HIV and AIDS are as much about social relations as they are about biological and medical concerns. Across the world the global epidemic of HIV/AIDS has shown itself capable of triggering responses of compassion, solidarity and support, bringing out the best in people, their families and communities. However, individuals affected (or believed to be affected) by HIV have been rejected by their families, their loved ones and their communities. Fear of discrimination often prevents people from seeking treatment for AIDS or from admitting their HIV status publicly.

Sometimes, HIV and AIDS are believed to bring shame upon the family or community. And while negative responses to HIV/AIDS unfortunately widely exist, they often feed upon and reinforce dominant ideas of good and bad with respect to sex and illness, and proper and improper behaviors. AIDS stigma is expressed around the world in a variety of ways, including:

- Ostracism and avoidance of people with AIDS.
- Discrimination against people with AIDS.
- Compulsory HIV testing without prior consent or protection of confidentiality.
- Violence against persons who are perceived to have AIDS or to be infected with HIV.
- Quarantine of persons with HIV.

“Stigma and HIV/AIDS,” written at the request of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), HIV/AIDS are often reported that “AIDS stigma is effectively universal, but its form varies from one country to another, and the specific groups targeted for AIDS stigma vary considerably. Whatever its form, AIDS stigma inflicts suffering on people and interferes with attempts to fight the AIDS epidemic. People infected with the disease are ridiculed and abandoned by friends and family. HIV-positive women are treated very differently from men in many developing countries.”

In India, for example, the husbands who infected them may abandon women living with HIV or AIDS. Rejection by wider family members is also common. In some African countries, women, whose husbands have died from AIDS-related infections, have been blamed for their deaths. Men are likely to be accused for the “behavior” that resulted in their infection, whereas women are not. As stated in the HRSA review, “The impact of HIV/AIDS on women is particularly acute. In many developing countries, such as Kenya and Madagascar, women are economically, culturally and socially disadvantaged and lack equal access to treatment, financial support and education.”

A survey conducted in 2002 by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) among some 1,000 physicians, nurses and midwives in four Nigerian states, returned disturbing findings. One in 10 doctors and nurses admitted having refused to care for an HIV/AIDS patient or had denied HIV/AIDS patients admission to a hospital. Almost 40% thought a person’s appearance betrayed his or her HIV-positive status, and 20% felt that people living with HIV/AIDS had behaved immorally and deserved their fate. One factor fueling stigma among doctors and nurses is the fear of exposure to HIV resulting from a lack of protective equipment. Also at play was the frustration of not having medicines for treating HIV/AIDS patients, who therefore were seen as “dangerous.”

How can progress be made in overcoming the stigma and discrimination? How can one change people’s attitudes about AIDS? A number of changes can be achieved through the legal process. In some countries, including Africa, Kenya, Madagascar and Thailand people who are living with HIV or AIDS lack knowledge of their rights in society. In addition, institutional and other monitoring mechanisms can enforce the rights of people living with HIV or AIDS and provide powerful means of mitigating the worst effects of discrimination and stigma. For more information on HIV/AIDS awareness and putting an end to discrimination, please visit www.aidsalliance.org or www.popcouncil.org/hivaid/stigma.
Killing Dreams for War

By M. Martinia Mejia-Picard

Pain that floods the veins with razors instead of sweet blood... How does that blood run free again when part of your very existence has been killed leaving only a gaping wound? No human being, especially a mother, should go through this pain; yet whenever there is war, mothers feel the bullets that bite their children and exit through their hearts. As more money is being spent on occupation of Iraq as less on the war on poverty and for education, the needless deaths of young people are escalating.

Cindy Sheehan, middle-class mother and political activist, lost her son Casey on April 4, 2004; since then she has been a strong voice for bringing the troops home and ending the war. She told the Progressive in an interview by David Barsamian, in March 2006, “We’ve had all lost a is report in war. I say lost, but I don’t like that euphemism because Casey wasn’t lost; he was killed by George Bush’s murderous policies in the Middle East.” Her cries join with the chorus of mothers who have lost their children to poverty and police brutality.

This past March 19th marked the third anniversary of the war in Iraq. On this crisp, cold Sunday morning, protesters braved the bitter winds to challenge the ongoing war and stood to break the cycle of pain that engulfs so many parents and their children. Chants and banners symbolized that youth in the five boroughs of New York City were joining hands with their peers around the world in a protest against the under-funding of their education and communities and the over-funding for war.

The air was raw with chants and signs that read, “Fund People’s Needs, Not War,” “U.S. Out of Iraq,” and “Money for Education Not Occupation.” The protest was organized by the Answer Youth Coalition and was supported by Network and the Chicano Caucus from Columbia University. Speakers from different coalitions spoke against sending poor, young minorities to fight in a war against equally poor people overseas. They called for the end of a racist war that denounces Iraqis, as well as stopping the racism in places like the Bronx where many youths face racial-profiling, police brutality and an inadequate education.

The speakers also said no to the many military recruiters who hound young people. “Our government should work for us. They recruit Latinos for war, to come home and face being persecuted by the same people who sent them in the first place,” said Corina Garcia, who is part of the Chicano Caucus. As another speaker, a senior from NYU and co-coordinator of Answer Youth Coalition put it, “I have more in common with my poor Iraqi brothers and sisters than anyone in Congress, in Wall street or the Bush administration leading us in the false cry of democracy.”

To fund this useless war, the U.S government has already set aside $120 billion for this year, on top of the $300 billion they’ve already spent. In addition, while billions of our tax dollars are going to Halliburton, the Bechtels, the Blackwaters, to supposedly reconstruct Iraq, the majority of Iraqi people are left without their jobs and the bare essentials such as electricity and water: things that they used to have before the occupation. Entire Iraqi cities have been destroyed. As the latest edition of The Nation, over 150,000 Iraqis have been killed. The death count for U.S. soldiers is 2,300. It seems that from the Bronx to Baghdad, the rich are at war with the poor and working people.

As opposition mounts to the war in Iraq the volunteer army is running short of volunteers. To make up for the shortfall the U.S government is using increasingly aggressive measures. Schools, for example, where the majority of students are working-class and of African American or Hispanic decent are being aggressively targeted by military recruiters. As reported on the Cleveland Independent Media Center (IMC) website, federal education resources are shorted by $3.7 billion dollars while programs like the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps is growing in inner city and rural school districts. It targets low-income, working-class communities beset by unemployment, poverty and racism. Schools with ROTC programs are largely populated by youth of color who are trained to chant marching cadences such as, “I used to date a high school queen, now I’m just a private.” Also according to IMC, military recruiters have an extended access to college campuses in that their presence has been protected under the Solomon Amendment of 1966. The amendment ties federal funding to a schools willingness to permit recruiters on campus. Community colleges, where working-class students have more limited career opportunities, are particularly targeted by Pentagon recruiters.

As more young bodies are being blown up in war like 4th of July fireworks, promises used by military recruiters are falling on deaf ears. In an article in the Philadelphia Tribune of May 29, 2005, an activist named Margaret Prescott was quoted saying that when the military says it will pay for college education when recruits sign up, the money actually comes out of the young soldiers’ paychecks during his or her tour of duty. Besides promising the young recruit that they will never see combat they also claim that the military prepares people for work as civilians. “How many demolition experts are needed in civilian life? How many snipers and sharpshooters are needed in civilian life?” said Prescott. In an August 21, 2005 Los Angeles Times report, Linda Bilmes writes that recruitment among African Americans who make up nearly one-quarter of active duty forces despite being only 13% of the U.S. population, has fallen by 40%. The Pentagon has decided that the solution to the problem is Latinos who make up less than 10% of the active-duty forces, but comprise 16% of the 18-24 year-old U.S. population. This rapidly growing population is poorer and more likely to be underemployed than the average for the age group and has a lower rate of college attendance than whites or blacks. Before the Iraq war began President Bush signed an executive order allowing noncitzen permanent residents to serve in the military and to apply for citizenship on a fast track basis. Dangling the prospect of citizenship is a tactic the military recruiters find effective among young Latinos.

