

OPINION

This column represents the views of the Old Gold and Black Editorial Board.

Students need more focus on Iraq conflict

Even as the debate surrounding the prospect of using force to oust Saddam Hussein and his regime from Iraq heats up within the international community, the issue is receiving surprisingly little attention within our campus community and the community at large.

To be sure, many students feel as if they are far removed from the situation. Unlike the Sept. 11 attacks, which touched extremely close to home, this newest world crisis appears on the surface to pose no immediate threat to most university students.

While the implementation of the draft 30 years ago led to widespread interest of college students in the Vietnam War, the possibility of the pending strike on Iraq necessitating another round of selective service seems remote at best. This, coupled with the fact that our generation has never really experienced the effects of an extended, international conflict, can lead to a sense of apathy.

We must not forget, however, that the Iraq question is just one component of the broader war on terrorism, the international conflict that may very well define our generation and produce far-reaching consequences. Immediately, the conflict may impact gas prices or increase the possibility of another terrorist attack within our borders, but also stands to protect our families from the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction in the hands of an irrational dictator.

For those graduating, a war on Iraq may affect the economy and job availability, or our classmates in ROTC going on to serve in the armed forces. As young people who will inherit the world being shaped by current policy, we cannot afford to remain indifferent.

Several steps have been taken, of course, to foster dialogue concerning the issue, and such activities are certainly deserving of praise. The *Living with the Legacy of Sept. 11* lecture series sponsored by the Political Science department is currently calling attention to events taking place in the Middle East. And even more specific to the issue at hand, a group of students and professors recently drew a large crowd to Shorty's for a roundtable discussion of the implications of a potential pre-emptive strike.

Some students and faculty even went so far as to attend an anti-war protest in Washington several weekends ago. Proactive measures of this nature, be they in support of or in opposition to the strike, are certainly to be encouraged, but let's not forget that

our own campus can and should be an equally effective arena for discussion and demonstration. Political activism is not relegated exclusively to Capitol Hill.

Students are in the unique position of possessing both the time and resources to investigate the issue extensively, and everyone, no matter where they fall on the issue, should take advantage of every opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the costs and benefits of the potential conflict. We cannot make full use of the education we receive at the university if we limit it to the content of professors' lectures in the classroom. As students, we have an obligation to take the lessons learned in politics, religion, economics, history and other classes, and apply them to the world in which we live.

And while students must pay greater attention to the issue in various areas of the university community, professors should nevertheless be encouraged to explore the issue in their classes whenever possible. Moving from the theoretical to practical applications should be a goal of a liberal arts education.

The organized political parties on campus, the College Republicans, College Democrats and other groups, are in an excellent position to help encourage dialogue on the issue. Now that the midterm elections are over, both groups should strive to harness the momentum created from the local and state races, and channel it into increasing interest in the ever-important foreign policy realm of government. We have placed our leaders in power; now let's examine exactly how they will be taking on the issues placed before them.

The Democrats and Republicans should focus on increasing their visibility on campus as well, by pooling their resources and sponsoring events to address this important aspect of our nation's foreign policy. There are undoubtedly groups of students on both sides of the issue waiting to be mobilized; they merely need some leadership to get started.

The university's response to Sept. 11 last fall was an impressive display of patriotism, unity and love. Such a reaction was almost automatic, though; everyone knew intuitively where to stand on such a tragic event. The current situation with Iraq is of no less significance to the United States, but neither is it so cut-and-dry. A bit more thought and consideration is required in order to draw conclusions about the current international conflict, and we should do all in our power to make campus an environment that encourages active dialogue and debate.

TV must improve race portrayal

The media's depiction of blacks in sitcoms often leads to misconceptions.

I'm now curious about race relations in the media and how that affects society.

Race in the media is a touchy subject because many people, primarily black people, find the racial tendencies of television to be offensive. I'm going



Chris Plumlee

OLD GOLD AND BLACK COLUMNIST

to tackle race on television head on just to see where it leads me. I can't pretend that this is all my own idea though.

