versatility, skill, ingenuity and, honestly, political power of the tech community. It also points to the necessity for future campaigns to get on Silicon Valley's good side.

But things weren't always this way. In 2008, the Obama campaign "lacked an internal IT team, relying on vendors and field volunteers to pull much of the weight," according to Ars Technica. At the time, the technology plan was code-named Project Houdini. Houdini looked like a great plan, but turned out to be incapable of handling the unanticipated high traffic loads that the campaign experienced. Essentially, it crashed because it was too popular. This time around, campaign staffers like Harper Reed, the campaign's chief technology officer, were determined to build "a bigger boat," after "the 'Jaws' moment" in 2008 that was Project Houdini.

That "bigger boat" was dubbed Narwhal, and comprised of a collection of web apps and services built on Amazon's cloud computing services that were all designed to intelligently connect volunteers with voters. One of the application's many functions would analyze what the person who was being called had said in other interactions with the campaign to target marketing more accurately. In other words, the Obama campaign rented server power from the shopping giant Amazon and in so doing, saved on the relatively high initial purchase and ongoing maintenance costs for the servers and the space to house them appropriately, thereby freeing the team to deal only with the actual software coding. The team also lessened their load by using free, open-source software.

"[The team] aggressively stood on the shoulders of giants like Amazon, and used technology that was built by other people," [Reed] said. "We had a pretty good culture of using not-invented-here technologies. And we weren't scared about it."

Therein lies the root of the controversy now surrounding the Obama campaign. In the tech world, there's a high level of respect for free, open

stuff. More than in any other industry, people will routinely make something and give it away for free as open-source software. Consider how strange it would be to find a store giving away free clothes and you'll see how unique and wonderful the free, open-source movement really is. The understanding is that if you've used open-source software as part of your software (called "branching") then you should make your variant on the original software available for free too. That's what developers want the Obama campaign to do now, but the campaign and Democrats in general have serious reservations.

They suggest that to make it free is to endanger the advantage they now hold over Republicans. This could jeopardize the success of future democratic candidates while allowing their better-funded opponents to use their software against them. Democrats fear they would be unable to match the strength of Republicans armed with the same software because Republicans might be able to deploy it more widely given their greater funds.

The Democrats' fears are well founded. They do currently hold a significant advantage, given that the Republican's recent attempt at a similar technological solution, called Orca, failed miserably. According to another tech news source, *The Verge*, "A source in Boston said the tool had been hacked, and an anonymous aide corroborated the reports of crashes, telling The Washington Examiner that, 'somebody said Orca is lying on the beach with a harpoon in it.'"

Slightly suspicious hacking incident aside, Orca had major issues from the beginning. Apparently, Orca failed in multiple ways. Technical errors and bugs were rampant, and even on a non-technical level, accurate instructions on how to use the tool were nonexistent or deeply flawed. Volunteers were told that Orca was a native mobile app, like those you get on the App Store, when it was, in fact, a web app accessed through a browser. "Training materials were vague and inaccurate," *Verge* claimed, and "the URL was for an HTTPS site, but the equivalent HTTP address didn't forward users to the right page, so anyone who mistyped or simply started with 'www' would find nothing."

But while the Democrats have reason to be afraid of the Republicans stealing Narwhal to spearhead their own efforts next time, the Democrats' rationale doesn't really hold much water. Firstly, the Democrat advantage lies not in the software,

The Obama campaign's success can be attributed in part to its vastly superior use of IT resources to leverage "big data."

but in having the people who created it on their side. Deciding to not "play by the rules" and make the software open-source, especially because it could help so many other people in the next four years and beyond, could alienate those developers that are one of the party's key assets. Numerous non-profits and charities could benefit from the software, as it could allow better targeting of phone calls, maximizing donations. Secondly, the software will probably be somewhat obsolete by the time that another campaign comes around anyway and so there's no use in holding onto something that's already depreciating.

But despite the developer's objections, Narwhal will likely remain under wraps. What will be interesting to see is how these types of systems will be used next time around. With a new Republican fear of being left in the dust if their campaigns fail at technology again, and a new Democratic drive to maintain their technical advantage in the face of real competition next time around, the next election could start a trend of elections driving real technological research and advancement. To be competitive next election might necessitate, according to one Twitter user, "major outreach with Silicon Valley," so the Republicans aren't "laughed at," again. That would likely be difficult, especially considering the Republicans' more prominent (debatably unfairly, given that both sides pushed it) affiliation with the publicly unpopular SOPA/PIPA legislations that attempted to regulate the internet more closely. Regardless, Republicans cannot have, as one person so eloquently tweeted, another "clusterf**k of biblical proportions," as some say they did this past election. Whatever ends up happening, there will probably be some big changes coming in how elections are run next time around, and I'm excited to see what that will look like. •

Blooper Reel Legislation

MICHAEL AMATO
STAFF WRITER

Laws are what hold the fabric of our society together. You know, the things that prevent us from driving on the wrong side of the road or urinating in public. Some of these laws are completely necessary. Others, I would say, are extraneous, unnecessary or just stupid.

Take for example the current situation in New Zealand. A few major news resources, most notably *Slate Magazine* and *The Huffington Post*, have garnered some attention this past week a law proposed by New Zealand economist, Gareth Morgan, to eliminate the country's population of domesticated housecats. First, he is an economist. Don't get me wrong; I believe that the field of economics is extremely important. But, how did a humanities intellectual figure this out before any of the five scientists on the island did? Apparently, the cats' hunting habits are causing the endangerment of several rare species of birds. While it may be a natural truth that cats eat birds, is it necessary to start a systematic elimination of them?

