

Blind patriotism has troubling implications

Unquestioning belief in the ideology of any state could lead to disaster.

I saw a child's hand slowly unlocking Pandora's Box at the mall yesterday. Her gaze was fixed on an "inspirational poster" in a shop that specializes in placing socially-valued words such as "success," "inspiration," and "hope," with beautiful photographs that complement them. A boy and his father fishing represented the word "value," as the subtitle said



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seems that "support of the troops," has spilled over from patriotic into militaristic realms. It was widely reported that on one wall of Sadaam Hussein's original cell was a poster of his family, top leaders and supporters who have been captured or killed since the beginning of the war; on the other wall was a poster of President Bush. The high road must have been washed out by mortar shells. This opportunity was a perfect time for the United States to show the world its declared intentions of spreading democracy. Sadaam is not forced to look at the face of freedom, democracy, peace or justice. He is forced to look at a man who was debatably elected to a four year term as President, representing only one-third of our federal government.

Any president, Democrat or Republican, isn't the representation of our democratic ideals. Granted, the duel between the President and Sadaam in *Hot Shots Part Deux* is so inspirational I would enlist if Charlie Sheen asked me to, but the difference between unofficial mockery and official arrogance is a line we may have crossed. And so, as the little girl in the mall loosened her tractor-beam from "Patience," probably on her way to the Disney Shop, I wondered how she will be affected. I have no idea whether her role models would extol or condone the poster. I do know that images such as this, interior design choices for the cells of brutal dictators, and ultra-patriotic trends in our society affect our future generations. The fight for equality and freedom should be celebrated, but when the idealism behind our actions is tainted, we have removed the safety from a loaded gun and given our children the key to a chest full of dangerous influences.

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something to the effect of "taking time for the things that *really* matter." The girl I saw, about 7 years old, was gazing at the word "patience." She was also staring at a man in full military camouflage up to his waist in water aiming the long barrel of a sniper rifle in between strands of water grass. The subtitle said "If you have but one shot at opportunity make it count." The man in a neutral uniform with no identification, American or otherwise, was placed outside any direct context. He represented one simple motive, the taking of human life. The military has never been or at least shouldn't be the embodiment of moral value. The military might *defend* our ideals but never represent them. My inspirational poster would say "desensitized." Many people would assume the sniper is an American and leave it at that. Therefore, no matter the target, our black and white world accepts the destruction he will bring. He could be aiming at our President or a farm girl holding a kitten. The target is outside of the frame and our consciousness. If this weren't true it wouldn't be for sale. Our patriotic binge could inspire solidarity. However, many times upon closer inspection it is flawed. Youth watch television instead of reading books, no one votes in a country that topples governments in the name of democracy, and it

Students not apathetic

Characterization of students as uncaring false.

My director said, "We didn't have a big audience, Anjali, but we had the right audience." These words came after an intense performance about international domestic

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violence at SECCA last year. I was disappointed that opening night only attracted a handful of supporters, but what my director taught me that night was a lesson in quality versus quantity. Are people at Wake Forest really that busy, or are they just really apathetic? I have not tried to reach any scientific conclusion to this question, but what I have learned from pondering this question, and from my interactions with many different types of Wake students is that everyone has their own interests. Let's be honest, not everyone is interested in international domestic violence, or politics or religious activities. Every group on this campus struggles to attract people to attend their events. But the people who *do* come to these events are the right people—they are the ones who have a genuine interest in learning something new, enjoying a musical performance, or just

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hanging out with their friends in a different setting. I do not think that Wake students rush around campus to go to class and run back to their rooms to check their friend's away messages or just chill. I think they rush around campus to get to rehearsals, track practice, a committee meeting, to Q to find their car and get to their off-campus job, or to their room to take a nap after a long day of four classes, lab and LSAT practice. I have faith that Wake students are actually really busy living out their own interests and trying to make it academically.

Of course I wish more people would come to, say, College Democrats events. But just because I devote the majority of my time to my political interests, I do not think it would be fair to charge the entire student body to have an interest in what (I think) is the most important issue facing our generation. I know for a fact that a number of students would rather volunteer at Crisis Control, plan a Greek fundraiser or go to an extra rehearsal than come to a political event. And you know what? I think that is great.

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think I would have room to complain. But I am more optimistic than that. I firmly believe that students at Wake are using their college careers to not only have a good time and earn a degree, but to find themselves through their involvement in what they genuinely care about. I agree with the late Sen. Paul Wellstone when he said "We should never separate the lives we live from the words we speak." I believe that Wake students speak their lived experiences. That is why there are so many cool events that happen every month on campus. But in reality, we all live different lives, and community is formed on common interest. This common interest cannot be forced, but it is found in everyday interactions and conversations.

I wish I could attend more events on campus—there is always a flier up about something that looks interesting; but sometimes I would rather go out to dinner with a friend I have not seen in a while, or try to catch up on reading or just do absolutely nothing. Although I have no data on the subject, my experience has taught me that Wake students do a lot—almost too much. We need to step back every now and then and prioritize our own lives, not fill our plates too high and take the time to build the right audience for our interests—not necessarily a big audience.

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Rethinking governmental moral impulses

It may be appropriate for government to legislate morality in an amoral era.

After watching President Bush's well-articulated State of the Union address, I quickly turned to my computer and searched for the column on morality I wrote



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last semester. In that article, I had expressed skepticism for government's ability to legislate morality, especially when those in power had many moral missteps themselves. I summarized my thoughts with this statement: "What a horrible state of affairs exists when morality and virtue must be legislated, instead of residing in the hearts and minds of the people."

