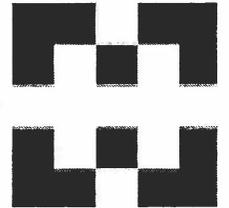




# The Challenger



A Publication of:  
The William Rainey Harper College Honors Program

## Why Do People Hate America?

by: Aleksey Maromyguin

Many have heard of the rumor that people in other nations hate America. And if you haven't heard it yet then you have now. The usual response is that these are lies spread by the liberals. Otherwise people cautiously accept the idea, though never put any thought into the matter.

Well, I'm here to tell you that these rumors do have validity, a lot more than you may think. And no, I am not a liberal and this is not a lie. These people are not the governments of other nations, but the actual people themselves. The purpose of this piece is to shed some light as to why.

First, let's take a look at America's past. No, not the history taught in the American school system, but the *real* history. On record there are over 150 interventions and conflicts that the United States has funded, backed or even participated in since World War II. It wouldn't make any sense to go into all of them, so

the following is a brief description of just three, most of the facts of which can be verified on Wikipedia.com.

First is Iran in 1953-1979 where shortly after its democratically elected leader Mohammed Mossadegh tried to nationalize British Petroleum holdings, the CIA, with Eisenhower's approval, backed a military coup replacing him with the dictatorial regime of Pahlevi Shah. Shortly after, the CIA and British intelligence created SAVAK secret police, one of the deadliest, most ruthless and violent in modern history, responsible for over a quarter million deaths. SAVAK was allowed to operate virtually unchecked without any restraint until the Islamic Revolution in 1979. The Iranian people today make no mistake about who was to blame for this brutal regime.

The Greeks also have their grievances. In 1965, the Greek ambassador rejected a plan of Lyn-

don Johnson's to resolve an issue about Cyprus as it was unacceptable to his country. Johnson re-



sponded with the following warning: "Fuck your parliament and your constitution. We pay a lot of good American dollars to the Greeks. If your Prime Minister gives me talk about democracy, parliament and constitutions, he, his parliament and his constitution may not last very long." In 1967, the CIA backed a military coup to oust the democratically elected Papandreou government for refusal to back US interests, two days before elections it was on the verge of winning. It was replaced with a military

(Continued on page 4)

## September 2005

This Issue's Editor:  
Aleksey Maromyguin

### Inside this issue:

<i>Why Do People Hate America?</i>	4
<i>Crossing the Line: SOA and the Spirit</i>	5
<i>Disaster Preparedness: Are We Really</i>	6
<i>Puppeting America's Frustrations: The Media and the State</i>	2
<i>The Media Today: a Counterargument</i>	3
<i>Through the Eye of the Storm</i>	4
<i>Birth Rights</i>	5
<i>Resources and Citations</i>	8
<i>Editor's Note</i>	8

## Crossing the Line: SOA and the Spirit of Protest

by: Jessica Crow Mermel

"Those who hate injustice, fight it with every ounce of their strength."

—Ignacio Ellacuria, killed by SOA graduates

In the face of extensive injustice that pervades our world, many people feel submerged, overwhelmed, and helpless. Many fall into complacency and become captive to apathy, fear, addictions, anger, and depression. However, some choose a different path, the route of dissent and protest. This road less traveled is not an easy one. Indeed, there are many turn-offs and obstacles. Burn-out is common in the face of so much oppression. Yet activism prevails. Many activists see nonviolent direct action not only important to raising awareness and fighting injustice, but also in healing themselves and their community to the vicarious wounds the injustice has caused. On November 18-

(Continued on page 5)

## Disaster Preparedness: Are We Really Prepared?

by: Oosa Sinrapanurak

Natural disasters are not uncommon. We have experienced nature's ruthlessness since before recorded times. With the current situation surrounding Hurricane Katrina this ranks as one of the most blotched and disapproved interventions done by the government.

According to a CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll "conducted September 8-11, the poll said 54 percent of respondents expressed disapproval of Bush's handling of the crisis, compared to 43 percent who said they approved." With this degree of disapproval from the nation and additional time left with our current President it leaves many to wonder whether we are provided for if any future natural disasters were to occur. The total approximate expenditure of the government on this disaster has been approximately \$965.8 million, according to the Department of Homeland Security. Even at this current level of expenditure it is still not enough to compensate for the destructiveness that this incident has committed towards those citizens. Many could have been saved if the nation's revenues

(Continued on page 6)

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

http://www.harpercollege.edu/cluborgs/honors

Questions? Comments? E-mail us! Harperchallenger@hotmail.com



## Puppeting America's Frustrations: The Media and the State by: Aleksey Maromyguin

The technological breakthroughs of mankind have put us in a very delicate place in history. One of the biggest impacts of industrialization on the modern day is the creation of mass communication networks throughout the world, especially in first-world countries such as the United States. But with the creation of, specifically, news networks, collectively referred to as "the media," there are also very major drawbacks. A symptom of those drawbacks is the media's intent to keep those drawbacks hidden. This is not only true of the media, but of other such facets of the world, which is another reason it is important to understand it.