CUNY education used to be free until Blacks and Latinos fought for and won open admissions in the 1960’s. As the percentage of non-white CUNY students shot up sudden government decided ever-increasing tuition was needed. If CUNY were free today no young people would join the military in order to afford an education. “Since 1990, state funding for CUNY has dropped by 31% in real dollars while tuition has doubled. In 2003 CUNY senior colleges were only funded at 55% of SUNY state-operated colleges in terms of funding per full time equivalent student,” reports the professional staff congress of CUNY, first vice president Steve London, in an article published in the Clarion, February, 2006. “It is hard to imagine that the CUNY/SUNY funding gap doesn’t have something to do with race, noting that 72% of CUNY students are non-white.” Democracy needs to start at home. The great boxer Muhammad Ali once said when he refused to be drafted for the Vietnam War, “No Viet-Cong ever called me a n**ger.”
Jerry Springer Meets Twelve Monkeys in Ancient Greece

BY CHARLES CHEN

Predestination stinks. That is the lesson that anyone might draw upon seeing Sophocles’ Oedipus, directed by Bruce Willis, the latest theater production from Queensborough Community College. Sophocles’ play is about a man who knows a dark destiny awaits him, who tries everything to avoid it, but whose course of the play he unrolls the events that make his fate unavoidable. Similar to Terry Gilliam’s 1995 film Twelve Monkeys with Bruce Willis, the hero of Sophocles’ tragedy acts in defiance of his predestined future, realizing too late that he is but a pawn of destiny and that even his defiance had been accounted for in the book of his fate. If you believe that you are not in tune with Ancient Greek plays, or in live theater in general, no problem. The QCC production is very accessible. Surprisingly engaging, it has all the shock value of a Jerry Springer episode, but with more class and less hair-pulling.

As the play opens, the audience witnesses the very large projected images of suffering from all over the world and in various periods of man’s history. These images are accompanied by rather distressing music meant to express the suffering taking place in Thebes, the Greek City that is the setting for Oedipus the King. Expecting the cast will wear togas with leaves on their heads? The denizens of Thebes could be cast in Victor Hugo’s Les Misérables with each character dressed in contemporary clothes with humble European village flair. Expecting to be confounded with old Shakespearean rape? Oedipus the King is easy to understand and follow. At the same time, QCC’s production remains faithful to the text, and is a largely successful attempt to capture the timelessness of Sophocles’ tale. No cheesy or horrific attempts at modernization with gilt or glare, but dignified and subtle. All elements of the production work together in establishing a mood that a contemporary audience can relate to, making it possible to identify with the growing unease each character experiences over the course of Sophocles’ tragic story.

The QCC stage design and props are simple and unchanging, and it is perfect that way. Anything more would distract from the story. We see the entrance to the palace, the podium of a religious temple, and a tree placed center stage. Modern, elegant and simplistic, the minimalist design works very well. Over the course of the play there are changes in light and the use of a smoke-machine, but not much else. Do not expect to see elaborate special effects and grand settings...that’s not what Sophocles’ play is about. Oedipus the King is hardcore drama.

Refreshingly, the actors in this production do not act the same way, and yet succeed in establishing the mood or emotion of their characters that constantly keeps the audience on the edge of its seat. There are many times in the play when one cannot predict what a particular character will say or do next. Think Juliet telling Romeo she is pregnant and should kill their families with a sawed-off shotgun and run off on their honeymoon. Well, not quite that extreme, but almost. Oedipus, played by Mike Aquilino, holds the entire production together as the dignified and perhaps arrogant king, who slowly transforms into a desperate and tragic hero.

Kreon played by Jean Lodescar, a laid back character that everyone in the palace relies upon as a buffer from disaster, becomes volatile and unstable. Pam Justino, who plays Jocasta, the wife of Oedipus, through her body language and voice appears so volatile you think she will explode on stage. My personal favorite, however, is the actor who plays the old shepherd who finally spills the beans to Oedipus thereby confirming his dark destiny. The shepherd provides Oedipus with the missing piece in his life’s puzzle, unlocking the mystery that shocked the entire audience. The gags and eerie silence in the QCC theater auditorium was clearly in response to this character.

Johann Boteja was awesome in his portrayal of the creepy mountain man stereotype that always has a forbidden secret that will rock the entire world. However, you cannot help but to feel sorry for his character as well.

I want the reader to understand that your humble reviewer is not by any stretch of the imagination a theater buff. He has not seen a Broadway show in his life. While a connoisseur of legitimate theater might provide a more discerning and nuanced review, a man who has relied on big budget movies and the FOX network for entertainment for most of his life is a tough customer and nit-picker. In short, the 90 minute run time is an extreme stretch for anything other than big budget explosions with robots, and an established taste for ridiculous shock value. That said Queensborough’s titillating production of Sophocles’ Oedipus the King gets 5 stars.

CUNY Professors take Student Hostages

BY BENEDICT ARNOLD

CUNY Professors on several campuses have taken students hostage in the hope of speeding to a close the PSC-CUNY contract negotiations. Stressed beyond an ability to recuperate their fragile hold on reality, meet mortgage and rental payments, cover basic dental and supplemental medical expenses for procedures no longer covered by the expired PSC-CUNY contract, missing car payments, and in a few cases going without food for days at a time, CUNY community and 4-year college professors have announced.

“Enough is enough. We will not release the students in our classrooms, despite their complaints, rising levels of body odor, hunger, and incessant cell phoning and text messaging to concerned friends and family. CUNY management must come to the table with a reasonably respectable salary and benefits package.”

Professor Letsinkimudski, a spokesman for the faculty hostage takers, has admitted that students and their parents, and some administrative officials, may have been taken by surprise. Nevertheless, “CUNY faculty has been debating the idea of taking student hostages for several semesters. This is not a rash or spontaneous act by a few renegade or otherwise unstable faculty members.” Indeed, a majority of CUNY faculty and staff interviewed over the past two weeks have publicly voiced their support of the hostage taking. Interviewed by FOX’s Geraldo Rivera, CUNY Chancellor Goldstein, however, has characterized the hostage taking as “a radically desperate act on the part of teachers whose foremost charge is the instruction and safety of their students.”

A student body president, requesting anonymity, has released an unsigned letter stating that “Although the student government officers sympathize with CUNY teachers who are asked to fulfill their professional responsibilities at sub-standard salaries and benefits,” they should “at least allow students trips to the bathroom.” Monitoring conditions in some of the classes being held hostage, the student president notes that, “Oh my god! The smell is really, really bad! I’m afraid some people are getting sick from the stink, never mind hunger.” According to Prof. Letsinkimudski, however, “faculty have allowed food vendors to come to the door, and the students have had access to fluids and some solid foods. No one is starving to death, yet.”

On that ominous note, one can only hope that CUNY management, Governor Pataki, and Mayor Bloomberg see the light and come to the rescue of students, faculty and staff with food and soap in hand ASAP.
What a Building! What Art!

By Wilmar Ethiene

Art has often been defined as "the adoption of things in the natural world to the use of life." A gallery, on the other hand, is "a connecting passageway as between one room and another." The art on display at the QCC Art Gallery runs the gamut from a permanent collection of African art to the famous Pop artist Andy Warhol to the current exhibition of QCC student work that runs through the end of April. Each exhibition is produced with the help of QCC president Eduardo Marti, and the tireless effort of the QCC Art Gallery director Faustino Quintanilla. Unfortunately, few QCC students seem to be aware of the Art Gallery building. Those who do notice it seem to be unsure if they can go in, or think that it is only for faculty, or perhaps they do not care. It may be that the Art Gallery needs to expand upon its outreach efforts to QCC students. Whatever may explain the low level of awareness among students regarding this campus resource, the QCC Art Gallery can make you feel like you have teleported off campus. The building itself transports its visitors. Recently having undergone a multi-million dollar renovation, it has the feel and the look of the fancier art galleries in Chelsea.

Goya’s Last Works

By Andelkiz Perez

Known as the last of the old masters and the first of the moderns, Francisco de Goya y Lucientes is one of Spain’s most famous artists and widely acknowledged as one of the greatest portrait painters in European history. Goya is more acknowledged today than ever before. The melancholy seen in many of his works, as well as his satires of aristocracy and his revolutionary spirit made him famous. He was the court painter for three bourbon kings — Charles III, Charles IV, and Ferdinand VII. During his tenure at court, he would often make fun of the monarchy. For example, his portrait La Maja Desnuda (The Naked Maja), is believed to be the Duchess of Alba in 1800. Before Goya no other court painter has satirized the monarchy. Goya, however, was a liberal sympathizer. He created many works that focused on the brutality of war. His series of paintings, Los Desastres de la Guerra (The Disasters of War), were created during the peninsular war and expulsion of the Napoleonic armies in 1814.

