

FROM THE NATION'S CAPITOL

Heather Thomas
Washington D.C.

The lives of the students in the Washington Semester Program (WSP) continue to be filled with excitement, challenges, and frustrations, all of which stem from their involvement in politics. During their time in the capital, they have learned more about themselves and the students with which they interact on a daily basis. Through the rich experiences that D.C. has to offer, many are saddened by the realization that the semester will be coming to a close in the ensuing weeks.

Recently, a group of St. Lawrence students, accompanied by friends from the WSP, their internship, and elsewhere, joined young leaders of America in their support for the Democratic Party. On Monday, October 27 the Democratic National Committee hosted a fundraising event at the Dream Nightclub, in an area that has repeatedly been referred to as "seedy."

At \$50 a ticket, students dug into their pockets for a night they will never forget. Where else can you see former President Bill Clinton walk on stage to 50 Cent? The event continued until 3:00am, very late for those who had to work the following day. And, yes, the internship opportunities, while good in every sense, do require that people adapt to the lifestyles of the working world.

On Thursday, October 30 congressional staff got quite the scare, when a toy gun that was part of a Halloween costume was run brought into the Cannon Office Building. It apparently looked like the real thing on the video screen of the metal detector. Capitol Police, with the help of scores of law enforcement officers, including SWAT teams, locked down the congressional offices and hearing rooms for more than an hour, as they conducted a floor-by-floor search. Consequently, Capitol Police have been forced to re-evaluate how things are run, which has resulted in a far more involved entrance procedure at the congressional office buildings.

"Rock the Vote" aired on CNN from Boston's Faneuil Hall on Tuesday, November 4. Hosted by Anderson Cooper, this program is aimed to capture the attention of students and individuals that are recently of voting age, namely 18-to-20 year old Democrats and Independents. Present were General Wesley Clark (Ret.), Former Governor Howard Dean (VT), U.S. Senator John Edwards (NC), U.S. Senator John F. Kerry (MA), U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich (OH), U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman (CT), Former U.S. Senator Carol Mosely Braun (IL), and the Reverend Al Sharpton.

In an effort to appeal to the issues of concern to young people, the Democratic candidates presented themselves in a much more relaxed manner, creating an informal setting in which to be asked questions, though many of which did not pertain to the pressing issues of the day.

Along with the warm weather, which was in 80's this past weekend, there are a number of other things getting people hot and bothered in D.C. For example, the recent ban on partial birth abortions, signed by President G.W. Bush on Wednesday, November 5 brought forth a lot of discontent from the unyielding Pro-Choicers.

Interestingly enough, there seems to be a divide between those who are Pro-Choice, without question, and those who believe that while women should have a "choice," abortions late in the pregnancy should be banned. There also seems to be a lot of hubbub about Howard Dean's (D-VT) references to the Confederate flag and its relationship to the pickup truck-driving-southern folk. There is no getting around it, issues are constantly spinning in Washington, DC, as are the minds of everyone involved. I would be willing to call it a non-reality, but that only begs the question, "what is reality?"

NOTES FROM ABROAD

Jessie "Wadudu" Wimett, Anella "Nyama Choma" Pappalardo,
Leah "The Ankles" Nelson, and Erin "Chapati" Shaw
Kenya

Greetings from Kenya! We receive the Hill News here like 2 months late (the football team won, eh?! And have they caught that illegal frog hunting trio?) We were in utter turmoil to hear of the Outing Club's slanderous "Peak Weekend" tee-shirt campaign... How could such a wholesome crew violate mother nature like that? Anyway, we've been reading everyone else's provocative Notes From Abroad (What up DC!) and we felt left out. We've been having ourselves a banging good time here in Kenya- We weren't aware that you could see and do so many things in only 3 months! We've become connoisseurs of fresh goat's blood, are still removing thorns from our flesh from hiking in the rainforest, and have had some interesting dancing experiences; from 80's-style disco clubs in Nairobi, to Maasai warrior jumping sessions in the middle of the savanna.

And OH the wildlife!! Lions and tigers and bears, oh my! We've experienced first-hand the power of the "circle of life" via two lions. ("King of the jungle" indeed, Mufassa only lasted about 5 seconds.)

So anyhow, in a slow-roasted, slightly-salted Brazilian nutshell, Kenya has been amazing! No cause for concern kids, Dan Rather lied. In the words of Kenya Semester alum, John Linsley, we've started missing it here already, and we haven't even left yet.

THE WEEK OF NOVEMBER 14, 2003

SAINT: The Greek Community for organizing the Powder Puff Football game and making it a fun time and a great success!