I am all for protecting endangered birds. However, Morgan neglected to acknowledge that there are other ways to protect endangered species other than just eliminating their predators entirely. It just seems like an extremist approach - that is, the blatant executions and forced neutering of the feline population is not quite the way to go. Despite this, I don't think Morgan is actually crazy. He saw a problem in his world and did his best to try and fix it.

Is his proposal surprising, though? How many times has a government passed a ludicrous law? There is a book about the crazy laws that each state has: in Dallas, Texas you cannot ride an ugly horse. Interpret that one, courts.

For argument's sake, let's explore the ridiculousness of a new bill in the Arizona state legislature that will require high school seniors to swear an oath before receiving their diplomas. This oath has the students pledge their undying support to the country:

I, _____, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge these duties; So help me God.

Not only does this required affirmation of faith in a dichotomized mess seem reminiscent of some fascist agenda, it also places religion back into schools in another form. It is called separation of church and state, legislators. Is it not your job to know this? Every few years we see another politician trying to get creationism taught in schools or ban the teaching of evolution. Schools teach science; there is no place for faith in the education. If you would like I can name a couple good, local religious institutions for you to join. Another reason to laugh at this law is the sheer irony of it. Go ahead and swear an oath to follow the Constitution, a Constitution that defends free speech, freedom from religion and separation of church and state.

Clearly, certain current laws based on tradition or customs were often created centuries before modern science and thinking, yet remain for practice's sake. These codes suffocate society's ability to grow. Laws need to change, evolve and be thought about. We should question - why do we have half of the laws we do? At some time or another they were seen as the correct way to govern society.

Gareth Morgan, the economist, may be a bit smarter than first thought. Unlike other people who blindly follow mindless laws, he questioned the governance of his country, I mean city or township or whatever, even if it was not his place. Morgan is trying to make a difference and make the world a better place. Maybe we should follow his lead, question our world and start plotting to kill the neighbor's cat. •

Reflecting on Fishbowl: The Facts, The Future and Student Apathy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

not cancelled. That this information is still unavailable and that students were in no way consulted before a cancellation decision was made are two clear shortcomings of the administration's handling of the situation.

In the second SGA meeting, students at large were still miffed by the Dean's conspicuously absent apology, and that no students were consulted at any point during the process. Process is the operative word here, as student leaders were given the result of the administration's decision to cancel and told to start thinking of alternatives. During the second meeting, it took a student asking the Dean directly if she believed she could have handled the situation differently for her to finally make the admission that students should have been consulted.

The budget for the spring event set to occur in place of Fishbowl is exorbitantly large.

To the College's credit, they seem to have realized the size and scope of what they have taken away from the senior class, and from subsequent senior classes. The symbolic power and unifying nature of Fishbowl was exemplified in the alumni response to the cancellation.

In addition to various personal emails I received regarding my own efforts to unify the student body and address the administration in a civil manner, one anonymous alumnus in particular acquired the email addresses of a large number of students and sent them a relatively inflammatory email inciting students to fight back against the Dean and the administration. Whether the administration's decision to allocate a surprisingly large budget to the new event is a result of this alumni outcry or a response to student concerns is not clear, but the reality is that the budget for the new event is significantly larger than any Fishbowl could ever have been. Though an exact number is not known, an anonymous source informed me that previous Fishbowl budgets were around \$3,000-\$4,000, and that the budget for this new event will be well above \$10,000.

The administration delivered their decision to cancel Fishbowl immediately prior to finals period.

Perhaps most importantly through all of this is the administration's decision to deliver the Fishbowl decision mere days before the beginning of finals period fall

semester. The soft sell for the administrators to the students was that students are being given enough time to come up with and refine a "new tradition" before the late-April Fishbowl date. The hard sell was that the decision was delivered immediately before finals period and before winter break, at a time when students were likely occupied with papers, exams and break plans. Now that we're back for second semester, the administration has effectively washed its hands of the Fishbowl controversy, and the senior class council is quietly and surely building one of the most legendary events the College will have ever seen.

In conclusion, it is an interesting exercise to use Fishbowlgate as a foil for the current Conn student. We are engaged in our college community, and highly protective of traditions we call our own. We are rational, intelligent and we demand our fair stake in the decisions that govern this College. We are hard-working, and committed, but only to an extent: the evaporation of the Fishbowl issue from the collective conscience is a testament to the tact of the administration, the importance that we place on academics during finals period and the ephemeral nature of any non-academic college is-

sue across semesters. Fishbowl showed us that we care! We really do, but not for more than a week or two at a time.

Moving forwards, I would hope for some kind of assurance from the administration or from SGA that students will, without a shadow of a doubt, be involved in any and all decisions directly involving student life. Shared governance is a big part of why a lot of us decided Conn over the Trinitys, Hamiltons and Wesleyans of the world, and why we've been mostly happy to preach the Conn gospel to prospective students as well.

Macro concerns for the future include the fact that no preventative measures have been enacted to ensure transparency and adequate maintenance of shared governance in similar situations moving forward.