Many art galleries and museums have exhibited Goya’s works, but none has been as unique as the exhibition of the artist’s last works at the Frick Museum in New York City. Indeed, this is the first exhibition in the United States that focuses on Goya’s last works which in previous exhibitions here and abroad have oftentimes been excluded entirely. The Frick exhibition covers four years, 1824 to 1828, during which Goya was in exile in Bordeaux, France escaping from the absolutism of Ferdinand VII. Many of his paintings during this time were of fellow exiles. He also created imaginary figures, including images of witches and of deformed people. Two wonderful examples are The Colossus, which in 1812 was called El Gigante (The Giant), and in Se Quieren Mucho (They Love Each Other A Lot), Goya painted two demons hugging each other.

The Frick exhibition begins with a portrait of Maria Martinez de Puga, a painting that belongs to the Frick’s permanent collection. The exhibition, located in the basement gallery of the Frick Museum, shows fifty-one examples of Goya’s works during his time in Bordeaux. The mesmerizing collection is composed of 10 oil paintings, 10 tiny works on ivory, and 31 drawings and prints.

Goya kept painting even during his time of illness, an illness that left him deaf at the age of forty-six, 32 years prior to his exile in Bordeaux. Many of the paintings made during his illness were self-portraits and one was of himself and his friend Dr. Arrieta, presented as a gift to thank him for his services. Goya transmitted different feelings and emotion in his paintings; it was as if he wanted to express what the person that he was painting was feeling. Besides portraits Goya also made drawings in black crayon on white paper, many of the figures in these drawings were derived entirely from his imagination and were not intended to realistically portray the people he knew. His portraits, drawings, and ivory miniatures in which, despite their size, one may easily read smiles and frowns, are all very expressive.

The Frick exhibition has been very well received by Goya aficionados, “It was truly breathtaking,” said Kristin West who has been to the exhibition three times. Goya’s Last Works is open through May 14, 2006. Tickets are $15 for adults, $10 for senior citizens, $5 for students with ID, and on Sundays from 11:00am-1:00pm you pay as you wish. The Frick museum is located at 1 East 70th Street in Manhattan, across from Central Park and close to 5th Avenue where there are many stores and restaurants. It is also four blocks from the Whitney museum. For further information on the exhibit and gallery viewing times log on to WWW.FRICK.ORG or call (212)288-0700.
Imagine yourself living in China, a communist country. You hear about a new meditation practice that helps strengthen the body and mind from a friend. You practice this form of meditation and before you know it, you are tortured and sent to prison. What did you do? People in China are being prosecuted and imprisoned because they are practitioners of Falun Gong.

Falun Gong is a Chinese spiritual practice of refining the body and mind. It is based on the central precepts of Truth, Compassion and Tolerance and is a "cultivation practice" with emphasis on both elevating the mind and enhancing physical health. In 1992, Li Hongzhi, the founder of Falun Gong, introduced the practice to the general Chinese public. After teaching for two years in China, the practice continued to grow by word-of-mouth. Today, Falun Gong is practiced by 100 million people in 60 countries.

Falun Gong incorporates Buddhist and Taoist principles, and combines them with exercise and body cultivation. The Chinese government has relentlessly suppressed religious groups since achieving power in 1949. The rest of the world is most familiar with its oppression of non registered Christian groups. However, the government has also persecuted many types of religious and spiritual groups, including Falun Gong. Indeed, it seems apparent that post-1992, with the growing popularity of Falun Gong, that Jiang Zemin, the communist leader of China, directly ordered the persecution. In fact, the suppression extends beyond such groups to include organizations that teach only simple meditation and gymnastic techniques. The government appears to fear any national group that is capable of organizing its followers into direct action.

Families have been dramatically affected by this persecution. Practitioners have been illegally detained and killed. According to Amnesty International (a human rights group), more than 500 people since the year 2001 have been sentenced to prison for up to 18 years. Over 100,000 have been illegally sent to industry camps without trial and more than 1,000 deaths have occurred under police supervision. Sources inside the Chinese government have disclosed that the actual number of deaths is many times greater. Most of the victims are teenagers, mothers, the elderly, school teachers, farmers and judges. According to the government's official internal statistics, as of November 28, 2005, 2,630 participants have been confirmed dead. On March 8, 2006, an update on the death toll raises the number dead to 2,840 victims. On average, 37 victims are killed each month.

In January 2003, U.S. citizen Charles Lee traveled to China to clarify the truth about the government's persecution of Falun Gong. He was arrested the minute he stepped off the plane in the Guangzhou City Airport. He then was sentenced to 3 years in prison. After serving the full three years in a Chinese prison, Lee returned to the United States February of 2006. Amazingly, even a U.S. citizen can be prosecuted if he/she is practicing Falun Gong meditation in China.

According to the Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service, during the beginning of March 2006, Falun Gong participant, Su Diankui, a 21-year-old college student and her mother Xu Diankui were sent to the Pingshan County Detention Center, in Gansu Province. Her mother was locked on the third floor division of the institution and the young woman was locked on the second floor division of the institution. Pingshan County Detention Center

MLB Gives the Green Light to Steroids

By KYONG LEE

With declining television ratings and fading fan interest, the commissioner has approved a bill that would allow athletes unlimited use of steroids. In a shocking turn of events, Major League Baseball has approved all use of steroids among its athletes. The decisive meeting in April 11th, a three hour closed door meeting on steroid use in professional sports, involving high ranking baseball officials and some members of Congress, ended with a twist: the unanimous agreement among all parties to allow athletes to use steroids.

MLB's previous stance against steroids has been thrown out the door. One official was quoted as saying, "the sudden change will come as a shock to many but there is no denying the fact that it'll be better for the game."

Commissioner Bud Selig, who had adamantly opposed steroid use, changed his mind on the issue when he became apparent that the legalization of steroids would "provide more juice" for the game. In a statement released to the press, Selig states, "I'm giving the people what they want. Steroids make our players stronger and stronger players will produce more home runs. People want to see high scoring games and 600 foot home runs being crushed out of the park. It's good for the game and other sports should follow suit." The change, effective immediately, has triggered the sales of all types of

China's Own Holocaust


By KELLY MOLINA

refused their requests to see each other. Their family members have asked the warden to release the two ladies for medical treatment many times, but the camp administration continues to reject their requests in fear that administrative crimes or criminal actions by detention center guards will be uncovered. As a consequence, Su Diankui remains locked in the camp without access to medical treatment. According to Amnesty International, guards "brainwash" and "punish" Falun Gong participants. Several methods of torture that have been documented:

• "Death Frame," used to cuff both wrists and ankles in a very uncomfortable position.
• Force feeding through tubes inserted in the nostrils and stomach, causing infection and intestinal damage.
• Sleep deprivation for 92-160 hours while exposed to extreme conditions.
• Locked in the "smallest cage," "water cell," or "thin cage."
• Injecting unknown drugs by force; burning through electric shock devices; as well as piercing with wires, rape, limb twisting and suffocation.

Despite an extensive cover-up and information blockade, Falun Gong participants have, at great risk to themselves, provided detailed eyewitness accounts of torture, extortion, rape and murder to the outside world. After a death, police deny the brutal torture inflicted upon their victims to family members by stating that the cause of death was "undetermined." To complete the cover-up, the bodies of the victims are cremated so that there is no possibility of forensic evidence.

Practitioners of Falun Gong in China have made appeals to the Chinese government through the proper legal channels, and have protested the persecution with nonviolent public protests. Practitioners outside China have taken up long marches, staged sit-ins, launched letter-writing campaigns, staged rallies, held press conferences, documented rights abuses and started lawsuits against the responsible perpetrators for crimes against humanity. As of today, there has not been a single report of violent protest on the part of Falun Gong supporters - despite beatings, torture, jailing, murder, and other grave injustices. The best way you can help is to let people around you know what Falun Gong is and to tell them about the current persecution in China. Write or call your Congressman and City Council members - by raising the public's awareness of the atrocities being committed you can help to put a stop to them.

