

America the Arrogant



SARAH REYES Rogers

Anyone who says that kids bring their learning to a screeching halt during the summer is dead wrong. Personally, I found that this summer has taught me countless things besides the fact that three months is not - and will never be - a long enough break from school. I have also discovered that John Cena does look as good in a Salt Lake City airport as he does on

television and also, that Lord of the Flies is in all actuality an excellent book, despite its summer homework status. One of the most important conclusions I have been able to come to though, is that in this great country that Americans call home, we are just a big melting pot of arrogant douche bags.

I have been overly bothered by that unfortunate fact because this summer I was really able to see the true colors of the United States in a few different ways. Although I have lived here all my life, I have never realized how much the U.S. differed from the rest of the world, until recently that is.

Hearing that the rest of the countries hate the United States, I always just figured that everyone was jealous of all the freedom that we get to experience over here and the ridiculous amounts of money that we spend on seemingly useless materials that other countries would never even dream of. I now understand their feelings toward us.

In June, I got the amazing opportunity to take a week trip to Puerto Rico with my foreign language class. While I was there, I was taken aback by the kindness that the locals showed to not only each other, but even to us discourteous Americans. On the trip, we were accompanied by three other schools, mainly from the Midwest, and I was also amazed at the condescending attitude that some of the group members from the other schools, not the kids, but the adults, had regarding some of the less fortunate Puerto Ricans. On the first night there, while taking a walking tour of San Juan, we stopped at a Baskin Robbins and it became apparent to me exactly why foreign lands feel the way they do about America. A chaperone from one of the Midwest schools saw a homeless man who just happened to stop in front of the ice creamery alongside my tour group and asked a few people for spare change.

This chaperone and a comrade stepped back as far as possible from this man in a manner as though any passerby may have thought that homelessness was contagious. Thankfully, our tour guide of Puerto Rican descent asked the man what flavor of ice cream he wanted and provided him with a nice somewhat of a meal for the night while simultaneously restoring my faith that there are still a few good people left in humanity.

Except these two lady friends later ruined my renewed confidence when they refused to sit within a two seat range of a Puerto Rican that was also riding the city bus, of whom didn't look as though he was up to the social standards of the female socialites. Regrettably, there were a few times in which I found myself using an American approach to thinking and was overcautious in safe environments.

We got to ask our guide some questions regarding the culture and lifestyle of his native country throughout our time there, and one question stuck out to me: "Why doesn't Puerto

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Rico become an official part of the U.S.?" The answer is that Puerto Ricans don't want to lose their culture. After my visit there, the response truly made sense. If Puerto Rico were to become part of the U.S., they would automatically get that manner about

them that all Americans have which makes us so unappealing to other places in the world.

Another event that has recently taken place that reinforces the facts I already have to prove that Americans are jerks is of course the Olympics. Sure we didn't have any wrestlers set their bronze medals down on the ground while the winner received his gold medal, nor did we have any underage girls competing in the gymnastics events, but we did have that dark cloud of arrogance following the U.S. athletes everywhere they went. I had thought that the U.S. was doing a pretty good job of keeping the overconfident factor under control, until I heard that some American swimmers, not a certain 2008 eight time gold medalist world record holder by the way, but some less than desirable swimming folk, wouldn't shave their facial hair for their race because it was, "just preliminaries."

Overall, the people that reside in the United States, or maybe just the majority that give off that stench of permanent superiority need to change their tune because as of right now, the rest of the world has every reason to hate the U.S. for its mind set and outlook toward everything and everybody that isn't American.



ASYIA GOVER LEWIS AND CLARK

Three parties, a crowd? Hardly!

Ron Paul REVOLUTION



It's election season again, and time for the age-old American tradition of voting in our next president. Candidates have been gathering money, making speeches and churning out advertisements for months; a sure sign that the time of decision is fast approaching. Between the campaign "promises" and the mudslinging, a popular phrase for our choice in presidential hopefuls is "the lesser of two evils."

Everyone acknowledges that both Democrat and Republican candidates are corrupt, yet everyone continues to vote for them. Why? If you don't want someone corrupt in office, don't vote for someone you think might be corrupt. It seems like a simple concept, but campaigns and statements by major parties try (and succeed) to convince voters that it doesn't work that way. As James Joyner, a college professor with a PhD in political science, said in an article on outsidethebeltway.com titled "Third Party Candidates And Wasting Your Vote," "The only way it makes sense, then, to vote for a Bob Barr or Alan Keyes or Ralph Nader or some other person who will not be our next president is if you honestly have no preference whatsoever as to whether McCain or Obama prevails. Otherwise, even if it's a one-percent, hold-your-nose difference, you should vote for that guy."