On the micro level, we never really solved the issue of Fishbowl itself. It cannot exist in its 2012 form, but could it have been altered and its integrity maintained? Will there be underground, non-sanctioned Fishbowls? Will people come to the new event, and if so will they get naked? I suppose this one is up to the senior class, but I can hardly imagine a senior semester at Connecticut College

without some majestic unified nudity. Also, will the student body get behind the new tradition, formed mostly by the senior class council? Why are no seniors trying to attend the meetings to plan this new event? This is yet another reminder of our conspicuous collective apathy, and solving this problem requires better publicity of class council meeting times and places, and more student-at-large involvement. Class council meetings are open to all members of the class, the same way SGA meetings are open to all students.

Though I have left many questions unanswered, I hope that some loose ends have been tied, and that we can rally behind our class council and its formation of a new, incredible event. The Class of 2013's legacy depends on it, and if we are anything like who we say we are, late April should bring about some new buzzwords that won't fade after a week, or two weeks, or two years. One thing Dean Denard got right through this fiasco is that this is an opportunity for us to make more perfect the institution we have called home for four years and to begin a new tradition. I hope you all will join me in welcoming this change, for us and for Conn classes in the future. •

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Arts & Entertainment

FEBRUARY 4, 2013

THE COLLEGE VOICE

Back for Season Two and Just as Bold: The Return of HBO's

GIRLS



DAVE SHANFIELD

MOLLIE REID
STAFF WRITER

Recently, American television has begun to develop a new female identity. No longer under the strict scrutiny of beauty and behavioral norms prescribed by Hollywood, a new generation of heroines is starting to redefine women in television. Among such shows like *New Girl* and *The Mindy Project*, HBO's *Girls*, which premiered its second season this January, depicts realistic women who do not necessarily fit Hollywood's mold of the "ideal woman."

In its most simplified description, *Girls* draws strong parallels to another HBO program of a different time: *Sex and the City*. Both shows follow four women as they navigate their way through relationships, friendships and careers in New York City. But on a deeper level, *Girls*, created by Lena Dunham, unmasks the glamour of *Sex and the City*, revealing the struggles

and frustrations of post-grad life in the midst of a recession. The first season of *Girls* begins with a short, but to the-point, visit from the parents of Hannah, Dunham's character. After internalizing that they have decided to financially cut her off, Hannah, an aspiring writer, hands her parents a draft of her collection of essays while telling them, "I may be the voice of my generation. Or at least a voice. Of a generation."

Hannah experiences the life of a twenty-something-year-old "one mistake at a time," as the show's tagline suggests, with her equally lost friends, Marnie (Allison Williams), a gallery assistant who seems to have her life under control, Jessa (Jemima Kirke), an "unpredictable world-traveler" and Shoshanna (Zosia Mamet), Jessa's younger, more innocent cousin, whose "biggest baggage" in season one was her virginity. In addition to the female characters on *Girls*, the men on the show also contribute to the show's underlying

rawness, brutal honesty and deadpan humor. What begins as a friends-with-benefits relationship between Hannah and Adam (Adam Driver), where he treats her heart "like it's monkey meat," slowly develops into something deeper. Dunham also captures the struggles of trying to continue a romantic relationship that began in college in the "real world." Mainly, with this sort of dynamic, Dunham focuses her attention on Marnie and Charlie (Christopher Abbott), who have different notions about how their relationship should or should not continue.

Instead of adding to the Hollywood clichés of romance and glamour that mainly dominate television shows focused towards female viewers (think *Gossip Girl*), *Girls* unapologetically embraces cringe-worthy moments, often sexual ones. After a bold, seductive one-liner from a pretentious artist, Marnie rushes to the bathroom to masturbate during a gallery

opening. In another instance, Shoshanna quietly watches Jessa as she has standing out-the-window sex with her ex. Lastly, Hannah is the last one to realize that her boyfriend from college had been gay throughout their relationship.

Of course, perhaps one of the daring aspects about *Girls* is Dunham's openness to on-screen nudity. Dunham seems to reject societal standards surrounding beauty and weight during scenes when viewers can see all of Hannah's body. Simply put, Dunham has questioned Hollywood's (and to a great extent society's) fixation with obtaining an "ideal figure" without making the show all about body image. Even though Dunham has done this in subtle ways, the media has been anything but quiet about her acceptance of nudity in a society driven by Photoshop. In a recent *New York Post* article, Linda Stasi called Dunham a "pathological exhibitionist," who should not display her "giant thighs, a sloppy

backside and small breasts." Dunham has also been praised for being a "refreshing" actress who does not apologize to harsh critics. Recently, she arrived at an event wearing a loose shirt and short shorts. In response, a flurry of blogs said that she was not wearing pants, to which Dunham said, "get used to it because I am going to live to be 100, and I am going to show my thighs every day till I die."