The first ugly truth behind the media is easy to understand. In a capitalist system, every aspect of life is designed and run with the intent to make money and out compete all others. In other words, networks like CNN, New York Times, FOX, BBC, etc. are all completely based on money. Whether it's newspapers, television, the tabloids, radio, those teen magazines, or what have you, they all operate on the basis of cash flow.

Now, what does this mean for us? The most striking consequence, for me, is the media's allegiance to government. This is always a controversial point, but it's true. That's why during the Clinton administration there was so much talk about the liberal bias, and now with Bush, there's so much talk about a conservative bias (though there's still those that still think it's liberal). But in reality there is no bias except toward making money. Put yourself in their shoes: You're a news network executive. The network that gets the most money is that which breaks the story first. The whole nation watches the president when he speaks publicly. But the president (or his staff anyway) decide who gets to personally attend, whose questions he answers, how well he answers them, and who gets the best spot to record, etc. That's why if they criticize the government too much during regular air time,

they always run the risk of getting punished, and that kind of punishment directly affects the wallets of the news execs.

The news networks have been around long enough to have learned this lesson well. Now most of them get the front row spot when it comes to such things as getting to ask questions during a press conference. But I bet you're never going to see anyone from, for example, the Independent Media Center (Indymedia) asking the president any questions. And you're never going to see CNN ask the president why he continues waging war in Iraq or giving Israel billions in aid, the most given to any nation, while children in third world countries die by the millions every year from starvation. You'll never see anyone ask him to justify the racist prejudice that this not only implies but creates as well as perpetuates and grows.

So in light of this, isn't it really fair to say that the media has a government bias? The only time the media criticizes government is when there is some sort of "scandal," which the public views more as entertainment than politics. Entertainment is more profitable than politics, though less predictable, but therefore first on the list of priorities. And this is how the world works. The mainstream media is so prevalent in our society today that you can trace a whole plethora of problems all stemming from this issue of media corruption and, even more broadly, from capitalism itself.

Granted there are journalists out there that try to write honest pieces for mainstream sources, but they are always running the risk of getting fired. There are several instances I can recall personally that I've heard of this, and there are many others that are very much public out there today. Those that truly succeed are either the ones that don't have any intention to be honest, or those that walk the fine line between the corporate networks and the truth without getting stepped on. So what do these people do that's dishonest? For one, they are never against lying, as long as they can get away with it. Besides that

they can just leave information out or even add unnecessary information to an article to further distort it. In any case, you are not getting an honest picture, no matter what mainstream source you consume. This is not conspiracy theory. This is reality.

You could see it in the 9-11 coverage, covering for Bush's mistakes and pulling at America's heart strings. You could see it in the war coverage where they turn war into entertainment and rally support for it. You could see it in the distinct class difference displayed in New Orleans.

For example, a Penn State study showed that in the 90 days leading up to the Iraq war, the top four television news sources, FOX, ABC, CBS and PBS had 390 speakers on various programs. Only 3 of those people were anti-war. This is not a study done by "leftists," and it's naïve to think so. Still not convinced? Look at the media response to Katrina. When white people took food from flooded stores, they were "survivors". When black people did the same, in the same manner as the white people, they were either thieves or looters. And although the media is a reflection of the people that consume it, it is nonetheless racist of them to portray the crisis as such.

So what can we do? We can fight it. We can fight back with our very own media, an honest media. An underground network of news exists that brings to light the truth as best it can. Something such as Indymedia is just the tip of the iceberg. But at the end of each day we still have to deal with the massive monopoly of disinformation; manufacturing consent and puppeting America's fears, frustrations, delusions, greed and complacency is their function and money is their motivation. And at the end of the day, this is all made possible by capitalism, the state, and the delusional masses that still believe that this state of existence is sustainable.





The Media Today: a Counterargument by: Valerie Hubbard

I am intrigued by the fervent manner with which my fellow editor, Aleksey Maromyguin, adamantly speaks out against the media for not supplying Americans with the news it needs in the above article, "Puppeting America's Frustrations: *The Media and the State.*" As a student of journalism, I must admit, I would be rather **disheartened** if I believed that everything I read in a newspaper or heard broadcasted in a report was a lie implemented by the media to strategically convey its loyalty to the government. Fortunately, my optimism pushes me forward with my chosen career path, and, while I respect the strength and passion of my colleague's opinion, I feel an obligation, as a future journalist, to offer my perspective in defense of the media.