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New “McReality” on FOX TV

BY CHARLES CHEN

Not to be outdone by such competitive reality fare as “America’s Top Model,” “The Apprentice,” “Blow Out,” and “Project Runway,” FOX Network is set to pursue a different direction in the TV reality sweepstakes. “Many of the so-called reality shows are pretty unrealistic to the common person in America,” states an anonymous Fox executive in an exclusive interview with Communiqué. “We need a show for the average Joe, the common man. Racing on a tropical island, designing clothes for top models, competing for a job with Donald Trump, and training to be a super-model are not average Joe things. The average viewer cannot hope to relate to these people. America needs a reality show where they can feel connected to the contestants.” FOX Network will soon air a reality show where contestants will fight for the right to work at where else? “McDonald’s! What could be more average than that?” The name of the show has not yet been disclosed in an effort to thwart the competition.

Several media commentators have already weighed in about FOX’s new show, asking how FOX will find contestants willing to compete for a minimum wage job in the mega-fast food restaurant. “We found 12!” states a second anonymous FOX television executive. “You would be surprised how many people can’t find a job.”

Contestants will compete with each other in the many aspects of working at McDonald’s. French fry frying, hamburger stacking, floor mopping, Happy Meal box assembly, and cash register etiquette are but a few contests the contestants will compete in during their attempt to be hired at a McDonald’s in southwestern Tennessee.

Of course, no reality show is complete without its iconic host. “The Apprentice” has Donald Trump, “America’s Top Model” Tyra Banks. Who does McDonald’s have? No other than Ronald McDonald, complete with the red ‘fro and the oversized shoes. “It gets no bigger than Ronald McDonald,” says a Fox executive, “and man, are those shoes enormous.” Cleatus, a 32-year old contestant who survived 3 episodes before getting the boot shared his experience on first meeting his hero: “I couldn’t believe it the first time I met him. I seen all his magical commercials when I was a kid and was so excited.” But Cleatus would soon have his heart broken. “But when I went up to him and told him I was a lifetime member of the Ronald McDonald’s kid club and showed him my official membership card, he laughed at me really loud and told me to get back to work.”

Cleatus it appears is not the only contestant on the new FOX show to share his malcontent about their iconic boss. “He’s a slave driver,” says one contestant. Hearing angry cries including, for example, “I am surrounded by dorks,” and “How did we cast these losers?” by the burger clown set many of the early contestants on edge. “He is one burnt clown,” shared one contestant. “He would come to the show almost every morning stumbling, with a bottle of Mad Dog in his hand and mumbling something about the @#$%!!! Burger King. “What’s weird is that you can’t tell for sure how intoxicated he is because of all that make-up on his face.”

“Kids are afraid of him,” says Patty, another contestant on the show. “Once he was trying to make animal balloons at the grand opening of a restaurant, and when the balloon popped he started spewing profanities. Kids were crying, mothers were covering their ears, and fathers were laughing hysterically.” “Maybe he should eat more Happy Meals,” says a child who witnessed the event, “he is not happy.”

Still, one female contestant can’t help but see an endearing quality in Ronald McDonald. “I think he’s hot. No man can rock a red ‘fro better than Ronald.”

The “McReality” show will air on FOX fall 2006, headlining two additional FOX quality reality programs, “When Lawyers Attack,” and “My Wife is My Cousin.”

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The Abortion Debate

BY CHRISTINA CELLUCCI

For years, abortion has been a very controversial subject. Some people believe in a woman’s right to choose while others argue that the elective termination of a pregnancy is equivalent to murder. An article published on CNN.com, March 6, 2006, reported that Governor Mike Rounds had signed legislation banning nearly all abortions in the state of South Dakota.

According to the CNN report, the legislation states that it is a crime for any doctor to perform an abortion in the state of South Dakota unless the woman’s life is in jeopardy, regardless of whether the unplanned pregnancy was caused by rape or incest. Under the new law, a doctor could receive up to 5 years in prison if they perform an illegal abortion. This legislation is set to go into effect on July 1, but a federal judge may suspend it during a legal challenge. However, with South Dakota passing such legislation, one may well ask when and if other states will follow its example.

According to an article on ABCNews.go.com dated March 3, 2006, several other states are now looking into changing their abortion laws. According to the ABCNews article, legislation is being introduced and/or drawn up in Kentucky, Ohio, Alabama, Indiana, Georgia, Missouri, Mississippi, Rhode Island, South Carolina and Tennessee. The article quotes NARAL Pro-Choice America President Nancy Keenan as stating that, “What we are seeing is that these states are emboldened by the climate in this country.”

She says, “They see a pro-life president, a pro-life congress and senate, and a president who nominated two members into the Supreme Court who he said would be in the mold of [Justices] Scalia and Thomas.”

The case of Roe vs. Wade has been revisited a great deal by legal scholars and the media in response to South Dakota’s new legislation, leaving many to wonder whether it could possibly be overturned. In Roe vs. Wade, a court case in 1973, the Supreme Court ruled that a woman would have the constitutional right to have an abortion during the first 6 months of pregnancy. However, before this ruling most states did not allow abortion, unless the pregnancy threatened a woman’s life. The court ruled that these states could restrict abortions during the last 3 months of pregnancy, which is when medical experts state that the fetus is capable of a “meaningful life” outside the womb. The case of Roe vs. Wade sparked the pro-life movement, with a campaign to restore the abortion restrictions to what they were before this ruling.

Rev. Msgr. Robert J. Thelen of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church in Ozone Park, Queens feels that the legislation to ban abortion is “A political attempt to force the hand of the Supreme Court.” In my interview with Rev. Thelen, he stated that, “A woman has a right to privacy, but that does not extend to the life of an unborn child. The child is not a liver or a kidney, it is in her body it is not of her body in the same way as a kidney is.” He also feels that “it is not unreasonable for the laws of the nation to allow abortion in cases of rape and incest. A woman has an obligation in justice to not terminate a pregnancy, with rape and incest it’s a case of hermos to give birth to the child and give it up for adoption.”

For years, there has also been a growing controversy about the “abortion pill” (brand name Mifepristone). According to OptedLine.org, this drug is used by women who are within 28-49 days of their last menstrual period. This drug consists of two different medications and is taken at the doctor’s office, requiring three office visits. On the first visit the woman is given RU-486 or mifepristone. The woman is to return to the doctor’s office 2 days later and is given misoprostol. These 2 medications combined cause the fetus to expel itself from the uterus. According to the Feminist Woman’s Health Center’s web site, www.fwhc.org, this method differs from surgical abortions in some ways. The abortion pill is considered to be more private because the woman is able to go to the doctor’s office and in 2 visits she has had an abortion without needing to undergo the vacuum aspiration or surgical abortion. Surgical abortion takes one visit to a clinic, and the procedure takes about 3 to 5 minutes, then the woman returns for a follow up about 3 to 4 weeks later.

Some disadvantages of the abortion pill include: the pill takes several days to complete the abortion, bleeding, cramping, it falls more often than the surgical, and it takes 2 visits to the doctor’s office. With the surgical abortion some disadvantages include: anesthetics and drugs are needed for pain, this procedure requires the use of medical instruments which are placed inside the uterus, the woman has less control over the abortion and who is with her, there are possible complications although they occur in less than 1% of cases, and this procedure can not be done as early as the abortion pill can. Both of these methods are considered safe. The abortion pill is 97% successful; however in the event that this method should fail a surgical abortion would be needed. Surgical abortion is over 99% successful, less than 1% of the time it fails and needs to be repeated.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, half of the pregnancies of American women are unintended, and half of these are ended by an abortion. Once abortion has been banned in South Dakota on July 1, a woman would have to leave the state in order to find a physician who can legally perform an abortion. Abortion is a very controversial subject about which everyone has their own opinion. In the United States the questions remain: Should a woman have the right to abort? Or, should the fetus have the right to live?

College and Alcohol Don’t Mix

BY SARA MASHEE

Recent studies have suggested that growing numbers of college students drink irresponsibly and do a tremendous amount of harm to themselves and others. It is a well-known fact that hard drinking increases the likelihood of committing a litany of crimes including getting into trouble with campus police, damaging property, drinking and driving, and causing serious injury. In addition, alcohol abuse is a major health concern among college students. A student is often identified as contributing to long-term health problems and illnesses, such as liver damage.