Three episodes into the promising second season of *Girls*, Dunham already has reason to celebrate: HBO has renewed the show for a third season with twelve episodes as opposed to its normal ten; it also won best television series-comedy or musical at the Golden Globes and Dunham won best performance by an actress in a television series-comedy or musical. With her well-deserved rise to fame, original approach to television and fearless personality, perhaps Dunham really is a voice for her generation. •

Two Best Picture Nominees, One Common Stereotype

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Zero Dark Thirty also does its job of depicting Muslims and Arabs in a very narrow fashion. The movie shows Islam as the only cause for radicalism in the Middle East, and subsequently attributes radicalism as the sole cause of terrorism. It is true that Bin Laden was Muslim and that he claimed to be waging his *jihād* in the name of Allah, but this is not a reason to shoot down Islam as a world religion. Similar to how the Westboro Baptist Church uses perverted interpretations of religious texts to wage its own war

Most viewers of both of these films only soak in propaganda about the Middle East and never think twice about it. They watch CNN or FOX News, get their information about the latest double agent bombing in Afghanistan and consider these news stories to be representative of Islam and Arabs.

against liberalism, Bin Laden used perverted religious interpretations to launch his war against Western civilization. He deserves absolutely no excuses, support nor praise for his actions. At the same time, Islam as a whole should not be chastised because of his actions and because of Kathryn Bigelow's narrow portrayal of a group of radicals who make up an extremely small percentage of the world population. Instead, both movies should be viewed with a grain of salt. Most viewers of both of these films only soak in propaganda about the Middle East and never think twice about it. They watch CNN or FOX News and get their information about the latest double agent bombing in Afghanistan and consider these news stories to be representative of Islam and Arabs.

We all must move beyond this mindset and realize that there is a lot more to Islam, and the Middle East-North Africa region, and that most of it is good. Like any region of the world, it has flaws, but instead of writing off these flaws as products of religion or a people, we must think critically and try to uncover the root causes. Only then can we watch movies such as *Argo* and *Zero Dark Thirty* and truly learn something beneficial. •

Quirky and Quality May Not Be Mutually Exclusive

HELEN ROLFE
NEWS EDITOR

The problem with movie posters is that they exist solely to make you say, "I really want to see that!" Oh, big deal, you might say — that's just the nature of advertising. Still, I would maintain that movie posters more often than not commit the crime of false advertising. Take for example *Silver Linings Playbook*, whose poster depicts an attractive man and woman (actors Bradley Cooper and Jennifer Lawrence), both with flawless complexions and sparkling eyes. His genial smile and her mischievous smirk might lead you to think you're in for another one of those quirky, "dark" romantic comedies populated by lovable oddball characters who alternate between wallowing in their trivial, overanalyzed angst and slinging out bizarre one-liners only a hipster could love.

But you would be wrong. *Silver Linings Playbook* opens as thirties-ish Patrick Solitano, Jr. (Cooper) is

going to live with his parents after fulfilling a court order to spend eight months in a mental hospital. As we watch Pat have sessions with his therapist, bond with his dad (Robert De Niro) over the Philadelphia Eagles football team and otherwise strive to once again piece his life together, we learn why he had been committed in the first place — he "snapped" one day and beat a man nearly to death.

Despite such a shocking revelation, Pat's basic humanity and his earnest attempts to carve out a "silver lining" for his life win over not just us, the audience, but also Tiffany Maxwell (Lawrence), a young widow who is wrangling with some destructive behaviors of her own. The poster for *Silver Linings* may have made you think it would be just another light, sparkly indie rom-com, but in truth, this movie features elements that are genuinely dark, and its characters (though always appealingly quirky) also exhibit traits and behaviors that are far from lovable.

It is to the credit of director and screenwriter David O. Russell that the characters' more unappealing facets are never glossed over in an attempt to evoke moviegoers' empathy.

This decision turns out to have been a boon: the movie works precisely because its characters come across as realistic and completely human. Any one of the film's idiosyncratic personalities may somehow remind viewers of a person from "real life," whether that character is the volatile but sensitive teacher struggling to live with his bipolar disorder (Pat), or the recovering sex addict with a passion for ballroom dance (Tiffany) or any other one of the movie's brilliant matches between actor and character. (De Niro, Julia Stiles, Chris Tucker and Jacki Weaver, to name just a few, also gave terrific performances.) Through Russell's delicate balance of realism and savvy, masterful storytelling, Patrick and his loved ones completely win you over,

making you simultaneously feel great affection and frustration towards them — just like you would towards your real family.

Despite assets like a predominantly honest, insightful screenplay and airtight performances from a formidable cast, *Silver Linings Playbook* can't quite avoid every potential pitfall. A sheer surfeit of indie-film clichés constitutes an especially weak aspect of the movie. There's the obligatory running joke about psychiatric drugs, the familiar figure of the implausibly aggressive and snobbish older sibling and (but of course) the gutsy, nonconformist, emotionally damaged female love interest.

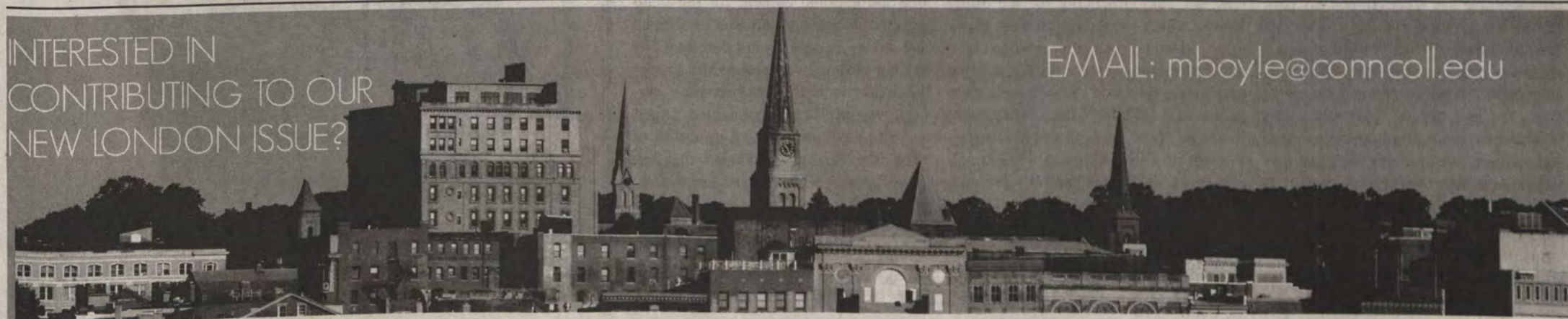
In some ways, though, these not-so-believable moments provide a welcome respite from the stark, harsh reality that drives much of the film's action. In fact, it almost seems that certain scenes in *Silver Linings Playbook* were deliberately calculated to make viewers uncomfortable: nearly everyone in

