

# The Gothic Guardian

at Duke University



## the 2008 ELECTION

*Perspectives: Young Republican Campaign Workers 8*  
*The "Greening" of the Republican Party 10*  
*A View from Abroad 12*

ALSO:  
Student Group  
Funding Reform

# The Gothic Guardian

at Duke University

*The Gothic Guardian* is edited and compiled by Duke students and printed in Alpharetta, Georgia. Opinions expressed in these pages represent only the views of article authors. *The Gothic Guardian* is funded by the Collegiate Network and the John Spencer Bassett Memorial Fund.

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Cover graphic and additional cartoons provided by [caglecartoons.com](http://caglecartoons.com)

*The Gothic Guardian* thanks the John Spencer Bassett Memorial Fund for its assistance in helping to fund this publication and the Collegiate Network for their consultation and advice throughout the production process.

## insidethisissue

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AARON MCGUIRE

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# The Miscellany

## Duke Has Long-Awaited Conversation About Sex

The Miscellany has noticed that a student publication calling itself the “Tower of Campus Thought and Action” is running a biweekly column on sex. Always intrigued by students’ perspectives on student life, we took a look (strictly in the name of science). And boy, are we glad we did. A wealth of valuable information awaited us. For instance, we learned that Duke students never talk about sex. Which is the purpose of the aforementioned sex column — to shake them out of their repression. Well, it’s about time. Someone needed to stand up and say, It’s okay, girls, don’t be ashamed to show a little ankle on a Friday night. But then, in a subsequent column, the intrepid sex writer sprung a new twist on us: it turns out that, in spite of the wall of silence about sexuality, Duke students actually really like sex. Especially something called “morning sex.”

The Miscellany wasn’t sure that the authoress could top that staggering insight. But we were wrong again. Because from column number three, we learned (a) that Duke students like to have sex with lots of different people, and (b) that any Duke student who is so woefully unsophisticated as to define “monogamy” as “being with one [partner] for your entire life” is a delusional “Southern Baptist”, to be looked down upon as a helpless creature “locked in a dark tower waiting for Prince Charming.” Whew. We’re glad that we have this sex column to set us straight. We’re climbing down from our dark tower right away and heading to Shooter’s in search of a couple of hours’ worth of true monogamy.

## Project Proselytize

The Miscellany was initially confused, upon arriving on campus in August, by the preponderance of T-shirts bearing a misshapen “Obama O.” These shirts featured the Obama symbol’s ubiquitous pattern applied to a B shape. At first we assumed that His given name had been deemed equally worth of idolatry with His surname. Upon closer observation, however, we noticed that the students sporting these shirts generally lacked the glazed eyes, foaming mouths, and Che Guevara backpack pins that we have come to expect from fervent Obama followers. And sure enough, the smaller print beneath the Obama logo reads “Project Build” indicating that the shirts refer to one of Duke’s organized pre-orientation freshman bonding activities.

Maybe giving new students shirts with an Obama reference was an efficient way to indoctrinate freshmen immediately upon their arrival on campus, without even waiting to send them to class. Then again, it’s possible that the students themselves chose the design, although we wonder whether every student in the program wholeheartedly supports Obama. The Miscellany doesn’t know how Project Build picks its T-shirt designs, but we humbly suggest that next year’s T-shirt feature an American flag. We think a symbol of national unity and American values (like intellectual freedom, for example) is in order after a divisive display of partisan support for an Obama agenda.

## Themed vs. Social Living

The Miscellany has heard that a magnificent “New Central Campus” is in the works. We understand that it is meant to connect East and West Campuses so that the geography of our campus will finally have a shot at making sense. This is all well and good and will surely have lots of fascinating implications, but all of us will presumably have graduated by then (unless we party extremely hard for the next several years). Some of these changes, however, will kick in while we are still around. The administration is using the construction of the new campus as an opportunity to address longstanding housing issues, and one of their proposals is the creation of something called “Themed Living Groups.” Vice Provost Stephen Nowicki recently met with a group of students to discuss the idea.

“TLGs,” as far as we can tell, are not the brainchild of the administration, but originally the suggestion of some sophomores who want to start a community-service-themed selective living group called “Ubuntu” (Zulu for “community of young people dedicated to padding their résumés;” also, according to *Wikipedia*, “a free computer operating system based on the Linux Kernel”). The difficulty is that these fine students do not want their selective living group to be classified as a selective living group, a label that they consider to be tainted by fraternities and other purely social residential groups (You know, the kind of people who spend their Saturday nights partying instead of serving the community). They also said that the administration should create a whole new category just for them because their application process would be different from that of a fraternity. We guess they’re under the impression that all SLGs are required to use the standardized FRAT (Fraternity Resident Aptitude Test) to select their members.

Seriously, the Miscellany believes that the idea behind TLGs is to give students the opportunity to create many of them, not just to humor the community-service group. Personally, though, we just have a hard time believing that some residential communities are not inherently social groups — or that students would choose to live together, without having any particular fondness for each other, just because they all happened to like cooking (this was the favorite hypothetical example). Come to think of it, it sounds kind of like a reality TV show.

Vice Provost Nowicki not only gave all students a fair hearing and expressed his ideas and concerns well, but also (according to our sources) made some pretty funny jokes. At the beginning of the meeting, he suggested a lottery system of admission into these new themed groups, but quickly abandoned the idea when it became clear that this would provoke most students to transfer to UNC. He strove to maintain a balance between focusing on the big picture and the concerns of current students. By the meeting’s end, the fate of themed living groups was no clearer. But whatever happens down the road, we’re pretty sure that as long as Nowicki is in charge, we’re all in good (and entertaining) hands. **G**

*The Miscellany does not reflect the views of the editorial board or of the staff of this magazine. We are merely an individual who has self-indulgently adopted the royal we.*

# A letter

From

# The Editor

Dear Reader,

Thank you for picking up this first issue of *The Gothic Guardian*. You may be surprised to learn that the *Guardian* is not a new publication at Duke, but a reincarnation of the *New Right Review*, which appeared on campus last year.

After some deliberation, our team of editors and staff decided to change the publication's name to reassert more clearly our publication's focus on events at Duke, particularly on the area where university life and politics converge. Young voters of all political stripes are often so focused on issues of national significance that they lose sight of the challenges unique to their immediate surroundings. But the reality of being a conservative on a university campus is that if *The Gothic Guardian*, as a conservative publication, does not seek to offer conservative perspectives on campus issues, no one else will.

Therefore, expect this year's issues to offer critical, conservative commentary on campus life, challenging the assumptions underlying our campus discourse that might otherwise go uncontested. *The Gothic Guardian* aspires to uphold the University's highest, oldest traditions and fight for freedom of speech and thought at Duke.