Modern American society cultivates numerous systems of values and beliefs that ultimately arrive at the basic ideological principals of freedom and democracy. Many of our freedoms are guaranteed by the level of accountability to which we hold those in power, and our nation's democratic stability depends largely upon its citizens' commitment to making informed and unbiased decisions. A key component in both tasks is journalism, and the quality of the news reflects not only the media but also the public interest.

Indeed, the role of the media in alerting and educating the American people on what's happening within our country is essential if the average citizens are to remain involved in shaping their way of life. More importantly, though, is the average citizen's role in demanding a higher standard from the media, and in order to demand such a standard, one must intellectually digest and absorb the news.

Technology has *certainly* put mankind in a delicate place by allowing us much more, and more immediate, access to the events that are taking place in the world we live in. Before the printing press was invented in 1454, the news was made available simply by being in the right place, at the right time, and then by traveling word-of-mouth. Newspapers began circulating in America in the late 1600s and remained the main source of the news for three hundred years, until the radio was invented in 1910. Modern Americans' most relied upon news medium, the television, wasn't available until 1939, and the internet didn't surface until 1994. We are fortunate to live in the time that we do, for there are endless sources from which to pull our news.

Alexis de Tocqueville remarked about newspapers in his classic *Democracy in*



*America*, "We should underrate their importance if we thought they just guaranteed liberty; they maintain civilization." The function of the media is a public service to provide the people it serves with information: to project the news, to present the facts, to apply the statistics, to question authority, and to describe the events.

It is irresponsible to assume that *every* news medium lacks adequacy and honesty. In fact, several newspapers, network programs, local broadcast stations, news magazines, public radio stations, online media reports as well as independent and freelance writers maintain their integrity and regularly produce journalistic pieces that are informative and relevant to the people who consume them. This is evident by the lasting influence, Pulitzer prizes and national recognition.

If we want to appoint blame for the public being uniformed, the culprits we must consider are complacency of Americans and the indifference with which they retain the news. According to An Annual Report on American Journalism, completed by the Project for Excellence in Journalism, there has been a steady decline in newspaper readership since the 1970s, when nearly 80 percent of adults read the newspaper on a regular basis. Today, only about 55 percent of adults read the newspaper regularly, and the largest deficiency in readers exists in the demographic of young adults aged 18-24. Television audiences have also been drastically cut in recent years. In 1980, network television news broadcasts captivated over 50 million viewers, but that number dropped to under 30 million in 2004. While the internet and cable news networks are responsible in part for these staggering statistics, their audiences are only a fraction of the size of those for either newspapers or network television. What this means is that Americans are not just getting

their news from other sources; they're not getting their news anywhere.

There is no denying that the sources of the news are not created equal. The media, like nearly all other facets of American business, cannot escape the strong-fisted grasp of capitalism. Profit-driven media conglomerates and the pressures of meeting investor expectations have, unfortunately, devastated the resources of the countless institutions that bring us the news. Stories that "bleed" or shock the public often take precedence over those with valuable content. Nevertheless, there are countless other sources to utilize when an update from one article or report is unsatisfactory.

Recent efforts made by the Committee of Concerned Journalists, as well as movements for "civic journalism," attempt to involve public interests and opinions more directly in the products of the media. This idea reflects the hope that the producers of the media might be better equipped to put out what the public wants conveyed (and yes, expand its audience, thus pleasing those profit-hungry corporate owners). Consequently, in current reporting, there has been less coverage on political and foreign affairs and more news from the lifestyle, health, medical, and scientific fields. In the newsrooms, public interests, and not necessarily government biases, weigh more heavily upon which stories are kept and which are killed.

Some of the pernicious events that have occurred in modern American history, including the Monica Lewinsky scandal, the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington, the war in Iraq, and most recently, Hurricane Katrina, have increased the public's demand for the news. This shift has, in turn, perpetuated some exemplary works of journalism and allowed for more in-depth reporting efforts.

In the aftermath of 9/11, news networks and local broadcast programs did not hesitate to forgo millions of dollars in profits to run continuous, commercial free broadcasting with the latest developments and updates on issues pertaining to the attacks, and rightly so. The devastation of Hurricane Katrina, and the inadequate emergency response of the government, has caused an emotional turbulence in the hearts of likely all Ameri

(Continued on page 7)



## Why Do People Hate America? continued

(Continued from page 1)

junta, headed by Colonel Papadopoulos, a CIA employee since 1952 and an ex-Nazi Battalion leader who hunted down Greek resistance fighters in WWII. The US admitted to supporting Greek fascists in 1999.