the theater that I could see flinched and squirmed uneasily whenever Pat's father hysterically bellowed at his son — a behavior pattern that was, by the way, conspicuously recurrent.

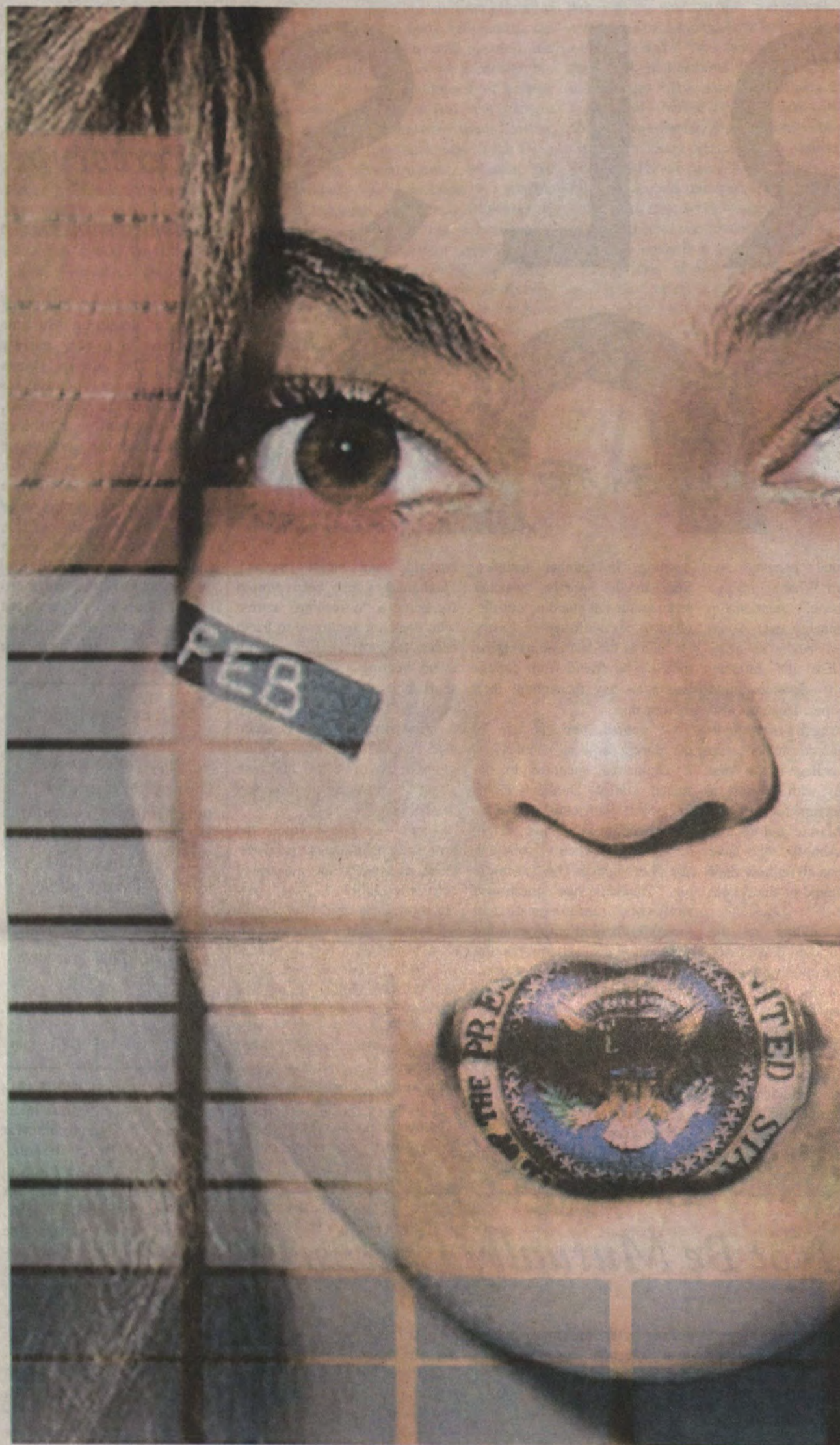
The film's prototypical "happy ending" may come as somewhat of a surprise after a full two hours of grim, hopeless realism — albeit a realism that's periodically punctuated by creative twists and the time-tested gimmicks of indie films. You may have bought your ticket to *Silver Linings Playbook* with the expectation that you'd be seeing yet another pleasant knockoff of *Little Miss Sunshine* or *(500) Days of Summer*. Yet it's this stubborn refusal of *Silver Linings* to fit into any previously defined genre that marks it as the distinctive, compelling film that it certainly is. *Silver Linings Playbook* has changed the game of movies, and this year's Academy Awards would do well to pay attention. •

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Who Run the Inauguration? Beyoncé (And Obama)



AUDREY MADOFF

DAKOTA PESCHEL
STAFF WRITER

Last week, Beyoncé was accused of lip-syncing the national anthem at the fifty-fourth Presidential Inauguration and it was later confirmed, not by the artist herself, but by the Marine Corps band that recorded the song with her the day before the event. Beyoncé decided last minute to lip-sync due to the possibility of something going wrong at the inauguration, whether it was with the sound system or something more serious.