According to the video that I viewed as part of a mass communication class called *Color Adjustments*, racial tension can be traced back to the beginning of television, when one of the first crossover shows, *Amos 'n Andy*, made the move from radio to television. Amos and Andy were two black men who stumbled and bumbled through various situations to great comedic acclaim on radio.

The radio show was thought up by a pair of white comedians who lent their voices to the characters and adopted an exaggerated accent to make the race of the two characters obvious through dialogue alone.

To some blacks, they represented a step forward, as they did give black people a presence in media. At the same time, however, the *Amos 'n Andy* stereotype took quite a while to break, and some would say that it has never been broken. The picture of black people as comedic characters not funny for their own sake, but funny because they fail, is a recurring theme throughout television.

Further steps were taken with shows like *Julia*. That show portrayed a successful, normal, everyday black woman raising a son in a world

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placing black characters in regular shows with normal casts is wrong because white people could have filled the role as well. I guess you could say that I'm confused about what's right and wrong in the larger picture of media.

populated in equal measures by white and black people. She was seen as an equal by whites, and it was not seen as unusual by anyone that she was successful. However, she was no different because she was black either.

The same formula worked for *The Cosby Show*, where the black people in the cast could have just as easily been white, for all the role that their race played in their lives.

The idea of "white black people" was successful, it is argued, because it is non-threatening, and even affirming, of the conservative status quo. The idea that minorities can, through hard work, become upper class just like anyone else and erase their ethnicity completely makes the establishment happy. In this way, positive images of black people are simultaneously negative.

The only positive show that was mentioned in the video that I viewed was a show called *Frank's Place*, which was, as the trend would demonstrate, canceled after only a few seasons. It dealt with the difficulty of being a minority in America, but dealt with it in the context of the life of a successful hotel owner in New Orleans.

The primary problem I had with the conclusions reached by the video was that nothing was held up as very positive. The shows that depicted a negative view of the lives of black Americans were hailed as realistic, but too negative. The shows that had successful black people as their main characters, as in *The Cosby Show* and *Julia*, were too positive and unrealistic.

The only show that fell in the middle ground, *Frank's Place*, was treated quickly and dismissed as an

aberration.

So, I would ask what is to me the next logical question. If there are no examples of positive race relations on television anywhere, what is to be done about it?

The conclusion reached by the video is that every person in America must hope that positive portrayals of black people come from black directors and creators, and that stereotypes must be monitored closely to make sure that they don't come across in television.

The conclusion reached in a discussion after the film ended was that every kind of show depicted had its place. It seems simple enough, I suppose. Take every show that is seen as a "white" show, and make a "black" show just like it. Dramas, comedies and unclassifiable shows should be available and visible, and stereotypes should end.

However, I wonder if this is a cop-out. Shows that recycle formulas that work for white casts and insert some ethnic humor and characters are standard fare on UPN and the WB, and those shows are denounced as derogatory and stereotypical.

Apparently shows with all-black casts, like *Sanford and Son* and *Amos 'n Andy*, are derogatory because they show black people in a black world, but placing black characters in regular shows with normal casts is wrong because white people could have filled the role as well.

I guess you could say that I'm confused about what's right and wrong in the larger picture of media. Also, as a quick side note, I was asked to chide readers about the rolling of the Quad.

While I only actively participated towards the very end of the effort (i.e. I threw one roll of toilet paper when nobody was looking), I did notice that there was a little bit too much of the trees showing.

It took 30-plus years for the football team to shut out Carolina a second time (the last time was in the 1960s) and it could have been celebrated more raucously. It's a shame when the parents and alumni get more excited about a sports victory than the student body.