Arguably the most widely-known coup in Latin America was in Chile. The only democratically elected Socialist government ever to have existed was overthrown in 1973. The Socialist president Allende was replaced by a military dictator named Pinochet. The CIA, as always, had funded and provided logistics for the operation. In fact, Nixon was also very much involved in this operation, remarking in his infelicitous style: "That son of a bitch Allende. We're gonna smash him." The US government supported Pinochet throughout his 17 years in office, despite the fact that he murdered, tortured and/or exiled tens if not hundreds of thousands of his political opponents.

In light of this, how can they *not* hate us? Although... I understand that you may think that that was *before*. But what has America done to piss everyone off *recently*?

Well, for one let's look at America's militarism. The United States' military budget for the year 2005 is \$420.7 billion, up from \$399.1 in 2004 and up from \$288.8 billion in 2000. As it stands, this number is 6 times the military budget of Russia, with the second largest numbers. In fact, the US spends more than the next 14 nations combined. Why? Does the US need this much more protection than the rest of the world? Well, yes and no. The Roman Empire always took pride in its legions, too. You see, empires need large armies to police the world to protect their "interests." This is why America needs a huge military. It needs this military to keep its position of power. And this stubborn, violent, and almost desperate circumstance of existence is the root of

worldwide hatred.

This desperation is reflected in the United States' handling of foreign relations. The most current example is the Middle East. Their oldest grievance is the United States' help and support in creating the state of Israel, created after World War II which was done based on the claim that Jews had a historical claim to that land, the basis of which was purely religious. The Palestinians that lived there were pushed



away, subjugated, oppressed and devastated throughout the half century of Israel's existence, and they still are, to this very day. The US still supports Israel very much, by, for example, giving it roughly \$3 billion dollars a year in foreign aid, the most aid given to any other nation. On top of all that, when anyone tries to speak out against the Palestinian oppression, they are called anti-semites.

Then there's the US support of gov-

ernments of Muslim nations such as Saudi-Arabia which ignore the public and pursue policy according to their own agenda. For example, the Saudi royal family pockets 14% of that nation's oil revenues. At the same time, the oil is grossly under priced and sold at paltry prices as a result of the United States' international influence and large military threat.

And, as we've seen, this threat has often been exercised, which is the greatest and most direct cause of resentment. Now there are over 100,000 civilians dead in the nation of Iraq, and the US is playing the role of puppeteer of Afghanistan's and Iraq's new governments. At the same time, and mostly as a result of this, al-Qaeda is growing by leaps and bounds for every day of occupation. So much so, in fact, that it is said to be more of a movement now than an actual organization.

There are, of course, scores of other reasons why the Middle East has a deep hatred for us. But the point is that that hatred is carried over to the rest of the world which sees American hegemony and shudders. That doesn't mean there aren't other power-hungry hegemonic nations, but it's no coincidence that the United States today is considered the greatest and the most dangerous power in the world. And this is precisely because it has the ability to act outside the realm of morality and decency coupled with its shockingly efficient ability to manipulate its own masses to complacency, apathy and even to consent.

Meanwhile, the mainstream American public busies itself with reality TV-shows and worries about "high" gas prices and doesn't even have a clue about the world outside their sterile environment. And this ignorance and lack of emotion is what drives the rest of the world to hatred at the empire we call America.

### Through the Eye of the Storm

by: Jessie Crow Mermel

"Help! The water is rising - Please." These words are scrawled in white paint on the roof of a building while six people of color wave American flags and their desperate arms in dire need of rescue after the wrath of Hurricane Katrina tore through New Orleans. The flag in the photograph reveals a duality of America as one of the richest countries in the world contrasted with the deep poverty of a third-world country. Just as the strong winds tore holes in the Superdome to reveal unimaginably horrific living conditions, this tragedy has revealed a strange and disturbing puzzle. In this puzzle, each piece magnifies another and all pieces are inter-related. This puzzle reveals not only the race and class divi-

sions that still exists strongly in this country, but also the fault of the federal government in creating and responding to the conditions that caused suffering to so many.

The immediate inaction of the government was glaringly obvious to the whole world following Katrina, but there are many aspects to this storm that lie just beneath the surface. Katrina began as a level 1 storm, until the heated waters of the Gulf of Mexico charged it to a disastrous level 5. Global climate change was the cause for the dramatic increase and the resulting magnitude of the storm. Despite indisputable scientific evidence that global warming is a real, clear and present danger, and that the United States plays a critical role in perpetuating it through our gas-guzzling automobile culture, the Bush administration outwardly opposed the Kyoto Protocol, the international agreement among industrialized nations to reduce emis-

sions of six greenhouse gases. President Bush also broke his campaign pledge to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from power plants. There is no credible scientific debate that if we, citizens of the Earth, are to avoid consequences such as dramatic shifts in weather and rising sea levels, we must substantially reduce these greenhouse gas emissions.