With theories like this, Republicans and Democrats do their best to implant in your brain the idea that a third party or alternative candidate is just a waste of your vote. They aim to keep your number of options at two, so that there's much less competition, and you believe that you still have a choice. The reality, though, is that with the two major parties restricting you, you don't have a choice. In Israel, where democracy was established in 1948 and is still relatively new, there are eleven parties running in the current election, and all of them are equally and fairly represented. In addition, there are another nineteen Israeli parties that ran in the 2006 elections, but did not pass the electoral threshold, and countless other parties that ran in the past and have since merged, disbanded, or otherwise reformed. It seems crazy that a country a bit bigger than New Jersey and with a population a few hundred thousand under the state of Virginia's allows representation of so many different perspectives, when we in the mighty United States have only two, but that is the true nature of democracy, the way it was intended to be.

Here in the States, we have five parties currently in presidential contention: the Libertarian, Constitution and Green parties in addition to better-known Republican and Democrat parties. To be eligible for the elections, a presidential hopeful needs to have ballot status in enough states that their combined Electoral-College votes make up at least half the total Electoral-College votes. The fact that those five parties are in contention means, theoretic-

cally, that a representation of at least half the country supports Libertarian, Constitution and Green parties individually this year.

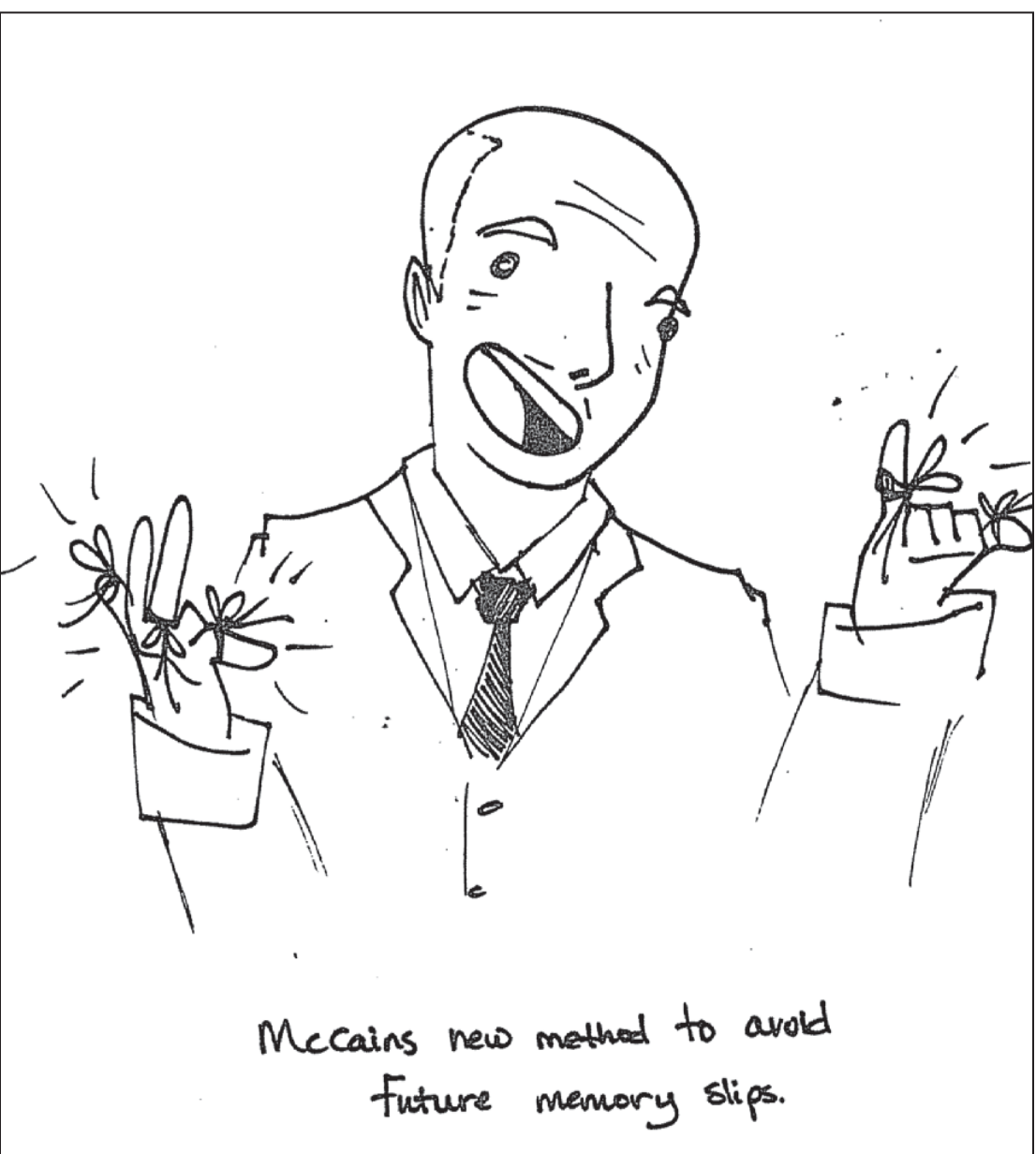
If those parties were similarly supported in the actual election, there's a fair chance that pitching in your support wouldn't be a "waste of a vote." Still don't think an alternative candidate is a good way to use your vote?