Conservatism, however, is far from a homogenous movement. The views that will be expressed within these pages over the course of the year will not always be in agreement with one another. As a publication, we take pride in this disagreement, and will seek to encourage thoughtful discussion among dissenting conservatives and libertarians on Duke University's policies and trends in academia more broadly. You will not find just one type of perspective in these pages, but a sampling of differing and sometimes discordant views on issues related to higher education and campus life.

That said, this issue takes a slightly different tack from what you

will see in future editions. We have sought to offer original perspectives on the Nov. 4 presidential election, with articles on "Green" Republicans, youth GOP activism, and a view on the election from a Duke conservative studying abroad for the semester. Investigating the election on campus offers a rare and unique opportunity for studying politics, since we can gain insight into the dynamics of the electorate of the future. After all, today's youth voters will be tomorrow's 30- and 40-somethings. It is certain that the election will continue to be a topic of campus conversation through Nov. 4, if not much later, and *The Gothic Guardian* hopes to add to that discussion.

This issue is not entirely election-focused, however. One article we've included, by junior David Bitner, examines the student group funding process and proposes ways to make it more attentive to student needs. We've provided some parodies, editorial cartoons, and graphic art offering an unfortunately rare conservative perspective as well. We've also included an article from an esteemed conservative publication with the help of the Collegiate Network. Michael Gledhill of the *National Review* looks into Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama's history of left-wing associations and garnering insight from his written autobiographies on what ideology he would bring to governance.

We welcome your comments, thoughts, and contributions. E-mail us at [gothicguardian@gmail.com](mailto:gothicguardian@gmail.com). We look forward to hearing from you. Thanks for joining us in our exploration of campus political culture.

Sincerely,

Vikram Srinivasan  
Editor-in-Chief, *The Gothic Guardian*

# Navigating the classroom and the common room

Vikram Srinivasan

Prior to your arrival at Duke in August, you had probably heard a great deal about rampant liberalism at the university. These stories may have caused a great deal of angst among the more ideologically committed of you—I certainly felt quite nervous when I was in your shoes.

Therefore, I advise you to take a deep breath and exhale. The situation at Duke is not as bad as you think. You will encounter bias, but it is not rampant. And in your response to it, attitude is everything. Conservatives should not be complacent when faced with unfair treatment, but they should also avoid being reactionary.

This might seem an unusual suggestion, with the backdrop of a presidential election campaign going on and a narrative stressing that college campuses are hubs for ever-nebulous “hope” and “change.” The Duke *Chronicle* has reported that faculty contributions to Democratic candidates far outweigh those made to Republican candidates in both number and volume. One might ask how can conservatives ever feel comfortable at Duke.

All this evidence needs to be put in context. It is one thing to argue that many students, faculty, and administrators can be categorized as “liberals.” But it is another altogether to assume that all liberals will necessarily be intolerant of opposing views.

Take the Duke faculty. Although it is fair to say that many lean (or more than “lean”) to the left in their personal political affiliations, it’s hard to say that a majority express their views in the classroom in an antagonistic way. I have seen my share of anti-Republican editorializing in college classrooms, but I hesitate to attribute this evidence to a vast left-wing conspiracy to extinguish conservatism at Duke.

I can only draw from my own experience, and perhaps others have encountered far more egregious bias in the classroom. But I have taken several incredible courses with liberal professors, and even when they have made questionable comments, the majority have done so in a manner receptive to a conservative response. Realize that these faculty members are not merely left-wing partisans but individuals who have, over the course of their academic study, been exposed to a wide-range of perspectives, ideas and arguments. Most faculty are more than capable of having a conversation with you and understanding that there is in fact a legitimate basis for politically conservative positions. You are not the first Republican they have ever met.

Given that, it is fair to conclude that most faculty members (in most departments) can acknowledge room for reasonable disagreement on contentious issues, even if it might not always seem like it. This certainly does not mean that you should expect them to indulge your every statement on the grounds that it is above scrutiny and criticism by virtue of its ideological diversity. In addition to producing academic research, their job also involves challenging you and

your way of thinking. If you enter a classroom unready to actively scrutinize your own belief system and aspects of it that you have long taken for granted, it greatly inhibits your capacity to make the most of the learning experience

Your responsibility as a freshman conservative, then, is to be engaged and attentive in a liberal environment. Individuals can learn far more, and their convictions and understanding can best be strengthened, if they allow them to be tested. When you encounter criticism, face it, rather than retreating into a defensive shell.

There is always a temptation for conservatives to play the victim in railing against the excesses of leftism in academia. These excesses do exist, but establishment leftism also presents a tremendous opportunity. Where liberal students may get a free pass on their beliefs and go through college unchallenged, engaged conservatives have the opportunity to scrutinize and strengthen their beliefs. The real losers, then, are liberal students, who don’t get the education they are paying for. Complaining about victimization is appropriate to the point where it seeks fair treatment and a right to be heard, but after that, it degenerates into a plea for special treatment. The argument almost seems to go, “Liberal students aren’t challenged, so we shouldn’t have to be either.” The truth is that liberal students are the ones losing out.

During your academic career at Duke, you will encounter instances of inappropriate and flagrant bias. I suspect that these examples will be concentrated in interactions with members of select, predictable academic departments and can be strategically navigated. Nonetheless, do your research before selecting courses. Use the online course look-up tools available, ask upperclassmen you know (especially ones within the major) for advice, and make the most of the drop/add period. With some effort, the worst encounters with academic unfairness can be avoided.

But do not be afraid to be a conservative. Be wary of discrimination, but there is little need for you to walk campus with a heightened state of awareness of liberals who may be giving you the evil eye. Your more liberal peers may judge you for your beliefs, but the more reasonable among them (I suspect the vast majority) will be able to concede that same room for respectful disagreement. Instead of retreating into partisan defensiveness, allow yourself to be challenged and, by all means, challenge back.

The worst thing you can do is feel sorry for yourself. The reality of campus liberalism is that it isn’t going away—at least not for the foreseeable future. And if it’s here to stay, you might as well allow yourself to grow from the experience of interacting with it. The education you will receive, far surpassing that of your liberal peers, may be the university’s unintended gift to conservatives. Make sure you take advantage of it. **G**

# Spreading the Wealth Around

Why the current budget system fails student groups and how to fix it

David Bitner

Taking part in a student group is one of the more rewarding experiences that Duke offers. This is especially true for those who have the opportunity to lead one (as this author has). But any who take up a leadership position are immediately faced with many challenges. In this author's experience, the single greatest of these lies in securing adequate funding for events, especially large events. For example, the Conservative Union (of which the author is the current president) received \$1500 last year. This may seem to be a considerable sum but it is not when compared to speakers' honoraria, which begin at roughly \$3000 and increase greatly thereafter. The Student Organization Finance Committee (SOFC) does provide supplementary funding, but can only be relied upon for around \$1000 in funding per event, which is insufficient to bring even a single speaker. Of course, other funding sources are available, and one can only assume that the various student groups have discovered ways to fund their activities, partially through the university and partially through outside contributors. In principle, this model is reasonable; why shouldn't a student leader seek outside funding, or even on occasion raise money from its members? Yet this arrangement ultimately results in fewer student group-organized events by forcing groups to rely overwhelmingly on external support, as has been the case with the Conservative Union and presumably is the case with all but a very few organizations, judging by the disparity between groups' budget allocations and their ambitions.