“Myth of the students don’t want to do it, but they don’t know how to say no, I think actually getting the numbers out will help the public understand that this is a very large problem, perhaps a larger problem that people might have otherwise thought,” says Mark Goldman, a psychology professor at University of South Florida, in the “Health watch” on CBS news on April 9th 2007.

According to an article published in the April 9th 2002 issue of The Digital Collegian, a spokesperson for Penn State observed that, “This college town, like every other college town in the country, has an atmosphere that wildly promotes alcohol.” But is this true? Do all college students drink irresponsibly? Is it true that alcohol is promoted in the cities and on the campuses of every college and university? A study by the federally supported Task Force on College Drinking, released in March 2006, reports that “drinking by college students contributes to an astonishing 1,400 student deaths, 500,000 injuries, and 70,000 cases of sexual assault or date rape each year.”

Because alcohol is so widely used and socially accepted in our society, it is often not considered a ‘drug’, nor is it considered as being particularly harmful. However, evidence from research shows that consumption of alcohol at harmful levels is increasing, particularly among young people. Researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health Alcohol Study (CAS) (www.hsph.harvard.edu/cas) presented the results of their study in the March 2002 issue of the Journal of American College Health: “Despite positive changes thought to be conducive to lowering binge-drinking rates, a remarkably similar proportion of students (44 percent) were classified as binge drinkers in 2001, as in previous survey years (1993, 1997, 1999). One encour...”

continued on page 15

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CEDAW's ratification and implementation.

Beginning April 3 through April 10, on college and high school campuses across the country, thousands of students will demand Congress to take action and call for an end to discrimination against women. More than 1,100 Amnesty International student groups joined by more than 100 student groups from other organizations will protest during Amnesty International USA’s national week of student action. This year’s efforts are aimed at convincing U.S. senators to support the treaty for the rights of women, officially named the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The organizations will take action by organizing protest, vigils, sit-ins and petition signing on college campuses.

The treaty’s ratification and implementation.

Amnesty International is an activist organization that has more than 1.8 million members worldwide. Amnesty International undertakes research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the individual’s rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights. Over 150 countries take part and participate in Amnesty International.

Volunteer activists from all around the world work together for a world where everyone enjoys human rights.

Participants in AI are independent of economic, governmental, ideological, political, or religious interests. Volunteer activists from all around the world work together for a world where everyone enjoys human rights. Their main focus is to free all prisoners of conscience, to ensure prompt and fair trials for all political prisoners, to abolish the death penalty, torture and other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, to end extrajudicial executions and “disappearances,” and to fight impunity by working to ensure perpetrators of such abuses are brought to justice in accordance with international standards. Amnesty International has proven itself to be effective on all fronts, having successfully persuaded governments to change their laws and practices.

Amnesty International carries out its work by mobilizing its members. Members search for facts, talk to victims, observe trials and interview local human rights activists and governmental officials. Anyone can work with Amnesty International simply by becoming a member and making a donation. Amnesty International is funded only by donations, it receives no government aid. Amnesty International gets its information from prisoners and their families, lawyers, journalists, religious bodies, community workers, humanitarian agencies, and other human rights organizations. Amnesty international makes sure it has the facts right by relying on sources of information both inside and outside the country, including news media reports, refugees, and diplomatic representatives abroad.

Surprisingly, out of the 111 schools participating in Amnesty International USA’s national week of student action, CUNY is not represented. Schools in the New York City metropolitan area that are participating include NYU, Columbia University, St. John’s University, the Kew Forest School, St. Ann’s School, and Benjamin Cardozo High School. If you would like to become a member of Amnesty International, apply online at www.amnestyusa.org/nwsa. You can bring Amnesty International to your college or high school campus next year during the national week of student action and become part of something that makes a difference.

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The Fate of the Freedom Tower Memorial
By Tahira Memon

On June 29, 2005 architects David Childs and Daniel Libeskind revealed plans for the new Freedom Tower, the planned center piece building of the new World Trade Center complex in New York City. In an effort to comfort the families who lost loved ones during the attacks of September 11th, and to honor the dead a planned memorial “Reflecting Absence” is to be built beneath street level. Construction on the memorial is expected to be completed in 2009 and is expected to cost $1 billion. Gretchen Dykstra, President and CEO of the World Trade Center Memorial Foundation, has noted that, “This marks the true beginning. After September 11th, many people around the world built temporary memorials and now it is time to build a permanent memorial to pay tribute to those who died and to bring understanding to future generations” (www.project rebirth.org).

Some family members of the victims of the attack on 9/11, however, are protesting the planned memorial complex. Instead, they want an aboveground memorial with a September 11th museum and visitor center though these ideas were never part of the agreement with the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. The LMDC warns that if these demands are met, new demands will follow. Mayor Michael Bloomberg, in an article by Barbara Jarvis, has commented that, “In order for Lower Manhattan to continue and grow as one of the world’s pre-eminent business centers, it is essential that the World Trade Center site be built out correctly, completely and as quickly as possible” (globest.com). The LMDC’s position is that revising the memorial at this time will unreasonably delay the rebuilding process and significantly increase costs.

A second issue victim’s families raised concerns the subject of the exhibits planned for the memorial museum. According to the International Freedom Center’s Web site, the planned museum will not only deal with the international impact of September 11th, but also address such issues as segregation in America and the history of the Holocaust. In response, protesters have gathered at ground zero to alert the country that plans for the World Trade Center Memorial will heavily disrespect the victims of the worst attack on American soil. Charles Wolf, whose wife died in the World Trade Center collapse, has stated, “It doesn’t belong at a memorial, you wouldn’t put a debate about Nazism and authoritarianism at Dachau” (Fox News, 2005).

September 11th families also revealed at a press conference in Washington, DC on June 29, 2005 that the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation is projecting that the underground memorial center will have up to 20,000 visitors daily but can only accommodate half that number. More than 10,000 people a day will be turned away from the underground memorial if current plans proceed because there is not enough space to accommodate all visitors.

President Bush and Congress were called on during the press conference by the September 11th families who insisted that American tax dollars be directed only towards the memorial and not the cultural complex. The families said they were turning to federal officials for help because the city and state leaders have resisted their calls to remove cultural institutions from the plans. The families argue that it would be better for everyone if they simply remove such artistic/cultural debates from the 16-acre site. They also looked to Congress to investigate how American tax dollars are being spent on the memorial and redevelopment plans and to establish better accountability controls.

In response to the pressure brought to bear by the protesting families, New York Governor Pataki has stated, “I view that memorial site as sacred grounds, akin to the beaches of Normandy or Pearl Harbor, and we will not tolerate anything on that site that denigrates America, denigrates New York or freedom, or denigrates the sacrifice or courage that the heroes showed on September 11” (www.takebackthememorial.org). Stay tuned.

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The Voice of Women

By Crystal Zelada

Should women compete with men to be politically powerful? Since the early 1900's, women have overcome many obstacles and won many rights previously denied due to gender discrimination, including the right to vote, equal pay for equal work, and other civil and human rights. Today, however, women still struggle for equal access and participation, especially when running for public office. Women’s full participation in political life should be encouraged. There have been women presidents in Bolivia, Argentina, Nicaragua, Ireland, Iceland, Chile and other countries. No woman, however, has yet gained the public support and respect necessary to run for President of the United States.

One difficulty for women running for high office may be convincing the voters. Many people, men and women, appear to doubt that women possess the requisite capabilities to hold positions of public responsibility. Women are all too often questioned about their emotional and mental strength when, as with their male counterparts, they should be judged on their public service accomplishments and political skills, in addition to their education. The voters feel that women have a tougher time persuading are men and the elderly. Older voters may prefer male candidates while younger voters may be more open to any candidate male or female. But, voters also discriminate for different reasons. One is gender identification and preference, i.e., men vote for male candidates and women vote for female candidates. USA Today claims that the greatest difference for a woman candidate is to demonstrate “toughness” in a way voters are comfortable with. If a woman is too tough she is viewed as masculine, whereas, if she shows weakness she will not be taken seriously. Women, apparently, must show toughness but also be compassionate.