New Orleans might not be a flooded and desolate landscape today if the Bush administration had not reversed policies under the Clinton administration prohibiting development of coastal wetlands. These wetlands were designed by nature to buffer the storms' impact. Global warming was not the only threat that was not heeded by the Bush administration. The New Orleans levees might have not been breached if they had been repaired, honoring the Army Corps of Engineers' request to strengthen and

(Continued on page 8)



### Birth Rights: The next battleground for reproductive rights by Jessie Crow Mermel

Women's health and the right to choice are being threatened once again. The right to choose gains forefront attention and attracts legions of activists to rallies. Yet, there is another less publicized battle brewing for women. This battle is to protect their right for choice in birth.

In the past few decades, obstetrics has changed birth from a normally healthy physiological function to a highly managed and medicalized high-tech event. Often, women who choose to give birth in a hospital and seek out a natural childbirth must be on the defensive against their own physician. In typical

hospital births, the mother is assaulted with invasive procedures and interventions that tend to have a domino effect: one leading to the next. Many times these interventions are done without the mother's fore knowledge or consent. In some hospitals, nearly every laboring woman receives epidural analgesia (narcotic spinal block) without information about possible side-effects and risks, one being an increased chance of experiencing a C-section.

The national cesarean rate hit 27.6% in 2003 and continues to climb. That means that 1 in 4 women are having major abdominal surgery to deliver their babies. About half of these surgeries are unnecessary. The World Health Organi-

zation (WHO) states that no region in the world can justify having a cesarean rate greater than 10 to 15%. Some doctors and mothers alike will schedule C-sections out of the convenience of planning the time of the birth. It takes much less time for a doctor to do a cesarean than to wait around for labor to run its course. Many OB's put a stringent time limit on normal labors, even though there is a wide-range of normal regarding length of labor. In fact, many C-sections are done for "failure to progress," when many of the women are really experiencing a plateau in labor or a normal but slow labor. The lack of choices in a hospital birth does not reflect safer birthing standards, but instead re-

*(Continued on page 7)*

## SOA Cont.

*(Continued from page 1)*

20, hundreds of activists will descend on Fort Benning, Georgia to protest the School of the Americas, speak out for truth, confront injustice and work to change US foreign policy. But it would be an injustice to call it a mere political action; the gatherings at Fort Benning are also like a communal healing ritual that connects the community to one another and to an unseen grid of universal life-power through music, movement, drama, symbols, and the collective union of love, peace and truth.

What is the SOA and why are so many people willing to risk imprisonment to speak out against it? The School of the Americas (SOA) was renamed in 2001 as the "Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation." Located in Fort Benning, Georgia, it is a combat training institution for Latin American soldiers. According to the SOA Watch, SOA/WHISC has trained more than 60,000 Latin American soldiers in "counterinsurgency techniques, sniper training, commando and psychological warfare, military intelligence and interrogation tactics." The SOA has both denied these claims and also said that they no longer teach those techniques. SOA graduates return home to Latin America with this gained knowledge and many commit atrocities on their own people. They have targeted union organizers, priests, nuns, social justice and poverty justice workers, and educators, among others. SOA Watch declares that "hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans have been tortured, raped, assassinated, 'disappeared,' massacred, and forced into refuge by those trained at the 'School of Assassins.'"

On February 21 - 22, 2005, eight members (including three children) of the San José de Apartadó Peace Community in Urabá,



Colombia, were brutally murdered. Witnesses identified the murderers to be the Colombian military's 17<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Brigades, led by General Héctor Jaime Fandiño Rincón, who graduated from the SOA in 1976. Among those massacred was Luis Eduardo Guerra. Guerra was co-founder of the Peace Community and an internationally recognized peace activist. In 2002, Guerra spoke at the SOA protest and gave first hand testimony of the impact oppressive US foreign policies and military trained by the SOA have had in Colombia. Little has been done to investigate these brutal murders and military forces have forced all but five of the 100 families that are the Peace Community to leave their homes.