The status quo fails to maximize campus events because it places an excessive premium on effective leadership in student organizations. If a leader lacks talent, dedication, or (to take a cynical view) connections, then his group will be unable to fund its operations beyond the small fraction currently provided for by the university. One might argue that this is the just result of inadequate leadership, and absent benefits to the community at large, this author would have to agree. Each student group, however, contributes through its activities to the vitality of the Duke community; a funding system that in ef-

fect limits this vitality is in fact robbing the average student of opportunities, experiences, and in sum, his quality of life. Consequently, the current situation lessens the vitality of the Duke community. Besides, even an extremely talented leader may be unable to secure funding, due to a dearth of external funding organizations.

Securing funding on an ad hoc basis from unreliable sources is equally problematic. If a group must raise funds from outside, it can't be quite sure of its budget until fairly late in the planning stages of an event. This makes booking venues difficult, inserts ambiguity into fee negotiations with speakers, and generally increases stress by shortening the planning timeframe. Consequently, events tend to be less successful than they might otherwise have been given a sufficient lump sum budget from the university.

The DSG budget should be substantially increased in such a way that the funds translate directly to increased student group budgets. A sliver of the interest from the endowment could easily fund this increase. DSG could also cut costs within the current budget. For example, DSG could considerably defund *The Chanticleer*, which receives \$100,000 a year; if students want yearbooks (or their parents do), then they will buy them, and if they do not, then the yearbook must find ways to reduce costs. Through such cuts, DSG could increase funding of other students groups even absent an increase in the total budget. Additionally, SOFC's budget should be increased, and it should be permitted to make commensurately larger allocations without DSG senate approval. Finally, the Duke Conversations program should be expanded to provide for travel and lodging for all speakers coming to the university and not just those doing so within the fairly stringent (if not always enforced) regulations of the program. This would naturally entail an increase in funding, which is necessary in any case since the program ran out of money within the first couple weeks of last semester. But it would improve the quality and increase the quantity of speakers student groups could bring to campus. **G**

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AARON MCGUIRE



# Working for the “right” side

Duke students get involved with election campaigns

## Lingfeng Li

It had been a month of 12 to 14 hour days, with no pay. But it had been worth it.

After his 30 day tenure as an intern at Ron Paul’s presidential campaign, sophomore Michael Krekel was offered a full-time paid position on the campaign staff. Although he declined in order to attend college, Krekel remembers the experience fondly. Fresh from high school graduation, he had had the opportunity to interact with senior members of the election team, forming valuable connections and learning about politics in his hours of labor.

With the movement to encourage voting, Krekel is among the many youth who are becoming involved with politics. According to the Young Democrats of America, 20 million people aged 18 to 29 voted in the 2004 election, the biggest jump since 1972. But for some students like Krekel, simply voting is not enough — working for a candidate is the best way to make a difference politically.

### On the job

Having previously worked for a lobbyist and a congressman, Krekel was no stranger to politics. He was required to complete a month of community service for his high school’s senior service program, and working for Ron Paul, a candidate Krekel agrees with, seemed to be the perfect job. “[Paul’s] pretty much my ideological

equal,” Krekel said.

During the internship, his duties were not always exciting. Krekel was able to sit in on meetings with campaign chairman, but spent much of his time performing more mundane tasks. “Mostly I just worked in a windowless office for a month,” he said. As he responded to emails, Krekel accumulated stories worth repeating. One particularly zealous Paul supporter would call regularly, sometimes on multiple phone lines offering amounts of money to the campaign that far exceeded the \$2,300 contribution limit. While the man claimed to have a number of friends also willing to donate vast sums, Krekel doubts any actual donations would approach the maximum amount permitted.

But during the course of a campaign, as sophomore Jake Bullock discovered, periods of tedious tasks could be punctuated by exciting events. Bullock worked on a highly competitive race for Bob Schaffer, who is running for the U.S. Senate from Colorado. While his day-to-day responsibilities largely consisted of sorting mail and organizing fundraising, Bullock occasionally assisted with candidate debates or rallies.

At one particularly memorable debate, Bullock and his fellow campaigners rallied a crowd of 300 sign-waving supporters, when only 75 were originally expected. “It gave us a huge head start in the campaign and really shocked our opponent,” he said. The immediacy

## onthecampaigntrail

of the positive feedback justified Bullock's late nights at the office — the latest lasting until 2 a.m. By the end of the summer, the campaign was head-to-head with the opponent, closing a 10-point gap in the polls.

While employed for Schaffer, Bullock also had the opportunity to meet other faces of the Republican Party, including former presidential candidate Mitt Romney and presidential nominee John McCain, both of whom spoke in Colorado to support the campaign. Exposure to the various aspects of government and bureaucracy, Bullock said, is just one of the benefits to being part of the election process.

### Career starter

A double major in political science and economics, Bullock has yet to commit to politics as a career. It is, however, an avenue he is

teaching a Political Science course on campaigns and elections this semester. In the past few election cycles, Irwin said, college students have been flown around the country to work on events. In the 2000 presidential election, many young supporters, including students, interns, and younger staff members, from both parties went to Florida to support their chosen candidates.

Because they bring so much enthusiasm to the campaigns, young volunteers are a practical necessity for elections. Not only are many young volunteers willing to work long hours for free, but they have more free time and are often more enthusiastic and committed. "College students are young; they don't need a lot of sleep," Irwin said.

In spite of long hours and, at times, dull tasks, those who do get involved on campaigns generally have few regrets. For Kregel, who plans to have a career in politics, the position provided not only a memorable experience, but valuable networking opportunities. And

“If you actually took up the issue and cared, I feel like we could reduce a lot of that negativity towards the political process.”

- Mike Besmer, Duke '09

exploring through his campaign experiences.

For senior Mike Besmer, politics has been the goal since he was young. Currently a senior majoring in political science, he is planning to start as a government analyst after graduation, though he'd like to eventually run for office himself. "It's always been a dream of mine to run for an elected position, whether that be something trivial as city councilman or U.S. Congress," Besmer said. Some of today's most prominent politicians entered politics at a young age — Karl Rove had been associated with the College Republicans, and Hillary Clinton campaigned for Barry Goldwater.

When Besmer saw a political science listserv email discussing an opportunity with BJ Lawson, a Republican congressional candidate from North Carolina, he had to inquire further. The campaign for Lawson, who Besmer describes as a "Ron Paul Republican," formed a close-knit group, fostering interaction between young staff and upper level management. In his months of employment, Besmer gained much experience with the information required for a campaign — he frequently researched Lawson's opponent and general topics like gun control or health care and occasionally blogged for the campaign web site.