Unfortunately, the double-standard imposed on women and the lack of general encouragement by both the public and male politicians has effectively discouraged many from running for high office. In the news media, music videos, and popular magazines women are represented in a very limited way. There are women working in government but you do not hear much about them. If you ask a little girl, for example, who Britney Spears is she will probably know, but if you ask her about Condoleezza Rice there is a good chance she will not recognize who she is. Women should not be represented as weak and dependent but as strong and independent. Women are as capable as men but must often prove themselves by working harder than their male opponents. However, women cannot point their fingers at men and leave it at that. Women have not had the loudest voice when it comes to voting. We tend to be indecisive and vote at the last minute. What, one wonders, would happen if the same number of women and men voted? One thing is for certain, there would be a corresponding increase in women’s political power.

What does give women an advantage in the political, as well as in the traditional domestic sphere, is sensitivity to inter-personal dynamics and emotions, the ability to empathize with others. Such skills, and they are skills, would be especially useful, for example, when confronting the improvement of public education, and helping to identify resources for the growing number of homeless women and children. Women are viewed as more compassionate by the public, but first they must prove their abilities. Women have to build a strong background, demonstrate financial expertise, and be able to make good decisions.

There has been support for women wishing to enter politics. For example, The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). IDEA has been active in raising awareness about the effects of electoral systems and political parties on women’s political representation. The problem facing IDEA and other organizations today is how to advance gender and democracy issues in general. According to IDEA women have made important inroads in politics in recent years, but the levels of women’s representation continues to lag far behind that of men. For more information about women issues contact IDEA at (468) 698-3700 or e-mail at info@idea.int.
EDITORIAL

A DISCREPANCY IN THE PRESIDENCIES

BY ANTHONY GENNA

There may be many differences between the presidential terms of Bill Clinton and that of George W. Bush, Jr. However, the biggest difference between the two may be perceived in the movement, or lack of movement, to impeach. Former president Clinton was impeached on charges that many scholars of constitutional law have argued were “trivial” in comparison to the proposed articles of impeachment against President Bush. Still, there has been little successful action taken against the current administration.

The following is a comparison of the articles of impeachment brought against each president.

Clinton provided false and misleading testimony to a grand jury regarding the Paula Jones case and his relations with Monica Lewinsky.

Clinton had obstructed justice in an effort to cover up and conceal evidence regarding the Paula Jones case.

By way of contrast, former United States Attorney General Ramsey Clark has introduced eighteen proposed articles of impeachment against President Bush. For sake of brevity the following are a few of the more severe charges:

“Seizing power to wage wars of aggression in defiance of the U.S. Constitution and the U.N. Charter.”

“Authorizing, ordering, and condoning, assassinations, summary executions, kidnappings, torture and physical and psychological coercion of prisoners.”


President Clinton was not charged with ordering assassinations or for detaining American citizens in disregard of their Constitutional rights, or for starting a “pre-emptive” war without approval from Congress. Yet the effort expended to impeach was pursued with much greater urgency than what anyone has so far mustered toward the impeachment of President Bush. Bush administration policies are costing our country lives and a tremendous amount of money. The war has cost over $270 billion, and as of last month the U.S. military death toll was 2,342 according to anti-war.com. Is the net result with which impeachment proceedings are moving against President Bush due to the fact that the American public would have to address the politics of reality rather than a personal scandal, as was the case with Clinton?

It is time for President Bush to be ousted from office and time that we cut our losses in the war on Iraq.

LET’S DEAL!!!

 Lose Weight Playing Cards

BY SAM MIU

Have you ever shuffled a deck of cards? Have your hands and arms ever tired after shuffling for an hour? The repetitive hand and arm motion are the same as the butterfly motion that professional bodybuilders use to strengthen the pectoral muscles. BURGERS!!! FRIES!!! PIZZA!!! Binge out and shape up. You can lose all the weight you want by playing cards.

Tom Ato, of the Poker King Gymnasium in downtown Queens, says he starts his mornings “drinking three cups of high protein milk shakes instead of a cup of coffee.” Immediately thereafter begins his daily exercise regimen at his living room table with an hour long card shuffle while watching morning television. After the shuffling warm-up, he flips through the television channels to build faster reflexes and strengthen his fingers.

Olive Cado, a long-time member of the Poker King Gym, had this to say about trainer Tom Ato: “His training is hard, but brings great results. He’s well versed in every card game, and leads specialized groups so we can expand our knowledge of games.” One of Tom’s specialized programs introduces gym members to the trading card game Yu-Gi-Oh. The program uses a dueling deck that contains forty to fifty cards per deck. Trainees shuffle their decks for thirty minutes then set their deck on a table to straighten the cards into an even stack. The player then draws five cards allowing the trainer to test his or her strength. Following ten breaths, each trainee continues drawing cards from the deck to flex arm muscles thereby loosening the cerebral cortex. The trainees then enter specially designed rooms containing platforms used for the game of Yu-Gi-Oh. The platforms hold preset instructions regarding which muscle groups each platform helps strengthen. The platforms put the trainees in situations where they must use preset decks to solve a card puzzle while battling the elements. For example, one platform simulates an active volcano through the use of 3-dimensional holography, producing a terrain that appears so realistic past trainees have occasionally mistaken the holograph for the real thing, jumping to their deaths.

The gym leader Ann Chovy, of the Card Catchers Coliseum when interviewed about the most productive methods of so-called “situational card-play” had this to say: “The best way to lose weight is through extreme situations. I have my clients begin with a simple game of 52-pack. The only catch is that the game consists of fifty-two packs of cards which are tossed one after the other.” Chovy believes 52-pack strengthens the calf muscles through constant tension and relaxation. Another exercise she recommends is a card toss wherein three people work together to transfer cards from one side of the coliseum to the other side of the coliseum, a distance of 100 yards, in thirty minutes.

One of Chovy’s clients is Mazu Rella Alfredo who has been a card carrying member of Card Catchers Coliseum for over three years. “Her gym is the best! Before I joined I was 250 pounds. Since gaining more discipline in my card games I’ve lost 125 pounds. When you’re playing with a full deck you feel as though time literally flies by.” Mazu’s workout schedule has helped her gain more confidence and increased her self-esteem. Her schedule includes 52-pack to strengthen leg muscles, I Declare War for hand-to-eye coordination, and Crazy 8’s help her reflexes.

Are you ready to become a dedicated card player? You can lose weight in a healthy and constructive manner, minus the diets and fancy equipment. Deal!
I had been waiting for this moment to come since the first time I laid my eyes on him. He was tall, light and handsome just how I like them, and he was funny and well dressed and knew the difference between pinch grip and pinot noir.

“You’re so beautiful, my Darling,” he whispers into my ear as his hands begin to explore my body. “I simply can’t wait to…”

The piece of paper plongs down on my desk with the wispy sound of a requisition for a daydream.

“So look these questions over, and well we don’t have time to do them all, but pick 4 or 5 of the ones that most speak to you and write a response.” In the thirty seconds between the times I had last had something to say aloud and now, I almost scored with a hypothetical hook and now I had to answer questions about some Wang Ping-other author, when I look down at the questions my English professor is asking us to answer, the first one to pop up and punch me in the nose is number seven. “What subjects come to mind when you daydream?” Ha! the sweet irony that is life.

Asking me what I daydream about is like asking anybody else why they breathe. It’s an involuntarily involuntary action in which I live my life, live to learn, love, laugh and hurt in my daydreams, and yet I can snap out of them in an instant. My daydreams are, in essence, who I am. No, that’s not entirely accurate because what they really are is whom I hope above all hopes I am going to become. Some clinical psychologist or another once said that fantasies are only for those who are terminally unsatisfied with their lives. Well, who the hell is unsatisfied with their lives? The dead, I assume, maybe little babies before they can think, but other than that, it’s human to want more, and considering nobody has more, it’s only natural to fantasize. Ha! I’ve just had an official daydream about daydreams.

I get home after that English class exhausted and with cut feet. I don’t know why the 31 has bus stopped, whether in the year 2006 or 1806, I’ve been taking it to get home, I’ve only seen it about 3 or 4 times. It’s an imaginary bus line, the daydream of some asshole in the MTA that likes the number 3 or 1 or something. I’m pretty happy about the fact that within a month, tops, I’m going to have my very own car. Triple black, V12 turbo charged Dodge Viper. I’ll name it after myself, of course: The Man Eater!!