The response to the incident has been mixed, but many people I have talked to have stated that her prerecording is perfectly valid, especially for an event as important as a presidential inauguration. Beyoncé did not use someone else's voice; it was her own that came out of those speakers. It just so happened that she did not sing "The Star Spangled Banner" live in front of an audience of millions of people. She merely used a recording of her own voice from the day before. Given that this was an extremely important event, it is only natural that she took the safer way out and decided to prerecord a beautiful version of "The Star Spangled Banner" that would please the entire nation. Beyoncé may be one of the most talented singers in the country, but it is only fair

that she would get nervous about singing live in front of a huge audience like that.

Beyoncé was not the first person to lip-sync at a presidential inauguration; at Obama's 2008 inauguration, Yo-Yo Ma used a similar strategy because the cold made his cello hard to play. It is also still not clear if Beyoncé was singing along to a prerecorded track, or if she only lip-synced. The Marine Band did not place any blame on Beyoncé, as they were already going to record due to the weather affecting their ability to play their instruments live. Cold weather has adverse effects on brass instruments; low temperatures do not really allow for them to play well. The cold also has a negative effect on the vocal cords, which may be another reason why Beyoncé chose to prerecord.

Beyoncé took the safe route because she was busy practicing for the Super Bowl, which arguably attracts many more viewers than the inauguration; and thus more is at stake for her as a live performer. Beyoncé did not have time to practice with the Marine Band, and therefore felt uncomfortable singing in front of a live audience without any rehearsals under her belt. While some believe that her decision not to sing live somewhat lessens the importance of the inauguration, especially because she is an avid supporter of President Obama,

it may only serve to heighten the importance of such an event. Kelly Clarkson and James Taylor, the two artists who performed before her, did not choose to use a prerecorded track, and many comparisons were made between her and them.

Anderson Cooper put this incident on his "RidicuList" on his show after the event, giving his spin on the topic. "So what?" he said. "As long as I'm concerned, it is Beyoncé's world, and we are just living in it." Cooper lauds Beyoncé, saying, "Francis Scott Key himself would send her a fruit basket." Clearly someone as critical as Cooper has to make a bold statement to defend her, but his sentiment has echoed what I have heard as the popular opinion; her voice is amazing.

Throughout this entire ordeal, one thing has remained clear: Beyoncé did sing the national anthem for the inauguration, whether or not she performed live. Many people do not care that she did not sing it live because the fact of the matter is that it was her voice anyway. Beyoncé is a very talented singer, and she gave an amazing rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" that left many people content with her performance. She wanted to give the best show possible, and her voice rang clear in front of millions of viewers that day.

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Arts & Entertainment

FEBRUARY 4, 2013

THE COLLEGE VOICE

The Trillion Dollar Sleight of Hand



DAVE SHANFIELD

RAYMOND HAWKINS
STAFF WRITER

I was at a friend's house over Winter Break when I first heard mention of the "Trillion Dollar Coin" idea. Naturally, my first reaction was to laugh out loud. But as my laughter died down, my friend told me, "No, it's actually serious."

Really? Is this what our deficit problems have come to? The minting of a trillion dollar coin? I just want to reiterate this, in case you didn't get it. We're talking about a trillion dollar coin. To put that in perspective, it's fifteen times the net worth of Bill Gates. It's enough money to purchase the entire annual production of Madagascar a hundred times over. And this ridiculous sum of money would be minted as a single coin.

Such an idea begs certain questions. We generally think of money as a practical way of exchanging value, but just how practical is a trillion dollar

piece of metal? Imagine walking into a department store, picking up a \$7 dollar bottle of shampoo, and saying, "Hey, can you break a trillion?" "Sure," says the cashier. "Would you like that in store branches or a \$999,999,999,993 loan which we'll pay off over the next few decades?"

Lack of practicality aside, what if the trillion dollar coin gets lost? Or, worse yet, stolen? I hardly think conventional police work would be effective when the thief buys a private army and a small nuclear arsenal.

Am I being facetious? I apologize. The trillion dollar coin is actually a very serious, legitimate economic idea, endorsed by various economists, including Nobel Prize winner Paul Krugman. I am not an economist, but I'll try to explain the basic concept. The United States has something called a debt ceiling, which is basically a limit on the amount of national debt that can be issued by the treasury.

This means that if the treasury is unable to pay its obligations, we must either scramble to raise the ceiling or default on some of our loans. Defaulting would mean serious repercussions, including but not limited to financial crisis, recession and a profound sense of national shame.

With the recent debates over the fiscal cliff, the debt ceiling has been a hotly-debated topic. How do we avoid defaulting on our loans while maintaining our current level of spending? If we cut spending, we would have to say goodbye to all sorts of government programs. If we raise the debt ceiling, we will just go further into debt. If we do nothing, we default and plunge into another recession. So what's the solution?