### A crucial component

Campaigns frequently rely on having a steady stream of enthusiastic young volunteers to help keep the electoral machine running, according to Duke political science professor Galen Irwin, who is

for those who do not necessarily need to network in the political world, working on a campaign is rewarding because of the passion that goes into the process. "You're actually working because you believe in a particular cause," Bullock said.

### Making a difference

In an age of globalization and awareness of pressing environmental and economic issues, college students are increasingly expected to vote. Much of the excitement can be attributed to Barack Obama's candidacy, Irwin said. The increasing presence of the Internet in politics has helped create a sense of community amongst voters, which helps raise the general level of interest. The act of voting for the first time can, in itself, stir excitement.

Despite the competitiveness of the current presidential election, though, Bullock is skeptical about the impact of the youth vote. "It's kind of a give and take relationship because politicians don't cater to us because we don't vote and we don't vote because they don't cater to us," he said.

What is crucial, Besmer explained, is that young voters take the time to educate themselves and get involved in political activism. Though he is no longer able to work full-time now that the school year has started, he remains a campus coordinator and plans to remain with the campaign until Election Day. "If you actually took up the issue and cared, I feel like we could reduce a lot of that negativity towards the political process," he said. **G**

# Green

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## Putting the “conserve” in conservative

Chalette Lambert

This year’s Republican National Convention, held in St. Paul, Minnesota, was the “greenest” convention in history. From energy efficient offices to bike checkout systems and recycling efforts, RNC officials and attendees worked to cut waste and boost an environmentally-friendly image.

More than a green convention, however, the GOP is going for a green campaign — the Grand Old Party hopes to win over Democrats’ longstanding environmentalist backing in the upcoming election. Due to the primacy of environmental and energy-related concerns this year, the Republican Party’s green credentials have taken on a new importance in this election.

Environmental issues are even affecting voters at Duke. Previously undecided sophomore Karen Chen; said she will vote for McCain because of his pro-drilling policy. “Drilling in America is the most cost-efficient way of supplying energy to the U.S.,” she said.

McCain-supporting, environmentally-conscious, economically-aware Duke students reflect a growing national conservationist trend among new and longstanding Republicans. According to John McCain’s website, “McCain will make greening the Federal Government a priority of his administration.” The McCain-Palin 2008 platform that Chen supports embodies a national Republican effort to conserve more and consume less.

High energy costs will be a key issue this November. McCain and Palin support domestic drilling to ease the burden on U.S. citizens and (in accordance with Republican Party priorities) want to lift the moratorium on off-shore drilling to relieve our reliance on foreign oil and reduce our trade deficit. In fact, Republicans in the House of Representatives stayed in Washington after the House voted to adjourn in August just to demand the lift. Representative Mike Pence of Indiana, who participated in the sit-in, said, “The American people deserve more access to American oil, and Congress should be in session until we vote.”<sup>1</sup>



AARON MCGUIRE

## greenoldparty

Republicans are at the forefront of protecting the environment and saving high costs by insisting on access to off-shore oil resources. Because the U.S. enforces strict drilling regulations, the GOP moratorium-lift also supports the environment. Oil companies drilling off-shore have regular inspections from committees created by several environmental acts such as the Coastal Zone Management Act and the National Fishing Enhancement Act; they are also required to submit regular reports detailing emissions and pollution discharges to committees created by the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act<sup>2</sup>. Drilling in U.S. waters conserves oil from foreign sources without those earth-saving regulations. In short, off-shore drilling is the safest and most consumer-friendly way to obtain energy for U.S. residents.

Republicans at Duke also support the initiative for safe and cost-effective domestic drilling. "McCain wants to do more for the environment and with Palin as his Vice President he has the people to do it," said senior Thomas Drury. The McCain-Palin ticket is essential for promoting safe oil sources and reducing high foreign oil costs, he explained. McCain supporters at Duke echo a nation-wide trend to protect our environment while still defending economic interests.

Across the country, more and more conservatives are saving energy and protecting national resources. Republicans in the Michigan Senate began an annual "Conservation Week" in 2007. Republicans in California, Colorado, and Virginia have all passed legislation protecting wilderness lands<sup>3</sup>. A worker at the Democratic National Convention gave unused flags to the RNC for reuse. Defeated Republican candidates in Martin County, Florida are recycling their election signs<sup>4</sup>. Many Duke conservatives switched from incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescent light bulbs. Republicans from all corners are finding opportunities to create a healthier environment.

So why should we be saving flags and recycling signs? The real incentive is that protecting the environment not only rescues trees and reduces the need for landfills, but also saves money and makes our individual lives healthier. While the Democrats were busy calculating their "carbon footprints"<sup>5</sup> at this year's convention, the Republican National Convention truly exhibited the benefits of attention to environmental concerns.

The GOP convention offices demonstrated the savings in business and personal costs of adhering to green standards. The RNC offices used recycled supplies and furniture. Keep in mind, recycled means cheaper — less money and less environmental impact. They also implemented climate control that shut off after closing hours; in other words, less money was thrown into to high energy costs. Using power strips decreased energy costs even more. Distributing materials electronically also saved paper costs. These practices can be easily implemented in any office or home to conserve energy and conserve wealth.

The convention also showcased efforts Republicans are making every day to protect the environment and create a healthier lifestyle. Many workers at the convention lived within walking or biking distance of the offices and exercised on the way to work. Others ate locally grown food, which not only saved grocery transportation costs,

but allowed for fresher and healthier diets. The convention allowed more Republicans to see the benefits of going green, from boosting health to cutting costs.

Of course, the National Convention was by no means the beginning of Republican conservation efforts. Martha Marks, founder and president of Republicans for Environmental Protection (REP), has been fighting for conservation for years. Upon helping form the organization in 1995, she wrote, "Republican Party values of fiscal prudence, reducing waste, love of country, and responsibility to future generations mesh neatly with environmental goals."<sup>6</sup> What better way to call party members to action? Every day, more Republicans are joining the "green" hype along with Martha Marks and working to save the environment and protect our wallets.

The national push for increased conservation and reuse has shed light on the benefits of going green. Not only can we protect the environment, live healthier, and save money, but we can achieve Republican goals of personal, financial, and environmental responsibility along the way. Oh, and did I mention we can also save gas?G

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AARON MCGUIRE

# An American European misconceptions of the 2008 election

# in Italy

Natalie Figueroa

The mafia, the cuisine, and the romance. There are no three things Italy is better known for, and the evidence is everywhere. Americans have the award-winning *Godfather* series and widely publicized headlines (and reality shows) of mob bosses such as John Gotti, which give us a revealing glimpse of the mafia's undertakings. We frequent "authentic" Italian pasta and pizza restaurants, complete with Mount Vesuvius backdrops and Dean Martin's "That's Amore" playing in the background. And the romance is summed up somewhere between the fine wine (served in sizeable glasses), and the country's breathtaking cities, coasts and countryside.