SAINT: The Thelmo candidates for their hard work in preparing for this week's elections - good luck!

SAINT: ACE for providing so many quality options for the spring concert.

SINNER: We don't intend to complain about ever thing, but does the heat in our rooms need to be cranked up to 150 degrees?

SINNER: The shoes for making a sick when they are supposed to make us better the "re-sill" worth it in the long run though.

SINNER: The person that found out the Purge dates - they can be pretty useful sometimes - see Sinner to the left.

QUESTION OF THE WEEK: How cool are those leaf picker-uppers?

SUGGESTION OF THE WEEK: Finals are quickly approaching, get prepared now.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: "Reading musses up my mind." Henry Ford

THE LEFT
SIDE OF
THE HILL

Brian Lind
Columnist

Breaking Fast in Jordan

The adhan resonates from the minaret of the local mosque by my house to announce the call to prayer as it echoes from all the minarets of Amman's many mosques. I join my family around the dining room table and open my fast with a date from the same plate that our Iraqi guest takes his from. We all sit for Iftaar and I smile as I begin to eat with my host family of Palestinian refugees and their Iraqi friend. It is the 17th day of Ramadan and the 17th day of my fast, however, there is something about opening this fast that moves me deeply and I know it will be an Iftaar I will not forget. I feel comfortable and relaxed here with my family and the stress of the day and my depression over the world's events leaves me, as I sit and eat.

But Iftaar will not open so pleasantly to both my East, from where our guest has traveled, or to my West, where many of my family's relatives reside. In both Iraq and in Palestine this Ramadan is a difficult one. The occupations of both Iraq and Palestine have destroyed the economy driving unemployment over 50% in both countries, as more and more families slip under the \$2 USD-a-day poverty line. Malnutrition in Palestine equals that of some of the worst countries in Africa and malnutrition and clean water have become a disastrous problem in Iraq. In both Iraq and Palestine families are fasting by force (i.e. they are going hungry) and others cannot fast because of the dangerous uncertainty of their lives. There isn't much to celebrate or be happy

for in either place this Ramadan, and Ramadan progresses somberly as more Iraqis and Palestinians are killed and suffer unnoticed by their oppressors, the outside world, or even us.

To me, my Ramadan experiences are more than just a cultural experience. As I am not Muslim, I did not have to observe Ramadan or its fast, but I chose to because of what Ramadan is about. Ramadan is a time of peace and humility where Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. Ramadan is a time to realize the suffering of others and to realize your privileges. The fast during Ramadan is to show solidarity with those that are hungry and those who suffer in the world. It is a time of reflection and meditation, of family and community, of shedding materialism, and a time of peace and kindness.

As my Iraqi and Palestinian neighbors die and go hungry I have chosen to observe Ramadan to meditate, explore, and understand better my role in this part of the world. Like it or not I (just like every American citizen) hold some amount of responsibility for my country's actions and the impact that they create. We harshly occupy Iraq, after destroying the entire infrastructure that allowed people to keep their heads above water, without replacing it, leaving life harder than it was before the fall of Saddam.

And we fund and are accepting of an equally harsh and oppressive occupation of the Palestinian territories, where we don't exert any real effort or pressure in creating peace. And least we forget the chaos we have created in Afghanistan, that we try keep silently swept under the carpet.

My fast isn't about making myself feel good about the injustice I support or to escape the responsibility I share in it. My fast is about gaining a better understanding of the consequences of U.S. actions in the Middle East and Muslim world, showing solidarity with those who we make suffer, and to attempt to begin to simply conceptualize their pain and loss (I say conceptualize because for me this disciplined suffering only lasts 30 days and I can break my fast come sunset each day).

What made me smile at dinner and makes this Iftaar memorable for me is the peace that exists at this dinner table. Here I sit as an American student, with a family of Palestinian refugees, who cannot return to their land; and an ex-Iraqi presidential advisor, who has not left Iraq in the past five years after being placed under house arrest by Saddam Hussein for not agreeing or going along with Saddam's destructive and lethal policies; and we eat dinner in peace. The tensions, mistrust, and anger that should exist here, at this cultural crossroads, don't. And we break fast together, as equal human beings, if I ever had a hope for peace and reconciliation here in the Middle East, I found it here, breaking my Ramadan-fast in Jordan.

ST. LAWRENCE IN BRIEF



University Chorus Concert, Saturday, November 15, 2003 at 8 p.m. in Gunnison Chapel



The Wine Field Concert, Saturday, November 15, 2003 at 9 p.m. in the Brewer Bookstore



Student Athlete Career Day, Sunday, November 16, 2003 at 11 a.m. sponsored by the Office of Career Services and Leadership Education

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