Well, isn't it obvious? Mint a trillion dollar coin! According to a useful loophole in our legal system, the Treasury has the authority to mint "collectible" platinum coins at whatever value it sees fit. All we have to

do is create a few trillion dollars, deposit it in the Federal Reserve, and voilà! Financial problems solved. Who would have known it would be so simple? And all this talk of debt ceilings and loan defaults was giving us such a headache!

Any potential problems? Well, there is the issue that we would be creating massive amounts of money out of thin air. Of course, that is essentially what many nations have been doing since they went off the gold standard during World War I. Paul Krugman has criticized opponents of the trillion dollar coin by pointing out their failure to recognize that "money is a social contrivance." Even gold is only valuable because we say it is. And yet, the fact that there is a finite amount of gold in the world makes it a little more stable than something like, say, paper. Germany's hyperinflation in the 1920s, where people pushed wheelbarrows of notes to the market to buy loaves of bread,

is an ominous reminder of what can happen if we simply print unchecked quantities of money.

In light of history, the trillion dollar coin idea seems, quite frankly, terrifying. We would be willfully devaluing our currency by massive amounts, all at once. I've heard some people ask if the coin would actually contain a trillion dollars' worth of platinum. At platinum's current value, that would mean an 18,621-ton "coin." That's the weight of forty-two Boeing 747s. I'm doubtful it could fit in the Federal Reserve, but at least we could melt it down and sell platinum fillings if we were ever in dire straits.

This coin would have value simply because we would say that it does. As Andrew Greaves '13 pointed out, "Why even use platinum? If we're just creating money anyway, we might as well create a trillion dollar rubber ducky."

Honestly, I'm quite relieved that the idea of the trillion dollar

coin was rejected. The idea that we can solve our economic woes by creating huge quantities of money out of nowhere does not strike me as a sound economic strategy.

Economist Joe Firestone claims that "the trillion-dollar coin could solve the government's debt problems once and for all, putting within its grasp the power to replace austerity with the abundance enjoyed by our forefathers." (Huffington Post).

Well, I'm not an economist, but that sounds a little overly optimistic to me. I suggest we start by re-assessing our huge levels of government spending, particularly our spending on the military. Perhaps we should think about how going to war and cutting taxes at the same time was not such a bright idea. Money may be a social contrivance, but it stands for something real, and we're not going to solve our real problems with a trillion dollar sleight of hand. •

The End of Fun Times Forever 30 Rock Ends its Final Season

MELANIE THIBEAULT
ARTS EDITOR

Blerg. There is never any easy way to say goodbye, whether it is to a friend or loved one, a beloved goldfish named Nemo taken too soon by cancer, to the entire Hostess snack cake establishment or to the wittiest, silliest, most self-referential-est TV show in the history of all humankind ever. So when *30 Rock*'s series finale aired last Thursday night, I watched with a tear in my eye, a hole in my heart and a mouthful of BBQ chips and Ben and Jerry's ice cream, just like any Liz Lemon

fan would do.

I've thought about what I want to say about the end of Tina Fey's brainchild sitcom, and nothing I come up with seems good enough. How do I say goodbye to a TV show, to something that's not living or breathing or able to hug me back? How do I say goodbye to such a long chapter of my life? To my Thursday night ritual? To all of the puns and songs and Mickey Rourke jokes? To the "Blerg"s and "What the what"s and the countless other Lizbianisms that I would tattoo all over my body if I weren't afraid of needles?

Good God, Lemon, it is impossible to do this show justice in a mere 600 words. I think I've repressed every funny line or moment in an attempt to pretend that it's not over, and that it will be back next Thursday in its usual time slot. *30 Rock* has been praised for its wit, its satire, its ability to be self-referential and meta, its incorporation of contemporary politics and pop culture; even the most minute, obscure Internet references got a Liz Lemon shout out at one point or another. There are things I wish I could unhear, but it's okay because for every disgusting thing Tina Fey

has referenced, she has made up for with her awkwardly "sexual" dance moves and beyond gluttonous approach to food. If she could marry a meat lover's pizza, she would. But wouldn't we all?

While watching the finale with a good friend who is equally obsessed, dressed in our tuxedos (because we aren't farmers), we both recognized how bittersweet that moment was. The finale was hysterical — probably one of the best, most spot-on episodes in its seven year run. It was even better than if every week was Shark Week. I won't give details away for those of you who

haven't watched it yet, but the episode is one giant spoof about the show ending, and we finally learn how old Kenneth really is. (Hint: the Hill People have some secret magic aging juice that we all need to get a hold of.) At the same time, we had to say goodbye to the characters we had grown to know and love, to mock and quote, to judge and identify with.

As funny as it is, *30 Rock* also has a heart, and this episode reminded us that change isn't always a bad thing. It's scary, sure, but sometimes good things come out of stressful situations, and sometimes saying good-

bye is more like saying, "see you later." But still, the end of TGS did not mean the end of the world, just as I am trying to remind myself that the end of *30 Rock* is not actually the end of "fun times forever," as Fey joked on Jimmy Fallon's late night show. Sure, it's upsetting that it's over, but after I consult some pizza and remind myself of all the good times we've had together, I think everything will be okay. It wouldn't hurt if every day for the next few weeks NBC aired a commercial of Liz Lemon saying, "There, there. Don't be cry." But we can't all be that lucky. •

Sports

THE COLLEGE VOICE

FEBRUARY 4, 2013

Dayton Arena Goes Green



The staff at Dayton Arena worked hard to prepare for the game, including the placement of the Green Dot slogan into the ice surface.