Yet the gradual process of settling down in Italy for a semester of study and soaking up my surroundings, as well as getting to know my Italian and international professors and classmates, has led me to adjust my ideas. The verdict? Our concept of the central elements of Italian culture is extremely misguided. Not to say that the aforementioned facets of Italy are not significant—they are vital parts of Italy's history and culture. The problem is that we are definitely not getting all of the information.

For example, I was astounded to learn that pizza and pasta are not truly representative of Italian cuisine. The first pizzeria to open in Venice, Italy opened the same year that Hamburg's first pizzeria opened. That was after the 1950s. Even pasta was not eaten throughout Italy until the 20th century. The dish was mainly eaten in Southern Italy, and even then, it was dried pasta. Instead, the highly popularized pasta dishes we enjoy today were first created by the wave of southern Italians that settled in American cities at the end of the 19th century. The different dishes were named after cities in Italy. Following the discussion on Italian immigration, my Italian Contemporary History professor, Luca Pes, raised an interesting point: "The Americanization of Italian identity," and its popularization, has "actually affected Italian identity."

The disconnect between our perception of Italian culture and its reality is not a one-way street—it is just as clear and disquieting the other way around. Italy's image of the United States is also distorted. In my experience here so far, nowhere has this been more evident than in discussions on American politics, which inevitably lead to debates about the two major candidates in the 2008 presidential election. I have found that all of my international peers and professors are extremely familiar with the names John McCain and Barack Obama.

But when our lunchtime discussions demand an analysis of the candidates' voting records and positions, it becomes difficult to separate fact from distorted information.

For example, one of my classmates informed me that John McCain "does not care about the environment." When I asked her how she arrived at that conclusion, she defended the claim by falsely noting that McCain's political party did not deem the environment an important issue. She was unaware that McCain had sponsored — three times — the bipartisan Climate Stewardship Act, a bill that would have provided a timeline for capping 85% of the country's carbon emissions. The bill was endorsed by the National Wildlife Foundation and by the Pew Center on Global Climate Change. In addition, throughout his political career, McCain has taken significant positions in favor of protecting the environment. Through bipartisan efforts, he has placed 3.5 billion acres of land into wilderness protection.

On another occasion, one of my professors went on a tangent from class discussion and announced that John McCain would be disastrous for our country because he "loves war." There was a momentary pause, and then discussion shifted in another direction, so I did not question her serious charge. But I should have. Perhaps more than any politician in Washington today, John McCain understands the horrors of war—firsthand. He was tortured for several years in Vietnam, and when given the choice to save himself at the expense of his fellow soldiers, he refused. Years later, when he returned to the United States, he found a different way to serve his country: he ran for office. Almost immediately, he emerged as a leading figure in an effort to normalize relations between the United States and Vietnam.

But John McCain didn't stop there. Two decades later, during the Bush Administration, he led a powerful, bipartisan effort against the use of torture. He was not afraid to criticize the government's handling of the war and denounce the actions of both Republicans and Democrats in Washington. And more importantly, John McCain has set his sights on what is best for our country, seeing beyond his personal experiences and tragedies. He has been practical and reform-minded, and, as a result, has gained respect from both sides of the aisle.

I realize that being uninformed about the entire political career of a potential president of the United States of America, the leader of

## foreigncorrespondence

the free world, is not quite the same as being unaware of the origins of pepperoni pizza. But that's not the point. Both are prime examples of the rapid dissemination of inaccurate information — a phenomenon especially worthy of consideration in an election year.

The spread of information is a crucial element of the democratic government envisioned and created by our forefathers. In 1787 Thomas Jefferson concluded that we, the people, “are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty.” And in order to preserve it when it is threatened the people can do little unless they are “well-informed.” Thus, over 200 years ago, our forefathers understood the vital importance of an informed citizenry, and long before that, despotic governments understood the danger of one.

A well-informed citizenry works to preserve its own liberties by monitoring the actions of the three branches of government, demanding government transparency, and holding public officials accountable for their actions. It is also a weapon and deterrent against governmental abuse of power. What is unique about America is that the public has a globally and historically unprecedented access to information and facts. Moreover, we have a greater ability individually and collectively to act on our information.

In the context of the 2008 presidential election, a well-informed citizenry does not buy into flashy and meaningless slogans, phrases and well-written speeches barely sprinkled with fact. They do not buy into entirely false information on a candidate's voting record, positions, and character. Yet these erroneous but easily refutable “facts” ultimately become deciding factors in close presidential elections. An uninformed citizenry has little else but these “facts” when they go to the polls. The media know this, private interest groups know this, and the presidential campaigns know this.

Every four years, American voters cast their ballots to preserve the liberties of their own generation, and of the next. But the liberty to which we are so accustomed is not guaranteed. That's why it is so important to know the candidates. To research their voting records, read the actual bills they voted for and against, co-sponsored, denounced, or killed in committee.

Accountability is also key. The candidates must be held responsible for their claims. When Barack Obama runs an entire campaign on the basis of changing America, research his past leadership on effecting change in the Illinois legislature, or in the United States Senate. When Obama is praised for his supposed record of bipartisanship, research successful bills that would support this notion. And when John McCain is attacked for being incapable of bipartisanship, when his status as a “maverick” is being denounced on several fronts, know his voting record and find the bills he has sponsored and co-sponsored. Become familiar with the stands he has taken against Washington politics, as well as legislators and presidents of both political



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parties, in the two decades of his senatorial career.

Three months of widely advertised “facts” against another candidate cannot disqualify or discredit an entire career of public service that proves otherwise.

There is simply too much information, too many facts, and increasingly easy access to primary documents and sources at our disposal. The outlets of information available to us today were unheard of two decades ago. Perhaps it is understandable, then, maybe even justifiable, that two centuries ago, people did not know the daily undertakings of their kings. If they held their rulers accountable at all, it was only when these abuses began to disrupt their daily lives. When taxes or the price of grain increased, or when drafts were instated, people rioted and protested. Nevertheless, actions against the government were most likely treasonous under the law and could result in capital punishment (if they made it to trial). This is still the case today in countries around the world.

The choice is ours. The risks are few, but the stakes are enormous. **G**

# Candidate Analysis: Dreams and Delusions

Michael Gledhill

Who is Barack Obama? Obama the presidential candidate presents himself as a man who has loved America from his earliest childhood, a man proud of his mixed-race roots who comfortably transcends polarized racial politics, a man who eschews the ideologies of Left and Right, an optimistic healer. But in his critically acclaimed autobiography, *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, Obama is something else entirely.