Unfortunately, the massacre of the

Colombian Peace Community is just one in a long line of atrocities committed by graduates of the SOA. Most people know nothing of this terrorist training center located right here in the United States. Since the protests, there have been many token changes to the SOA including the change of their name and the inclusion of novel courses in peace-keeping. The movement is gaining momentum as the SOA keeps trying publicity tactics to divert the truth. Yet even with the new name, there is the same shame. Learning about the SOA and the ripple effects it has throughout Latin America is shocking and painful to most. People are so outraged that they commune in Fort Benning, and some people choose to come year after year. Many people choose to symbolically "cross the line" onto SOA grounds (it is legal to enter the base, but not for political reasons). For a first time offense, those who cross the line are arrested and would receive a letter barring them from the base for 1 -5 years. Repeat offenders risked jail time, while the SOA assassins, ironically, are free today. But even with the police oppression and the incarceration, many dissenters feel intense freedom from the experience because they have worked for healing and connected to the unifying "soul force" that Gandhi once spoke of in relation to nonviolent direct action. By superseding their own needs and fears for the cause of a greater good, these activists who choose to fill themselves with compassion and love, will in turn heal themselves and become more whole. Peaceful hearts, minds and actions have a ripple effect and can work to make us all more whole.

For more information about the upcoming protest in Fort Benning, Georgia, visit [www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org).



## Disaster Preparedness, continued

(Continued from page 1)

were more effectively centralized on the nation's health than that of others. This is not the first instance where not enough aid was provided by the government due to agendas overseas or other tantalizing political activities of our government. The despondency portrayed in the media was a direct result of the delay in action to this affected area and the un-preparedness and mismanagement of resources that were needed to ensure the welfare of all citizens despite their race or socioeconomic level.

The U.S. is not foreign at all to handling natural disasters, nor is this the last disaster that we are bound to experience. Other disasters that have been handled more effectively but not sufficiently by the government were the Loma Prieta and Northridge earthquakes in California in 1989 and 1994, respectively. There was also Hurricane Andrew in 1992, affecting Florida and Louisiana. These natural disasters received much quicker response times and the devastation was much better handled compared to Hurricane Katrina. This catastrophe is an embodiment of the weaknesses that exist in this nation and are being targeted at President George W. Bush and his administration. There is an increasing level of concern on the efficacy of Bush's management style, thereby leading to his dangerously faltering public image. According to a strategy proposed by the President's administration in Time, the first part of the proposal is stated as "spend freely, and worry about the tab and the consequences later. 'Nothing can salve the wounds like money,' said an official who helped develop this strategy." This focus has led the country into a national debt that appears limitless and in time can only lead to further deprivation in this country. Historical disasters have been resolved in a much more economically friendly way than this current administration is proposing. One disaster that has left significantly less scars but



still created a high degree of concern for the preparedness for any future disasters is the earthquake in Loma Prieta.

On October 17, the Loma Prieta earthquake affected the San Francisco Bay area during the 1989 World Series and was thought at the time to be the expected "Big One," an earthquake so massive that the lives lost and the cost for restoration would be inconceivable.

National Geographic focused on this crisis in an analysis article on San Francisco's vulnerability in the October 2004 issue. The earthquake was noted to be significant at 7.1 on the Richter scale leaving a significant amount of damage to numerous areas in Northern California but with the primary aid being supplied from organizations such as the Red Cross and public and private donations that were sufficient enough to restore 75% of the homes at that time. One of the towns affected, Watsonville, lost more than 800 single family homes according to the National Information Service for Earthquake Engineering but "very few victims applied for or received federal and state assistance" because of difficulties qualifying for aid from the state or government. Total costs to restore three quarters of the damaged area were greater than \$1.13 billion. Very little of the money received for restoration has been provided by the government because many of the original buildings and newly-established buildings in that area are still not up-to-date with building codes and will more than likely collapse if there were another significant earthquake, as analyzed in Time.

Additionally, the 1994 earthquake in Northridge was also insufficiently funded. The earthquake was declared as a state of emergency by FEMA with costs running from \$25 to greater than \$35 billion to recover the Los Angeles Area. This earthquake had a lesser magnitude at 6.8 but damage occurred to "Sections of six freeways [that] collapsed

and 27 bridges [that] were damaged. Some 450 public buildings (schools, libraries, recreation centers, and offices) suffered significant damage, as did utilities such as water, power, and sewer. Six thousand commercial buildings were damaged," according to California Policy Seminar Brief Series(UCOP). FEMA's contribution of \$6.961 billion to this disaster was less than 30% of the total collective costs. Once again the government's contributions to people affected by natural disasters is insufficient in handling the needs of those affected.

As for Hurricane Andrew the total loss was reported by UCOP to be more than \$16.3 billion with FEMA contributing only \$1.813 billion only covering 13% of the total losses. The inadequacy of the government to aid these disasters financially was fortunately able to be remedied by the strength of the people and businesses that came together to help these areas recover from these tragedies.