WINSLOW CRANE-MURDOCH CONTRIBUTOR

On Friday night, the men's ice hockey team partnered with Conn College's Green Dot program to give Camel sports fans a reason to cheer, and it showed. Dayton Arena was at full capacity for the second annual Green Dot hockey game, which pitted the host Camels against the visiting Tufts Jumbos.

The Green Dot hockey game is a project put together under the college's Think S.A.F.E Project, which is funded through a \$300,000 grant given by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women. The Green Dot program helps educate students on issues of sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. Through bystander intervention training, the program helps empower students to recognize and stop potential sexual assault incidents.

Green Dot students and staff greeted fans at the entrance to the arena, offering information about the project. In addition, Green Dot ran a chuck-a-puck contest and a raffle to raise funds for the program.

The Camels men's ice hockey players donned specially made Green Dot jerseys, wore green socks and used green tape on their pads and sticks. A list of twelve Camel skaters who have successfully graduated from the Green Dot training program was posted around the rink.

The Dayton Arena staff pitched in, too, adding a Green Dot logo underneath the ice on the audience side of the arena.

Feeling the energy from the packed crowd, the Camels got out to a very physical start, and carried this momentum through to the very end of the game en route to a huge 5-2 NESCAC victory. The win puts the Camels above Colby and Tufts for the final NESCAC playoff seed.

"I think the huge amount of energy, support and interest that was generated served as a powerful statement about how important the issues and ideas that the Think SAFE Project and the Green Dot Program address and embody are to our campus community. And obviously a big shout out to Darcie Folsom who inspires all of us Green Dot grads every day!"

*-Gina Deitz '13
Safety Net member, third from right*

The Camels found their stride in the second period when freshman Tim DiPretoro found the back of the net twice and junior Keith Veronesi assisted on both goals. Senior Dawson Luke, who has amassed 14 points (including seven goals) from the blue-line this season, provided a third consecutive goal on the power play to put the home team up 3-0.

After a brief lapse in play that saw the Camels surrender two goals to the visiting Jumbos, the team got back to work in the third period, adding two insurance goals off the sticks of sophomore forward JC Cangelosi and junior defenseman Kevin Reich.

The Green Dot hockey game was a tremendous success. Students, faculty and players alike felt the energy in the building. It appears that the game will continue to be looked forward to as a great event to help educate and empower students to root out all forms of sexual violence.



Freshmen goaltender Tom Conlin had a strong game, his defense provided a number of blocked shots.



KATIE KARLSON

NESCAC POWER RANKINGS

Compiled by the College Voice

This is the first installment of the winter NESCAC Power Ranking. The Power Ranking will be posted weekly and will rank the eleven NESCAC schools based on men's and women's hockey, men's and women's basketball and men's and women's swimming and diving.

SCHOOL	MEN'S HOCKEY	WOMEN'S HOCKEY	MEN'S BBALL	WOMEN'S BBALL	MEN'S SWIM & DIVE	WOMEN'S SWIM & DIVE	AVG	LAST WEEK
AMHERST	5	3	1	2	2	2	2.5	1 ↑
WILLIAMS	3	7	2	3	1	1	2.83	2 ↔
BOWDOIN	1	2	5	5	5	6	4	2 ↑
MIDDLEBURY	4	1	3	8	6	4	4.3	4 ↓
TUFTS	10	-	4	1	3	5	4.6	5 ↔
CONN COLL	8	5	11	7	4	3	6.33	6 ↔
TRINITY	2	4	9	4	11	11	6.83	7 ↔
WESLEYAN	6	8	6	9	9	7	7.5	8 ↔
BATES	-	-	10	6	7	8	7.75	9 ↑
HAMILTON	7	6	8	10	8	9	8	10 ↔
COLBY	9	9	7	11	10	10	9.33	11 ↓

The poll was devised as follows: Sports Editor Katie Karlson ranked all NESCAC schools in each sport. These rankings were based on NESCAC standings as well as quality wins and influential losses to NESCAC opponents. These scores were averaged to create a composite overall ranking for each school.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Men's Ice Hockey:

Conn 5 - 2 Tufts
Conn 3 - 2 Tufts

Women's Ice Hockey:

Conn 1 - 0 Amherst
Conn 3 - 2 Middlebury

Women's Basketball:

Conn 51 - 46 Hamilton

Men's and Women's Swimming and Diving:

M: Conn 219 - Bates 85
W: Conn 188 - Bates 93
W: Conn 155 - 158 Wellesley

Men's and Women's Squash:

M: Conn 2 - 7 Amherst
Conn 9 - 0 Tufts
W: Conn 2 - 7 Wesleyan
Conn 9 - 0 Tufts

SO YOU DON'T MISS IT

Women's Basketball:

vs Nichols
2/4 7:00 PM
vs Colby
2/8 8:00 PM
Luce Field House

Men's Basketball:

vs Colby
2/8 6:00 PM
Luce Field House

Men's Ice Hockey:

vs Hamilton
2/7 7:00 PM
vs Amherst
2/9 3:00 PM
Dayton Arena

Men's and Women's Squash:

DIII Individual Championships
1/9 & 1/10
Bowdoin College