Contrary to what the Republican and Democrat parties might have you think, not all third-party candidates are nobodies with little experience or radical head cases with insane views. While it might be difficult to identify with the Marijuana Party or the Socialist Equality Party, a surprising number of third-party candidates were previously either Republican or Democrat, or vice-versa. Constitution Party nominee Rev. Charles Baldwin, Libertarian Party nominee Bob Barr and Alan Keyes, who sought Constitution Party nomination but came in second to Charles Baldwin, are all former Republicans, and Green Party nominee Cynthia McKinney is a former Democrat. Conversely, Ron Paul, who won about .02 percent of the total Republican delegates and is still heavily supported in the Spokane area even after suspending his campaign, has been nominated by the Libertarian party in the past.

For fans of alternative parties, the future looks pretty bleak. Third-party candidates, despite their requests and challenges, are almost never invited to participate in debates, and usually aren't represented in polls, as if they aren't even there. There is hope, though—in the 2000 elections, votes for Ralph Nader, the Green Party candidate at the time (now running as an independent), in New Hampshire and Florida vastly exceeded the difference in votes between Al Gore and George Bush.

On top of that, he was endorsed by the California Nurses Association and the United Electrical Workers. Republicans and Democrats can claim all day long that no one cares about any other party enough to give them any kind of chance, but the statistics make it clear that people do support third parties, they just don't have enough faith in their success. Voting for the one you think is more likely to win rather than the one you want doesn't really exercise your right to choose, does it? Continuing to vote for politicians who you know won't represent the people and won't be fair or honest when you'd rather have someone else in office just seems stupid, yet people do it every election.

Although third-party candidates do suffer from the public's lack of awareness, that isn't necessarily what they need to take their part in changing this country's leadership for the better. What they really need from us is a refusal to give support to someone we don't agree with, and a little bit of confidence that with enough time, and enough corrupt politicians, things will change.



Erin Murphy/Central Valley

Vietnam War got more press than current War on Terror

Opinionated bumper stickers and negative comments in political discussions are about the extent of anti-war protests these days. With the large number of people who claim to be against the War in Iraq, the public's attempt to make a stand has been pathetic. Protests and demonstrations occur, but because of lack of media attention, we do not see much of the action.

The Vietnam War and the War in Iraq might be seen in parallel. Each war has different purposes and objectives, but both involve American intervention to promote democracy—fighting communism in Vietnam and dictatorship in Iraq. Some people believe that the United States, as a world superpower, has a responsibility to defend other countries even if that means fighting the country's government to protect the citizens. Others believe the United States is wasting money and lives. With the Vietnam War, however, those who were against the war made their opinion known. During the Vietnam War, students at the Univer-

sity of Michigan began teach-ins allowing student to voice and argue their notions about the war. This method of non-violent protest spread to other campuses across the country.

Protest and demonstrations are held around the nation to protest the fighting in Iraq, but the demonstrations are not as nearly as large as those held during the Vietnam War. Vietnam protests sometimes had crowds of over 250,000 people. Anti-war demonstrations in this century have not drawn crowds any where near that number. Protest of the Vietnam War extended beyond student discussion and public displays of discontent. They had music that spread anti-war sentiments. Country Joe and the Fish—one of the performers at Woodstock—pokes fun at the pro-war attitudes of Americans in the song "I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag." They sarcastically encourage fathers to send their sons to war so they can "Be the first on your block / To have your boy come home in a

box." The song also suggests that soldiers sent to war were being sent to their imminent death. Presently, we have John Mayer's "Waiting on the World to Change," which mentions bringing home the soldiers in Iraq, but quickly adds that he "and all his friends" cannot do anything about it. The music and the protests are definitely out there somewhere, but they have not gained enough recognition to spread their ideas.

Two movies—"No End in Sight" and "Redacted"—produced by Magnolia Home Entertainment—attempt to reveal some truths about the War in Iraq. No End in Sight documents the government decisions through the process of sending troops to Iraq, and gives commentaries that seem to suggest the government was not proceeding in the correct way. Redacted gives a story—based on true events—of soldiers breaking down under the pressure of the every day life in Iraq. While it is not directly anti-war, it shows the war's negative effect on soldiers.

These two movies combined made less than 1.5 million in the United States. WWCompared to The Dark Knight, those numbers are miniscule. Maybe Americans are distracted by other causes. The pro-environment movement might be occupying the all the protesters of the country. Americans also have to worry about a declining economy and increasing gas prices. Distraction or preoccupation could be an excuse, but anti-war protesters of the sixties and seventies were also fighting civil rights battles while fighting for the anti-war cause. Selfishness might also be the force suppressing American protesters. The draft was an important factor driving the Vietnam protests, but the current war is fought by voluntarily-enlisted soldiers. If Americans are not being directly threatened, why should they care? The sixties and early seventies were partly characterized by the strong war opposition. This lack of public, peaceful protesting of the war could characterize our decade as lazy or apathetic.

Editorial