After reviewing our past natural disasters and the progression of Hurricane Katrina's recovery efforts, President George W. Bush's approach appears insufficient and reflective of the lack of funding and preparedness by the government both now and historically. The past response times have been commendable but with

this current disaster it appears significantly inept. The delayed start by the government has not affected the quality and dedication of the people working to remedy the difficulties of those in the south. The uncertainty of this nation's preparedness planning and funding leaves a feeling of vulnerability with the capabilities of the government to safely ensure the continuation of our livelihoods in the case of another disaster. With a so-called technologically and socially advanced nation are we really demonstrating our capacity to handle any future disasters, whether natural or man-made? ■



## The Media Today: a Counterargument continued

(Continued from page 3)

cans, including journalists and members of the media. Reporters have asked forthright questions and made blatantly disapproving remarks aimed at members of local, state and federal government officials.

One example is ABC World News Tonight correspondent Elizabeth Vargas, who, reporting live amid the damage in Louisiana, asked "Did the government learn anything from 9/11 about how to handle a major catastrophe?" Jon Sanner, her executive producer, supported the remark, noting that it is the reporters' task to "ask a lot of tough questions and raise issues for our audience."

In another recent example of the emboldened media, CNN correspondent Andrew Cooper asked Sen. Trent Lott in a telephone interview if some of the deaths from Katrina might have been averted if the many National Guard troops from Louisiana and

Mississippi who are deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan had been closer to home? The senator's response was elusive. Brian Williams (NBC/MSNBC), Jack Cafferty (CNN), Shepard Smith (Fox News), Marcy McGinnis (CBS News), among other in the media have kept the government and those in positions of power in check with authoritative, unabashed journalism.

We have an obligation as responsible citizens to stay informed of the issues surrounding us today. We have the freedom to choose from which medium to get our news, and we can voice our opinions about how to make those sources better. It is important to remember that print journalism can generally devote more space and time to a story than can television. If your interest is piqued but unsatisfied by the brief snippets of news and headlines offered on an evening news broadcast, go to the accompanying

website for more information, or perhaps read the newspaper the next day.

To quote authors Bill Kovach and Tom Rosentiel, the journalist's purpose is to "provide people with the information they need to be free and self-governing." The media has an obligation to serve the public with relevant and interesting news, but the media does not exist without its public. Like the journalist, the public's role in media consumption is also a process: interest, knowledge, contemplation, judgment. I am quite certain that the masses of intelligent American citizens, whose interest in the news and diligence in learning the facts, are far from "delusional" and will continue to sustain this educational state of existence.



## Birth Rights, cont

(Continued from page 5)

flects the hospitals' and doctors' convenience and fear of litigation. Hospitals also stand to make much more money with interventions and C-sections than with natural births. Let us not forget that hospitals are in the business of making money. C-sections can save mothers' and babies' lives when used judiciously. Unfortunately, they are grossly over-performed.

Women wishing to have a vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC) are facing an even more difficult battle. A growing number of hospitals are banning VBACs and forcing women to schedule repeat C-sections out of fear of litigation. Bob Wentz, CEO of California's Oroville Hospital admitted, "We think the risk is more of a legal risk than a medical risk." The ban on VBACs is an attack on reproductive rights and freedoms. The main risk of VBACs is about .22% chance of their uterine scar tearing during labor. For many women, this is a fair trade-off to experience a normal birth



and avoid a repeat C-section, which carries its own physical and emotional risks to both mother and baby.

Women have been stripped of confidence in their body's own ability to give birth naturally, neglected of informed consent, robbed of a normal birth experience and are instead filled with fears and misconceptions regarding birth. The obstetric model of care is permeated by a gender bias. Only recently have women entered into the obstetrics field.

Throughout history, laboring women have been attended by female midwives. In America, however, obstetrics is a decidedly male institution, yet it decides the fate of women. This gender bias views women's body's as weak, a problem that needs a solution. The doctor becomes the hero, saving the baby from the mother's body, when often the mother needed more time and support, not intervention and technology. Obstetricians reflect our broader culture that believes technology is superior to nature and that birth is a nega-

tive, highly painful experience that needs to be medicated and helped along. There are risks to every intervention, however. The safest birth for most moms and babies is a natural birth.

Many women are choosing to opt out of a hospital birth altogether and experience what most feel is a safe and gratifying birth at home with a midwife. Some women would rather give birth unassisted than face what the hospital has planned for them. Unfortunately, in some states, including Illinois, midwives are being persecuted for giving women a choice in birth. Women, and men alike, must organize and refuse to accept this attack on their personal freedoms. Let us also not forget that we are the consumers and live in a free country. If more women confront our cultural fear of birth, empower themselves to trust their bodies, inform themselves of their choices and rights, lobby for reforms in malpractice caps, dissent and show the medical establishment that they demand a choice, the hospitals will eventually listen and obstetrics will be forced to shift from an antiquated paradigm to a new one that treats women and babies holistically, as people.