Why the return to a previous theme? Because Bush's words, and the resulting partisan response, struck me so deeply that I believe my endorsement of eliminating government from the sphere of morality may in fact have been premature. I say this still believing in small government, with minimal intrusion into the individual lives of its citizens. Yet when the stark choice is presented between some governmental legislation and a chaotic amoral society with no principles of community and decency, I will always choose the former.

There were several key moral elements of President Bush's speech which brought me to this conclusion. First, he spoke to the power of sexual abstinence as being the only entirely foolproof method of preventing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Along with aggressive measures to fight drug and steroid use, Bush made clear his proposal to continue teaching abstinence as the sole stop-gap measure to spreading STDs.

I was enraged when the whole chamber did not stand up to applaud. Yes, I do realize that birth control education is helpful to those who are sexually active. Yet for nearly half of America's legislators, teaching our nation's teenagers high-risk prevention seems more productive than teaching them responsibility and respect for their own sexual health. Abstinence stops the spread of STDs. Error-prone human inventions will not.

Bush next spoke powerfully of the family and his desire to see the institution of marriage remain intact, defined as the union between a man and woman. Marriage is the foundation of a successful and loving family. Our nation's children deserved to be raised in a loving home

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with parents who are dedicated to each other and their children's well-being. It is this institution which passes the moral torch from generation to generation, and when it breaks down, so will society's moral fabric.

Why must government even become involved in this issue? Last semester, I might have told you it should not. But in rethinking this issue, I realize that in our society of entitlement, there is one entitlement that the government has not given us that each child deserves: a loving family with a stable marriage.

Many parents already provide this entitlement to their children without the government's intervention. I would not trade my personal upbringing in a loving two-parent home for anything; I know that my family has provided me with the principles of morality and love that government can never teach.

Yet my family is also a foster family, taking in children from broken and abusive homes. I see siblings with different fathers, children without parents, young lives already headed in the wrong direction. Abstinence and healthy marriage will prevent some of these horrifying situations. It will not cure everything, but it is certainly a start. Bush ended his speech by reading a letter from a 10-year-old girl, asking him what she could do to help this country. His response was this: "Study hard in school, listen to your mom or dad, help someone in need, and when you and your friends see a man or woman in uniform, say, 'thank you.'" Sound advice from a President who knows the foundations of America – morality, family and patriotism. Let government and citizens alike be guided by those three principles and the United States will indeed continue to be a nation of which we can all be proud.

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Step up and take charge

Students should accept duty to posterity.

Anything for the Wake Forest name, I often tell myself, setting my alarm for 7 a.m. I wonder how I will

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describe Wake Forest next year to my new friends in D.C.? The first thing that comes to mind is to reflect on our traditions: those things we will remember (hopefully with a smile) and that transcend time and space. August includes traditions of freshman chaos, like being wrapped up in orientation, an awkward ice cream social, confusing inside jokes from the Lilting Banshee show and the most thoroughly studied publication: the Look Book. As the leaves change into their fall outfits, we find costumes of our own for Project Pumpkin and reunite with friends at Homecoming. The end of the football season yields the challenge of "Senior Fifth," and the semester winds down with late night breakfasts in the Pit and candles at the Love Feast.

We kick off the new year with a kiss or two ... hundred on "Pledge Night" and later learn about the consequences of intoxication at the alcohol and rape awareness speak outs. In the spring, we escape from "The Forest" to work on our tans or hone our skiing skills and return for the final leg of the race,

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which culminates with post-exams and commencement in May. These traditions hold an important place in all our hearts, but just as our predecessors began these traditions for us to enjoy, we have a responsibility to the future of Wake Forest to continue in this spirit and determine what we will pass on to our progeny.

I recently walked through a modern art museum in Vienna and found, among other inspiring quotes, "If we do not honor our past, we lose our future. If we destroy our roots, we cannot grow."

This reminded me of an address President Hearn made last fall to the faculty, staff and administrators introducing the Eli Lilly Grant, in which he suggested that Wake Forest is facing an identity crisis. After spending some time reflecting on this idea, I have come to form a slightly different conclusion: I believe that the "crisis" to which Dr. Hearn refers is more like the transition period of puberty, through which we all emerge as we leave our stage of adolescence into maturity.

Certainly since the divorce from the Baptist Church and now with the retirement of Chaplain Christman, the Wake Forest name, its people, and goals have changed. As with the human body, our campus has evolved physically with the addition of new buildings (Kirby) and bricks (the Young Walk) and emotionally with new ideas and issues. We now study in Rhoda's corner, not

the Orange Room; we meet for coffee in Shorty's and in the Common Grounds; and we've said good-bye to some beautiful tall members of the magnolia family. We actually even have a new voice, one that is crackly with Bahá'ís, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims. So what traditions will last, and what goes?

I have come to believe that it is matters of the heart and our commitment to *Pro Humanitate* that not only brought me to this community but also is the one thing that has and will continue to outlive us all. These are our *roots* from which the future Wake Forest name will grow. It's those things that we choose to capture in a picture or make us smile when we allow our minds to coast. What few of us realize, however, is that we, students, have the capacity to be a part of this ever-changing process. Who knows, maybe in five years, we will have a *Pro Humanitate* major that focuses on service-learning and peace and conflict resolution. Regardless, each of us has individual capacity to support existing or initiate new traditions.

Just as we are identifying our "true selves," we should be consciously identifying and adapting Wake Forest to this ever-changing world in order to assure Wake's continual growth and effectiveness, while remaining true to its fundamental missions of academic excellence, integrity, and of course *Pro Humanitate*. Think about traditions. Think about the Wake Forest Name. Think about *Pro Humanitate*. And identify your role in the evolution.

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