Obama published his autobiography in 1995, when he was in his mid-thirties. Unlike most books by politicians, which are concoctions of clichés penned by ghostwriters, *Dreams* was clearly written by Obama himself. Unlike most politicians, Obama can write and loves language. (He was contemplating a career as a novelist at the time he wrote *Dreams*.) Most important, Obama wrote his autobiography after he had become a political activist but before he was a politician; the book is therefore candid in a way a conventional politician's memoir would never be.

*Dreams* is a complex, introspective book. Its theme is how Obama, born in Hawaii to a white student mother and Kenyan student father, grows to view himself and the white society around him. The Obama of *Dreams* abandons his multiracial roots to forge an alienated black identity — that of a man steeped in radical ideology who views history in terms of a huge chasm separating oppressor from oppressed, white from black, and rich from poor; a man who is never more emotionally at home than when sitting in the church pew listening to Rev. Jeremiah Wright rant about white racism.

People and politicians change, and the Obama of today may not be the one of 13 years ago. But he has never forsworn *Dreams* or given a detailed explanation of how he has evolved since writing it. The book thus remains an extraordinary window into Obama.

## WHAT DOES HE LIKE ABOUT AMERICA?

Candidate Obama claims that “throughout my life, I have always

taken my deep and abiding love for this country as a given.” He tells us his “heart swells with pride at the sight of our flag.”

In *Dreams*, his heart swells at many things but sight of the flag certainly isn't one of them. There he presents a warts-only history of the U.S., a story of evil and suffering. U.S. society is a “racial caste system” where “color and money” determine where you end up in life. He tells us of white children's stoning black children, Jim Crow, and heatless Harlem housing projects. He describes “Japanese families interned behind barbed wire; young Russian Jews cutting patterns in Lower East Side sweatshops; dust-bowl farmers loading up their trucks with the remains of shattered lives.”

Obama says the Hawaiian islands, where he grew up, are beautiful, but quickly reminds us that behind the beauty lurks the “ugly conquest of the native Hawaiians . . . crippling disease brought by missionaries . . . the indenturing system that kept Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino immigrants stooped sunup to sunset in [the fields].”

Candidate Obama proudly tells audiences that his white grandparents were raised in the American heartland. But in *Dreams* he describes this heartland as the “landlocked center of the country, a place where decency and endurance and the pioneer spirit were joined at the hip with conformity and suspicion and the potential for unblinking cruelty.”

Candidate Obama fondly tells audiences that one of his earliest memories is of sitting on his grandfather's shoulders proudly watching the Apollo astronauts return to Hawaii after their splashdown in the Pacific. But in *Dreams*, even this event is an occasion for outrage, as Obama asks: “How could America send men into space and still keep its black citizens in bondage?”

American affluence offends Obama. The vast upper-middle class lives in a land of isolation and sterility. As a teenager, he envies the white homes in the suburbs but senses that the big pretty houses contain “quiet depression” and “loneliness,” represented by “a mother sneaking a tumbler of gin in the afternoon.” American consumer

## acloserlook

culture is comforting but mentally and spiritually numbing, yielding a “long hibernation.”

Studying U.S. law at Harvard, Obama concludes it is mainly about “expediency or greed.” Working in a large modern corporation, he sees himself as a “spy behind enemy lines.” Even science and technology draw his disdain as he warns of “technology that spits out goods from its robot mouth.”

Finishing *Dreams*, I could not recall a single positive sentence about the United States or European society. I reread the book specifically looking for positive remarks. The pickings were lean. Obama does write glowingly of JFK’s Camelot and its promise of a “bright new world,” but concludes this promise was a mere illusion quickly transformed into “war, riot, and famine.” At the end of the book,

Obama acknowledges that “faith in other people” can be found everywhere: among Christians as well as Muslims and in Kansas as well as his beloved Kenya. If you’re looking for rousing patriotism, that’s about as good as Obama gets.

Earlier this year, Michelle Obama made

headlines by declaring that her husband’s primary victories were the first time she had ever been “proud of my country.” Michelle’s remark simply echoes the assessment Barack presents in his 442-page autobiography: Aside from a few comments about what he regards as the largely unsuccessful struggle for civil rights in the Sixties, Obama has nothing positive to say about his country. Even his hopes for the future are modest and “sometimes hard to sustain.”