**Resources and Citations:**

Resources for "Through the Eye of the Storm"  
[http://www.dr-fix-it.com/arc\\_kyoto.html](http://www.dr-fix-it.com/arc_kyoto.html)  
<http://www.motherjones.com>  
<http://www.commondreams.org/headlines05/0901-02.htm>  
<http://www.dissidentvoice.org>  
 The New York Times, Monday, September 5, 2005

Resources for "Birth Rights"  
Thinking Woman's Guide to a Better Birth by Henci Goer  
<http://www.usatoday.com> - Battle lines drawn over C-sections  
<http://pregnancyandbaby.com/read/articles/295.htm>  
<http://www.compleatmother.com/factsheet.htm>

Resources for "Crossing the Line: SOA and the Spirit of Protest"

**Editor's Note**

Any views and opinions expressed within these pages do not represent those other than the *Challenger* editors. If you have questions or comments e-mail us at the address below

A Publication of:  
**The William Rainey Harper College Honors Program**

Editor: Aleksey Maromyguin  
 Contributing Editors:  
 Jesse Crow Mermel  
 Oosa Sinrapanurak  
 Valerie Hubbard

Faculty Advisor: Andrew Wilson  
 Honors Program Coordinator: Andrew Wilson

Phone: 847.925.6000 x6791 or x2139  
 E-mail: harperchallenger@hotmail.com

**Through the Eye of the Storm, continued**

*(Continued from page 4)*  
 renovate pumping stations and levees. However, the Bush administration chose to cut the budget for flood control in New Orleans by \$71 million, 44 % of its budget. New Orleans wouldn't be in the dire straights it is in now, if the money needed to repair the levees and build new buttresses had not been funneled into the Iraq war.

Where were all the National Guard units in the first days after Katrina? Isn't this the kind of work they signed up for: helping with national disasters? The Bush administration has roughly 48,000 of these men and women in Iraq still trying to build democracy, not to mention protecting those precious oil reserves (therefore protecting American's petroleum addiction). As Congress prepares itself for the multi-billion dollar costs of cleaning up New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, we must look at the money that has been spent on the Iraq war. According to the 84 page report, "The Iraq Quagmire: The Mounting Costs of the Iraq War and the Case for Bringing the Troops Home," the bill to date for the war has come to about 204 billion dollars, plus an additional 45 billion pending in Congress. The Iraq war is costing us more per month than the Vietnam War. The tremendous amount of money spilled into this ongoing war, with no end in sight, could have possibly been spent better here at home, aiding in the protection the city of New Orleans from this disaster predicted by a 2001 FEMA study and the clean-up and rebuilding of the city.

The people of means in New Orleans certainly lost a great deal in the hurricane. However, they escaped before the hurricane with their lives, their personal possessions and their insurance policies because they had transportation, money and places to go. Vast numbers of people living in concentrated poverty in New Orleans had no automobile to leave the city and no money to do so. These Americans lost EVERYTHING. Many watched as their loved ones die. America has starved public transportation, favoring a national infrastructure devoted to the automobile (protecting oil interests), therefore stranding many poor, mainly black

Americans in the hell that was New Orleans, post-Katrina. Thousands of Americans were left stranded on roof-tops, in the filth, death and violence of the Superdome and convention center. Watching the footage on television, it is obvious that the majority of those living in misery in those days after the storm were indeed black. The President denies race having anything to do with it, but these people were seemingly invisible to the Bush administration in the days following Katrina. One must wonder if these Americans will be able to go back to New Orleans after it is rebuilt, or if they will become the victims of the gentrification that is sweeping through the country. Will affordable housing be built for them or will they be replaced with condos for the young, upper-middle class professionals?

After 911, many people were clouded with a rightful anger, but turned it into revenge without looking at the events leading up to this tragedy. Many people refused to look at our own government's role in creating the hatred that led to tragedy and the terrorists' use of the targets as symbols of globalization and US foreign policies. In New Orleans, we need to respond with immediate rescue efforts and to comfort the suffering. But through all of this, we need to look deeply into the eye of the storm and address these root problems: global warming, sprawling over-development,

our nation's gluttonous dependence on fossil fuels, government policies that give tax-cuts to the rich elites and transfer resources away from the poor and desperate. Bush once referred to his "base" as the "haves and have-mores." It is time now for the Bush administration to answer for the thousands of have-nots who suffered and died because of the painfully slow response to this disaster as well as to the policies that helped to create this suffering. Millions of Americans watched their televisions in horror of what was happening in New Orleans and felt helpless. Action is needed now. Help! The water is rising. We must do something.



WE'RE ON THE WEB!

<http://www.harpercollege.edu/cluborgs/honors>