Goodwood is an obvious choice, particularly in its clever disguise of looking like a four year old Saab. No one will ever figure it out. Well, I don’t have a car NOW, so my paper-mache feet are bleating, even though losing walking flip flops.

I think God mistook my feet for hands or something when he was designing me, because they’re so soft, and they never ever smell, and the toes are so evenly spaced that I could interlink them as though crossing my hands in prayer. My yoga instructor in Florida almost screamed his pants when he first saw them. I recall wanting to tell him to suck them if he loved my toes so much, but my aunt/gym partner was right next to me, so I deemed it inappropriate. No matter; that night in NataLaLa.A.Land, he did much more than that. Hmmm.

After rapping my poor fragile tootsies for a good 15 minutes and bandaging them up, reality reminds me I have to check in with her every once in while. I look at the center of my living room where no coffee table has resided since that one morning three or so years ago when my Dad took hold of our old one and flipped it over and smashed the four mirrored plates to smithereens. Seven years bad luck multiplied by 4 is my entire luck this year. A year of misfortune. Ha. I look at the fold up couch that during the day looks like a shabby chic love chair with the fanciest of throw pillows bestowed upon it like flowers on a Greek bride’s head; at night a humidified bed which my mother has been sleeping for about two years now, though the lion remains in his lair with the queen size bed and the boudoir and the closet space. I pick up the broom and dastypain and begin to sweep around a bit because I notice a thin layer of dust on the hardwood floor around the dining room table. I clean my made-up quest when I note the visibility of the glass tabletop. I know this dining set cost several grand, and even though I told them that blond wood didn’t go with our décor, they never listened to me and now this beautiful, mismatched, upcycled furniture set has morphed into a makeshift closet/storage room/dinner plate in of itself, apparently. I know I wiped it down and smoked with Winds before, so why is it so gross yet again, and so soon? It’s not like we even eat on it really, just every once in a while when the clutter has moved itself from this table to the one in the kitchen. I don’t understand. And the audacity of my mother to tell me my room looks like a closet threw up. I mean it’s true, but at least that’s just my room - nobody ever goes in there unless I personally invite them - but our dining room??

Every single one of her pricey designer suit jackets is slung over the backs of the chairs as though the tall thin blonde chairs are the runway models for the Duna Buchman fall line. I suppose it makes sense, what with her sleeping next door in the living room. When she used to sleep in her room, the jackets were hung in her closet, conveniently located nearby where she would lay her head to sleep. But with the supermodel chairs are equally convenient now that she sleeps on the cot like an unfamiliar acquaintance in her own house. I need a blunt.

“YO, TONY!”

The clicking of the locks gets me a bit too happy. I’m really not expecting him for a while, considering that after school he usually goes out and smokes with the team. So why is it so gross yet again, and so soon?

At least I don’t constantly have real penises all over my face. HAHAHAHA, yeeessssah!

“Clever wordplay, Shakespeare. So yo, I was gonna’ ask you if you wanted to smoke, but I can see you’re baked like clams already, so never mind.”

“What are you talking about? I’m not high. It’s been like, almost, like 4, 5, 6...no three hours since I’ve smoked. I’m totally... OH MAN! Are those Oreos?”

Yeah. Sober as a judge. Well, no matter, when one is high, one is usually down to smoke again, and he is, so we proceed down into our Den of Dumbness, our Lair of Lack of Lucidity, and our Basement of Bud. We plop down on the couch and I begin to break up the trees as he begins to break down the Dutch. Though our eyes are getting along just fine at this point, I can’t help but worry about the state our relationship has fallen into lately.

Last week there was no food in the house, AGAIN. (Every time that happens I feel like throwing all my pairs of BCBG and Kenneth Cole shoes and Armani and Burberry blouses and Louis Vuitton and Coach bags out the fucking window. Of course, I refrain, but the point is I hate being a spoiled rich bitch. Also I once, I mean, there was a starving poor Steve at one time.) So there was no food, and, of course, Tony had money, and for once I had some money, so I asked him if he wanted to order a pizza. He said he would prefer to walk to the pizza place instead, that way we could each get one or 2 slices, but that he’d have to be back in half an hour because his friends were coming by. I was ready to go as soon as I grabbed my purse, but fifteen minutes later he was still picking out his socks.

“What the fuck, ASSHOLE!!!! I’m fucking starving man, can we fucking go! I thought you were in a big rush, what the fuck? PLEASE, Bro, PLEASE let’s go! Your friends are going to be here soon, come on!”

“Yo shut the fuck up with the fucking nagging, bitch! They ain’t here yet, are they? So what the fuck? Besides if you’re so fucking hungry go get a pizza on your own, SHIT!”

“The mother fucking point was to have a mother fucking meal with my mother fucking baby brother, you degenerate fiend!!! What the fuck are you gonna’ do go with your fucking dumbass friends, make sales? You do that every fucking day, and you’ll be able to do that later on tonight, why the fuck is it so hard for you to take your own advice and HURRY THE FUCK UP FOR CHRISTMASS YOU FUCKING COCKSUCKING FUCKING FUCK!!!”

At this point I took the cordless from the living room and smashed it to bits. It was the third living room phone whose fate I bid farewell to. It was more of such a tragic end, but only the second I’d basted. I walked around the stupid cot and through the walkway into the kitchen where he was standing.

“What the fuck was the point of that? What the fuck did the phone do to you? Jesus Christ, if you’re that upset, here’s 5 bucks. Fucking order a pizza, what the fuck!!”

The five-dollar bill was bilgey and gentle in the air. It seemed so at peace being treated in such a manner; it must have been a massochistic bill. I don’t believe it had even touched the floor yet when I scooped it up and ripped it to bits as well.

“You think I want your mother fucking nickel bagging five bucks? You must be joking. I wanted to eat WITH YOU, you loser cunt!”

The din was a bit much to bear at this point. When the fridge door swung open, Tony, I thought, the counter, all of the contents that were shelved on its inside went flying all over. He had swung the door so hard that it came around, closed, opened up, spit most of the contents out, and then closed, breaking something or other that was keeping the refrigerator stable because the entire fridge started wobbling like a Wobbler, I picked up the item that had been flung closest to me (a glass bottle of lemon juice) and flung it right into his abdomen. (It’s amazing what perfect athletes siblings become while embroiled in a fight.) That knocked the wind out of him, but he regained his composure quickly enough to storm at me. I turned around and opened up the drawer behind me and took out the French chef’s knife I had sold to my mother when I was a kitchen supplies dealer for Cucso.

“Yo, is it broken up?” His question wakes me from my memory of last week.

“Yeah man, here ya’ go.”

He rolls up the blunt and suggests we go outside to blaze. It makes sense; the weather is gorgeous, and it won’t be for too much longer, and this way the basement won’t sink. We plop down on the chairs that are arranged in a small circle around the bong table. The dining table that they’re supposed to surround was moved over to the other side of the backyard, where at night the lighting is far superior for passionate games of beer pong. The tiny little table that is now the bong table was initially a coffee table between continued on page 14
Identity Theft Can Happen to Anyone

BY KEVIN SMITH

Your identity can be stolen by anyone. Many people, more often than not, first discover that their identity has been stolen when withdrawing money from or checking balances in their savings and checking accounts, or when making credit card purchases or applying for a loan. From January 1, 2002 to December 31, 2002 the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) identity theft hotline 1-877-IDTheft (438-4338) received 161,000 cases. In 2002, experts estimated that there were 1.2 million victims nationally.

Anyone can have their identity stolen if they are not careful. Though strangers are often identified as the culprit in most cases, a significant number of thefts have been committed by a family member. According to a 2002 FTC report, John Wright, a retired veteran living in Tampa, Florida had his identity stolen when another man received his military I.D. Using the veteran’s name and social security number, the man purchased cars, took out loans and opened credit card accounts, leaving John Wright to cope with a newly acquired bad credit rating. In the same report, the FTC cites the example of Greta Palmer, a mother from Bakersfield, California who used her daughter’s name and personal information to open credit card accounts and then charge the maximum amount for each card. Her daughter’s credit was ruined but she refused to do anything about it because the “criminal” in this case was her mother. Unfortunately, her mother could have been careless with the information as well, leaving her daughter’s identity to be stolen by other people.