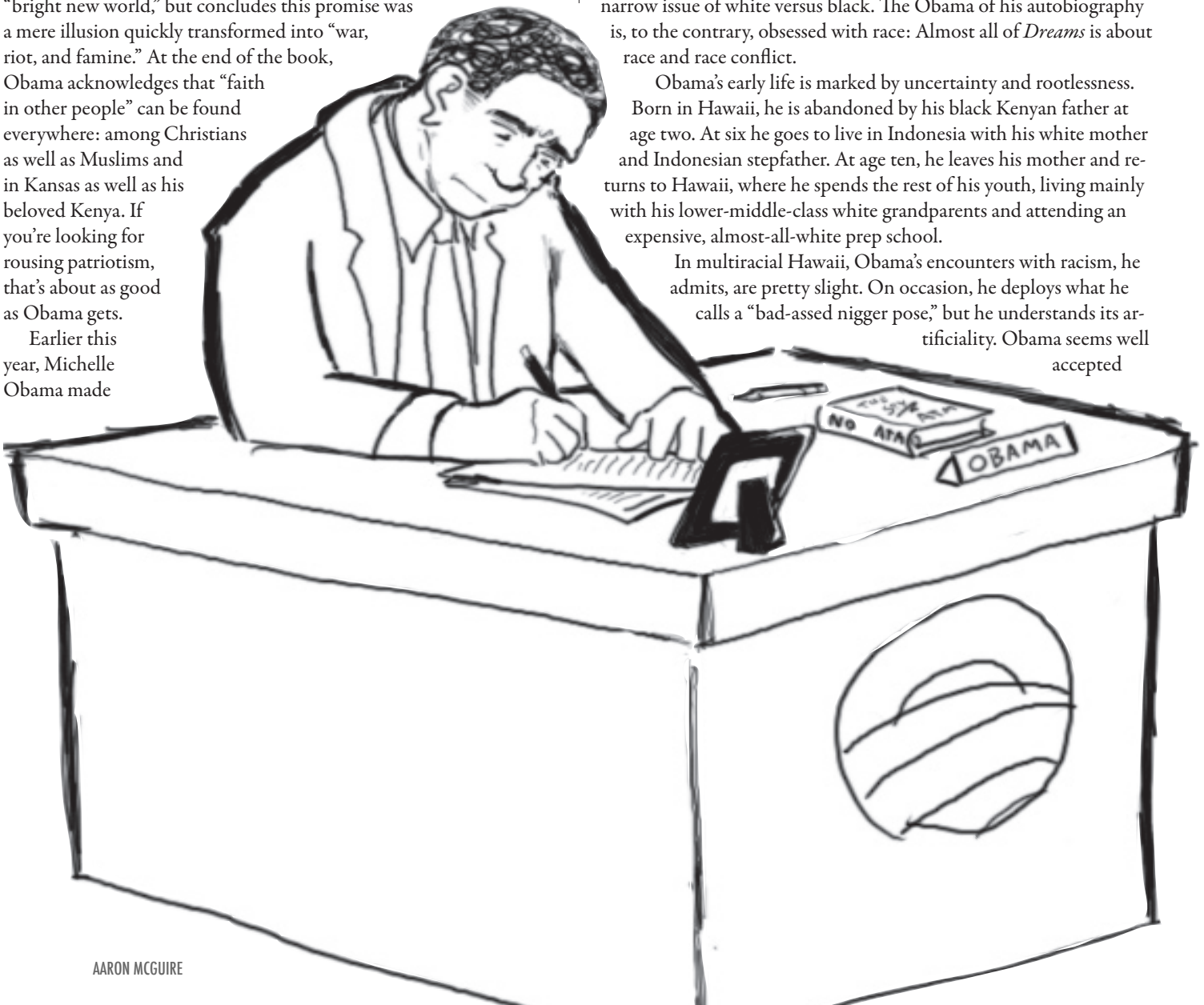
## POST-RACIAL OBAMA

Obama is touted as a post-racial statesman who sees beyond the narrow issue of white versus black. The Obama of his autobiography is, to the contrary, obsessed with race: Almost all of *Dreams* is about race and race conflict.

Obama’s early life is marked by uncertainty and rootlessness.

Born in Hawaii, he is abandoned by his black Kenyan father at age two. At six he goes to live in Indonesia with his white mother and Indonesian stepfather. At age ten, he leaves his mother and returns to Hawaii, where he spends the rest of his youth, living mainly with his lower-middle-class white grandparents and attending an expensive, almost-all-white prep school.

In multiracial Hawaii, Obama’s encounters with racism, he admits, are pretty slight. On occasion, he deploys what he calls a “bad-assed nigger pose,” but he understands its artificiality. Obama seems well accepted



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by the youth around him, but, inside, he feels anxious and apart. A turning point in the narrative occurs when some of his white teenage friends attend an otherwise all-black party with him but feel uncomfortable and ask to leave. Obama is enraged and wants to punch his friends.

He begins to inundate himself in black literature: Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and W. E. B. DuBois. Saturated with themes of anger and alienation, Obama withdraws into a “smaller and smaller coil of rage.” He suffers a “nightmare vision” of black powerlessness and feels whites have maimed blacks with a tragic “self-contempt.” Malcolm X becomes his favorite author, although he admits all the talk about “blue-eyed devils and apocalypse” is a bit much.

Teenage Obama now sees himself as a “would-be black.” He begins to deliberately craft a black identity with alienation and anger at its foundation. The reader of *Dreams* cannot help being struck by the unexplained contrast between the circumstances of Obama’s life — an opportunity to attend a fine school, white grandparents who love him — and his great anger at white society.

Today, Candidate Obama presents himself as a multiracial American who is proud of his mixed ancestry and can comfortably draw from both his white and his black roots. In *Dreams*, he takes the opposite stance. He deliberately and repeatedly rejects a multiracial identity. For example, attending an expensive private college in California, he meets many young people of mixed black and white ancestry who view themselves, not as black, but as multiracial. Obama specifically rejects this option as a sellout. He also rejects integration as a goal because it is “a one-way street. The minority is assimilated into the dominant culture, not the other way around.”

After college, Obama has an affluent white girlfriend who loves and wants to marry him. She brings him to visit her family, who warmly accept him. Obama is attached to the girl and respects the family’s deep cultural heritage, but he eventually dumps her because she is not black. He feels that if he marries her he will ultimately be assimilated into a foreign white culture, a fate that is unacceptable to him.

Obama comes to define and identify himself as a black man. As a young man he views his white ancestry not as an asset, but as an impediment to achieving authentic blackness. The dozens of cultural and historic figures appearing throughout *Dreams* are almost all black. (White author Joseph Conrad makes a token appearance as a deranged racist.) Obama identifies his principal role models: Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, and W. E. B. DuBois. He states that while he might love his white grandfather and Indonesian stepfather, he could “never emulate” them because of the racial difference: They were “white men and brown men whose fates didn’t speak to my own.”

Obama is fascinated by his black ancestry. When he journeys to Kenya he has a deep sense of joy and belonging — he feels he has finally come home. By contrast, he has very little interest in his white ancestors or in the history of white America. He views U.S. history simply as a melodrama in which whites crush blacks (although class oppression and brutality against other minorities provide secondary plotlines).

It is true that Obama never abandons his affection for his white mother and grandparents. The memory of his immediate white relatives does remind him that not all whites are culpable racists and that some “could be exempted from the general category of distrust.” But beyond this he has no identification or psychic ties to larger white society.

*Dreams* does present one exception to Obama’s black exclusiveness. As Obama studies radical Marxist-Leninist literature (Frantz Fanon, neocolonialism, etc.), he comes to see himself as the champion not just of blacks but of the downtrodden of all races. But this shift only distances him farther from the dominant white and European culture, which he views as the focal point of global exploitation. Even in his thirties, he writes with enthusiasm about the Viet Cong, the Mau Mau Uprising, and black rioters in Detroit who lashed



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out with “street crime and revolution” against complacent white oppressors.

## HATRED

Generally, Obama sees an unbridgeable gulf between races: “The other race would always remain just that: menacing, alien, and apart.” He states that at the core of black consciousness is the experience of white hatred of blacks. This hatred inspires an anger in turn that can either be directed out toward whites or in toward blacks themselves, in self-loathing:

[Black awareness] hadn’t arisen simply from struggles with pestilence or drought, or even mere poverty. [It] had arisen out of a very particular experience with hate [of whites toward blacks]. That hate hadn’t gone away; it formed a counternarrative buried deep within each person and at the center of which stood white people — some cruel, some ignorant, sometimes a single face, sometimes just a faceless image of a system claiming power over our lives.

As a youth, Obama is shocked when a black mentor tells him that “black people have reason to hate,” but later comes to accept this view. He ponders whether the “ghostly figure” of white hatred can ever be “exorcised” from black dreams. And he goes so far as to ask whether blacks can love themselves without hating whites, but provides no answer.

Candidate Obama declared that he was shocked when he heard Rev. Jeremiah’s Wright’s outrageous remarks about American society. Despite the fact that he had been a member of Wright’s church for over a decade, Obama asserted that he had never heard such remarks from his spiritual mentor before.