Chris Plumlee is a junior communication major.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Kings will surrender reign to Lakers

In response to Matt Gallagher's press box ("NBA in a Sacramento State of Mind," Oct. 31):

As sure as Vlade Divac will pathetically yell, "Vlade no foul!" the Los Angeles Lakers will be hoisting their fourth consecutive championship trophy in June. Last year, the Lakers, without fail, managed to beat teams that insisted, "this is our year." Now I am going to tell you why this next year will be more of the same.

I don't even need to waste time previewing the other 27 teams in the league. I mean, come on, the Eastern Conference is worthless.

The NBA Championship should just be awarded to the Western Conference winner, and the East should just get a big basket of high-quality muffins, a gold medal and a card that reads, "Congratulations for being the least impotent team in your Conference!"

So it basically comes down to the Western Conference, and by that I mean the Los Angeles Lakers and the Sacramento Queens ... err ... Kings. These are far and away the best two teams in basketball, and their playoff series will decide the NBA champion. I will guarantee that when these two teams do indeed meet, the Lakers will be moving on, and the Kings will be busy mopping up Rick Adelman's tears.

You don't have to be a professional basketball analyst to understand why the Lakers will win; in fact, it is quite simple: Shaq and Kobe. There is no stopping these two, although the Kings have tried desperately.

Last year Kobe Bryant "conveniently" came down with a nasty case of food poisoning when playing at Sacramento in the Western Conference Final. I have done a little "private investigating," and it turns out that it wasn't food poisoning after all. Kobe just made direct eye contact with Doug "Medusa" Christie, whose immeasurable hideousness induced a nauseous stupor. Kobe has learned his lesson and will manage to stay healthy

this year.

The Kings, like every other NBA team, have no answer for Shaquille O'Neal. Divac, Scot "shave those sideburns" Pollard, or whatever other lanky goon the Kings play will resemble a rag doll when matched up against the Big Fella. The only respectable player on the Kings is Mike Bibby, but even his shoulders cannot bear the money-stuffed pockets of Chris "What 280,000 dollars?" Webber and the rest of his quick-to-fold team. Regardless of the regular season and everything else, these two teams will meet in the playoffs, Kobe and Shaq will put up 30 points each, Pedrag "Stojako-miss" will fling airballs, and Divac will flop and whine until referees' ears bleed. In the end it will be another championship to Los Angeles ... Lakers four-peat.

Chris Shepherd
Sophomore

National Coming Out Day deserved coverage

Being gay at Wake Forest isn't easy. Being "out of the closet" you come across a full range of positive, apathetic and negative responses. It is these responses that the very act of "coming out" addresses. Visibility and awareness are essential to acceptance and nurturance, for we judge hardest that of which we are most ignorant.

"Coming out of the closet" at its core is about visibility, nurturance and community. Accepting one's own sexual identity is the first step in the long and difficult process of disclosure to others.

For many people "coming out" is one of the most challenging and liberating experiences in one's lifetime. And on Oct. 11, 1987, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered activists originated National Coming Out Day to celebrate each individual's sexual identity. This year, like other past years, GSSA held a National Coming Out Day celebration on the upper Quad here at Wake Forest. From noon until 4 p.m., anyone on

the main Quad couldn't miss the people gathered around the rainbow balloons and live music in front of the post office. Clearly, the *OGB* photographer did not miss this event; however, an *OGB* reporter did. For on the front page of this past week's paper there was an excellent pictorial representation of gay life on Wake Forest campus, but no article to support it.

Sam (the woman in the picture) was not interviewed. Rather, the *OGB* staff assumed her identity by her association with the event; an event that justly regards representation. However, I do not feel that as a member of the GLBT community at Wake Forest that it is right to show our faces without sounding our voices.

Elizabeth Story
Senior

'Muscle cars' hit funny bone, struck a cord

I was reading Miranda Mill's column ("Muscle cars drive girls mad," Oct. 31) and it made me laugh out loud -- twice!

Once while recognizing the actions of the described Mustang drivers as all-too-true, and again, at the column's underlying theme of "us poor girls driving sports cars." Life at Wake Forest can be so hard!

Josh Buchanan
Freshman

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