It is very easy to commit identity theft if you are preying on the right victim at the right time. Most incidents of identity theft occur when there is a death in the family. The family is focused on the death of their loved one, which makes it easier for the thief to gain access to personal information. Your social security number for example can be used to obtain an abundance of information about you from other sources. Your credit card number and bank account can be obtained once the thief has your social security number along with your address. With this information the thief can ruin your credit by going on a spending spree and purchase items worth thousands of dollars. Fifty percent of identity theft victims report that a credit card was opened in their name or that unauthorized charges were placed on their existing credit cards, whereas thirty percent of the victims report that the new bank account had been opened in their name. In the later instance, fraudulent checks had been written or unauthorized withdrawals had been made from their account.

It can take years before victims of identity theft can repair their credit. The first rule in protecting your identity is to be extra cautious when revealing information to other people. Do not provide personal information to those who call you by phone even if they claim to be a bank or the police unless it is possible to verify their identity. In addition, be very careful about opening emails. Emails enable thieves to gain access to your information by manipulating passwords to open not only your emails, but other personal information as well.

The FTC provides the following 10 tips to help prevent identity theft:

1. Install a lockable mailbox at your residence to reduce mail theft.
2. Take credit card receipts with you. Never toss them in public trash receptacles.
3. Never leave your purse or wallet unattended at work or in open view.
4. Destroy all checks immediately after closing a checking account.
5. Do not have your bank send a new check book to your home address but inform the bank that you prefer to pick it up.
6. Limit the number of credit cards you have and cancel any inactive account.
7. Do not allow your financial institution to print your social security number on your personal checks.
8. Shred old information or credit cards.
9. Check your credit rating at least twice a year. If you feel someone might have gained access to your credit card number, place a fraud alert on your credit with reporting companies. You will be notified if anyone tries to sign up for credit in your name for a period of about 6 months.
10. Be very careful when opening emails.

Over thirty-five percent of the victims providing information of identity theft according to the 2002 FTC report noticed the identity theft within one month of its occurrence. However, some victims were unaware of theft for as long as fifteen years. The average amount of time between the date the identity theft occurred and the date it was noticed by the victims was 14 months. One reason may be that many people carry more than one credit card and oftentimes do not pay as close attention to other credit cards or accounts used less frequently. The best rule to follow? Watch your money.
College and Alcohol

continued from page 8

aging finding showed that underage students attending colleges in states with restrictive laws restricting underage and high-volume drinking were less likely to binge drink.” According to the IAS fact sheet online (www.ias.org.uk), binge drinking is defined as “the consumption of large quantities of alcohol at a single session in intoxication.”

The most effective strategy to decrease binge drinking would be a combined effort at the individual and societal levels—the students must want to help themselves, and adults must put into place clearer restrictions on student access to and use of alcohol. For example, such an approach would need to take account of and alter the current positive perception of “happy hours” at taverns and at other environments that encourage rapid consumption of large quantities of alcohol, thereby changing social norms of what is acceptable drinking behavior.

Why has binge drinking become so popular with college students? According to an online article published on www.everystudent.com, “Quench Your Real Thirst,” many college students “cuddle up with a keg or casual a bottle of J.D. The boozes makes you feel good and relaxed. It’s accessible and always there when you need it. It makes you feel funny, attractive and accept-
ed.” But in addition the article mentions how “this relationship works for a while, but then you wake up. It’s a one-night stand. It’s not a relationship. People are hard to bond to but it’s easy to bond with the bottle.”

Information about binge drinking provided on Nimenssn.com (see http://health.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=18718) is sobering, pun intended: “Common short-term effects of binge-drinking episodes are hangovers, headaches, nausea, shakiness and possible vomiting and memory loss... If someone drinks heavily over a long period of time, they can become physically and psychologically dependent upon alcohol... Over time, alcohol can damage parts of the body, including the brain and liver. There are also the risks of developing emotional problems, such as depression, and problems at school, work and with relationships.”

Many people with alcohol problems do not recognize when their drinking gets out of control. Colleges need to take decisive action in order to deter drinking among their young students. There are, thankfully, many different types of treatment available to help those who are problem drinkers. If you or a loved one is hesitant to seek help, the following is a list of organizations provided by the Department of Health and Human Services that can help:

- Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration, The Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, The Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, National Institutions on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. For toll free numbers visit: http://www.steponline.com/someone/sub/some_4.asp

“Extreme Makeover” Joins Hands with NeighborWorks® America and Sears to Help Katrina Victims

April 5, 2006

Dear Friend of NHS:

I have some exciting news. The hit ABC-TV show, Extreme Makeover, is highlighting the work of our network, NeighborWorks® America, on the Gulf Coast, helping families rebuild homes destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. And throughout this month, Sears is collecting donations at its 930 stores across America, including those right here in New York City and the rest of the Tri-State area.

The money raised will go to NeighborWorks® America, the national organization which supports Neighborhood Housing Services of New York City and 240 other organizations like ours across the U.S. NeighborWorks® America will direct the money to housing aid for Gulf Coast families, making sure that every dollar is well spent.

Some of that money will be put directly to use by three of our own NHSNYC staffers: Gloria Ashby, Program Manager at NHS of the North Bronx, and Yves Kedelina and Elizabeth Malone, both Program Managers at the NHSNYC HomeOwnership Center. These NHS staff are each spending a week on the Gulf Coast, volunteering to help families get back on the road to homeownership, so your contributions through Sears will have an NHSNYC connection to Gulf Coast families. Many NHSNYC board and staff members have already made personal contributions to the Katrina recovery effort.

Please tell your friends and family who shop at Sears that this is a wonderful way in which they can make a difference, by contributing money to the people who lost so much in the hurricane. Every dollar collected will go to the NeighborWorks® America effort, as Sears takes no overhead or marketing fee. And NeighborWorks® America will direct these funds to the communities where we are working to rebuild homes and lives.

Customers can donate any amount at the store. The cashier rings it up like any other purchase, and the register receipt is the customer’s record of a tax-deductible donation. Donations can also be made online. The promotion runs from April 2 to April 29. The show airs on Thursdays from 8-9 p.m. EST.

As we continue to build strong communities right here in New York City, let’s pitch in and help NeighborWorks® America bring vitally-needed assistance and expertise to the Gulf Coast.

Sincerely,
Sarah Gerecke
CEO, NHS of New York City

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steroids. Players are juicing up in the wake of the upcoming baseball season. Is this good for baseball? Is this what the fans really want? “Absolutely,” according to superstar Barry Bonds of the San Francisco Giants. “This is exactly what baseball needed; this is definitely a decision that will make baseball more enjoyable to watch. Even though it was illegal to use steroids in the past, I did it anyway because I knew I was giving the fans what they wanted. I’m definitely a pioneer for the game. Now I can spend more time on the baseball field then in the courtroom.” While some players are rumored to be in disagreement with Bonds, they have failed to come forward, some commentators speculate due to fear of ridicule and humiliation.

The arms race has begun and with so many teams stacked with juiced sluggers, teams are now beginning to explore other performance-enhancing alternatives. For example, there has been speculation around the league that the New York Yankees are on the verge of signing Night Crawler of the X-Men, who would be first mutant in sports history. The addition of Night Crawler, who has the ability to teleport, would make the Yankees the team to beat this season. When asked about this “ridiculous” proposal, Yankees General Manager Brian Cashman said the deal was in the works but nothing was official, yet. According to league sources, however, the Yankees and Night Crawler’s representation was nearing completion of a 3-year contract worth approximately 18 million dollars. The rumored signing of Night Crawler is generating interest in other mutants. One league official, requesting anonymity, commented that “The signing of a mutant would definitely pave the way for a new era in sports.” In the midst of the Night Crawler signing, talent evaluators from several teams have been seen scouting players from the Mutant Baseball League. In the opinion of Scott Anderson, a scout for the Atlanta Braves, “This could be the next big thing for baseball; the Yankees already got their mutant, it’s time we got ours.”

In apparent response to the recent MLB ruling that allows steroid use, spring training is on deck and the fans are lining up at the ticket booths. Ticket sales have already doubled from this time last year. The approval of the use of steroids and the signing of the first mutant ballplayer has enflamed fan interest. “When was the last time we saw 50,000 fans at an exhibition game?” says Selig. It is clear that the decision to allow steroid use and mutants has people intrigued. Indeed, most fans seem optimistic and excited about the upcoming baseball season.