But in the autobiography, Wright’s rants are in plain view. It is obvious that Obama is drawn to Wright’s ministry not in ignorance, but precisely because of the Reverend’s politics. In *Dreams*, Wright asserts: “Life’s not safe for a black man in this country, Barack. Never has been. Probably never will be.” Obama apparently agrees, ignoring the obvious facts that nearly all black homicides are committed by other blacks, and that the number of violent crimes committed by blacks against whites is about eight times greater than the number of such crimes by whites against blacks.

When Wright, in the pages of *Dreams*, rants from the pulpit about Hiroshima and proclaims that “white folks’ greed runs a world in need,” it’s not so jarring, since Obama has been saying pretty much the same thing throughout the book. Obama expresses joy and a real sense of belonging in connection with only three places: his childhood home in Indonesia, Kenya, and in the pews of Reverend Wright’s Trinity United Church.

## OBAMA AND THE UNDERCLASS

In his personal life, Obama has received highly favorable treat-

ment from white society. His grievance appears, at least on the surface, to be abstract rather than personal. It is the existence of the black poor and underclass that justifies his alienation from and hostility to his nation. For Obama, the black ghetto epitomizes the callousness, greed, and injustice of U.S. society.

Obama became a community organizer in south Chicago to save the black urban poor and underclass. This was no mere job to Obama; it was a quasi-religious calling, his mission in life, offering the promise of personal “redemption.” But at only one point does Obama pause in his narrative and ask the big questions. Contemplating the tangle of homicide, drug addiction, alcoholism, out-of-wedlock childbearing, and educational failure that blights the public-housing complex where he is working, he asks: What causes this? Who is responsible? After all, there are no white people there, “no cigar-chomping crackers . . . no club-wielding Pinkerton thugs.”

With this question, Obama broaches the central paradox of modern race relations. Why, at a point when white society ended segregation, created affirmative action, and erected a massive new welfare state, did the self-destructive behaviors of the black lower classes soar, and entire communities begin spiraling downward in devastating social entropy? But, having raised this question, Obama offers no answer. The only solution he suggests is increased HUD funding. Some pages later he returns to vague charges about racism and hidden structures of power.

Elsewhere in *Dreams*, however, Obama hints at an explanation for this silence. He says that focusing on the self-destructive behavior of the black underclass smacks of “the explanations that whites had always offered of black poverty: that we continued to suffer from, if not genetic inferiority, then cultural weakness.” A focus on behavior will only confirm the “worst suspicions” of blacks about themselves, pushing them deeper into helplessness and despair.

Black well-being therefore requires that the blame for black behavior always be placed in historic context — that is, shifted to whites. If 69 percent of black children are born out of wedlock, if blacks kill blacks, if black-run schools don’t teach, it is the white man’s fault. Alternative explanations will only relieve white guilt while raising black self-doubt.

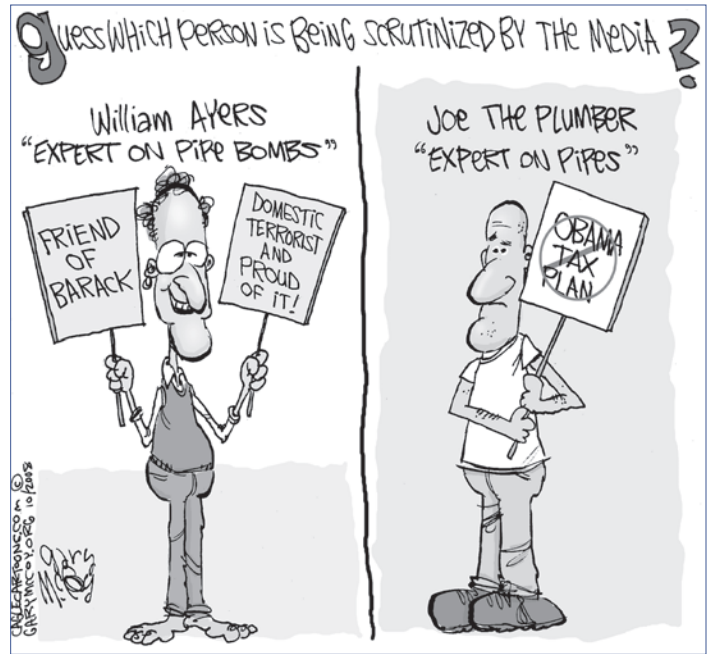
## SELF-PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR

*Dreams from My Father* reveals Barack Obama as a self-constructed, racially obsessed man who regards most whites as oppressors. It is the work of a clever but shallow thinker who confuses ideological cliché for insight — a man who sees U.S. history as a narrow, bitter tale of race and class victimization. The Barack Obama presented in these pages is not electable to national office. No wonder that Obama, aided by a compliant media, has created a new self for public view, one the Obama of *Dreams* wouldn’t recognize and probably would disdain. G

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# ART

A graphic commentary on our times



Top cartoon courtesy of Aaron McGuire, Trinity '12. Bottom cartoons courtesy of caglecartoons.com.

Over the summer, Duke abandoned its impressive, easy-to-use, and entirely Duke-based ACES class registration system in favor of a new system of registration created outside the university. The new ACES has made signing up for classes an agonizing, rather than an exciting process due to its labyrinthine system of links and convoluted class look-up process. In the wake of the enormous student outcry in response to the new system (including a Facebook group entitled “The New ACES Sucks”) the administration has begun discussing the deeply flawed system with students and seeking their input. It is becoming increasingly clear that students are not merely homesick for the familiar format of the old ACES; the difficulty is that the new one is barely usable. More than superficial changes are necessary.

Menu

Search

Give up

Stuff You Actually Have a Prayer of Accessing -- Maybe

Academics

**Class search**

Everything you need to look up classes from prior semesters.  
Oh, you wanted to be able to see syllabi? Well, that's just tough.

**Planner/Bookbag**

What is my Planner?  
Your Planner is like your bookbag, except that

- (a) It serves no real purpose,
- (b) It doesn't tell you when classes are actually held, and
- (c) We let you access it.

My Classes	Topics	Enrolled?
Computer Science 121	Navigating the New ACES: Part one of a two-semester course	✓
Sociology 142	Spec. topics: Student concerns at Duke: Why the Administration really doesn't give a	😊
History 101	Remember how easy it was to use the old ACES?	✓
French 139	Le nouvel ACES et le désespoir	❤️

SEARCH FOR CLASSES

(Includes course listings from Fall 2006 through Fall 2008!)

Announcements

We will force you to sign in again every five minutes. And just forget about opening anything in a new window!

To Do List

Ask your professors what courses their departments are offering next spring, because you surely will not find out from us.

Enrollment Dates

Enrollment for the spring is coming. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

Advisor

Hates the new ACES just as much as you do.

Professors

Now have to set aside 20 or 30 minutes each time they want to check the enrollment of their courses.

Administrator

Helped choose the new ACES because it would be easier for him personally to use and because he would rather outsource our programming than pay less for a more efficient and convenient program created right here at Duke.

Need help?

Yeah. We bet you do.

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