

ZEITGEIST

THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES

MIDDLE EASTERN PROTESTS • WISCONSIN LABOR DISPUTE & MORE



FREEDOM!

Leaders of the Political Awareness Club

President: Quinn Myers '12

Vice President: Jackson Roth '12

Zeitgeist Editors-in-Chief: Henry Burbank '12 and Dan Welch '12

About the Club

Ever feel like your Thursday afternoons are missing something? Perhaps your family has stopped listening to your rants about Ronald Reagan, or your dog is just not having a very good discussion with you whenever you complain about Hillary Clinton? Well, for all of you lonely politicians out there, you're in luck!

Every Thursday, club members - conservative, liberal, and moderate alike - chew over the week's political events, often with the aid of SNL, the Daily Show, the Colbert Report, or some viral video smack off of YouTube.

Over the years the club has sponsored many guest speakers from the world of politics. It has also organized debates involving representatives from various political parties and it has conducted mock elections involving the entire student body.

We meet on Thursday afternoons in Mr. Szabs's room (B407). All are welcome to attend.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 3 Huck Finn Commentary
- 4 European Debt Crisis
- 5 South Sudan
- 7 Middle Eastern Revolutions
- 9 Wisconsin Protests
- 10 The Media and Iraq

A Six-Letter Roadblock

By Dan Welch '12

Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has always been a difficult book to teach, and it will only get harder as time goes on. The most recent display of this has been the controversy surrounding a modified edition of the book that has censored the very word that has made it so controversial: Nigger.

This single word has granted the novel, one of the definitive pieces of American Literature constant backlash. It ensures that it is commonly listed among the most frequently challenged books. Any class discussion becomes awkward and unwieldy, solely due to these two syllables. As a matter of fact, we ran into problems printing this issue of the *Zeitgeist* because the word is so poisonous. All this, despite the fact that most, if not *all* who read it will recognize the fact that the racism present in the book is only used in order to hold a mirror up to the disgusting attitudes of the time. When one examines the actual thematic context of the word and the author's well-known personal beliefs, they can deduce that, logically, this *is not a racist book*. And yet, it continues to be so inflammatory.

While it is easy to accuse those who feel insulted by the book of just not "getting it", the issue doesn't just end where we say it will. We cannot ignore the fact that, historically, the people who have challenged the book aren't simply prudish white soccer moms. They're not the prissy, conservative caricatures that some, myself included, would like to imagine they are: in the past

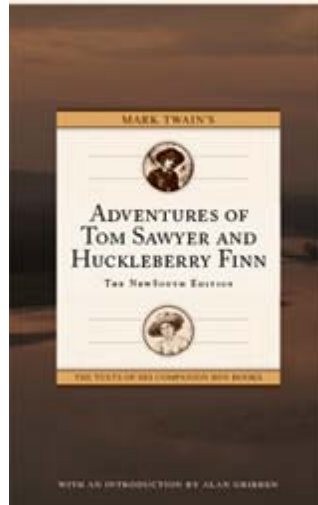
ten years, it has almost always been black students and parents who genuinely feel uncomfortable with the language. This isn't a matter of covering up shame and embarrassment or trying to forget the past: people are turned off to this classic work of literature because they are legitimately offended. Is this something that can be fixed? Is this single word ever going to do anything but stir up feelings of resentment and guilt that even Twain's message of understanding cannot overcome?

In all likelihood? No. This is where we need to recognize the reality of the situation. Race relations in this country are far from perfect, to say the absolute least. Chances are, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* will

always be an uncomfortable book for black students to read. If there were no demand for an edition like this, then surely there would be no supply, correct? Then why blame the book for our own faults?

This new edition lessens the impact of history, yes. It is unfortunate that our current situation would bring us to this. But we cannot afford to let this work slip away. It seems that we have to compromise, just a little bit, in order to keep the story

alive. Rather than skip over the book entirely (undoubtedly, a grave error) this censored version allows teachers and students to connect to what Twain is saying without becoming alienated. It does not fundamentally alter the lesson that the book tries to impart upon the reader. The conflicting emotions that Huck faces are still there on the page. And there is no mandate saying that every school *must* teach this edition of the book. It is safe to assume that many will not. The only difference is that now, schools that formerly deemed the word too sensitive to have in a classroom can expose young minds to Twain's masterpiece.



The European Sovereign Debt Crisis

By Jackson Roth '12

As I'm sure many of you are aware, the shock instigated by the Financial Crisis of 2008 was not limited to the U.S. It was felt throughout the world. And while the U.S. economy seems to be on a tentative rebound, our European cousins haven't been so lucky. In short, what is coming to be known as the European Sovereign Debt Crisis could spin out of control and may itself have consequences for the World Economy.

There were largely two causes for this crisis. The first is obvious: debt. The governments of European Countries had, for far too long, run government spending out of control. Take Greece, for example: the country that started the crisis. An influx of foreign capital as well as a strong economy during most of this decade allowed the Greek government to run their deficit out of control and not face the consequences. Eventually, Greece's debt to GDP was over a

100%. Things eventually took a turn for the worse when the Crisis of 2008 rolled in and several of Greece's major industries were hit particularly badly and the economy basically fell apart. Without a strong economy, many Greeks turned to their government to provide support but soon realized that the government itself was in it as deep as they were. All of that debt had finally caught up to them.

To try and stay afloat, the government continued to borrow money until investors realized there was a strong possibility that it would never be paid back, and Greece would default. In addition, it was revealed that the massive government corruption, tax evasion, and bribery of rating agencies that had initially hid Greece's problems actually contributed to them. On that note, The EU agreed to bail out Greece in order to save the larger European financial system. A similar

scenario has occurred in a number of other countries, including Ireland and Portugal, the former having already been bailed out, with the latter likely to follow.

However, the real problem lies with the next potential domino: Spain. The system can withstand

a Portugal bailout, but if Spain falls it could be financial Armageddon. And the problems wouldn't be just limited to Europe; in fact if the European System enters a scenario like the one described above then the entire world would likely enter another crisis because of the immense impact that Europe has on the World Economy.



The second major cause of the crisis was the Euro. Introduced in 2002 as a part of the broader Neo-Liberal movement, the Euro is the common currency shared by all member states in the European Union. Its purpose was to standardize and open European Markets. While it has had obvious benefits, it is now clear that some significant consequences were ignored. Nations that have their own currency, and therefore their own capital controls, were able to provide an aggressive Government response to the Global Financial Crisis. However, since Greece and other EU member states don't have their own currency, they couldn't respond as aggressively. The United States faced a similar situation as these European States, but we were able to respond far more effectively by just printing more dollars, thus stimulating the economy (that's essentially what the bailout was). But EU states don't have that authority over the

Euro and must rely on the European Union as a whole to save them.

If the European Union wants to stem the current crisis, and avoid crises like this one in the future, it will have to make several fundamental changes. This process has already started with the creation of the tentatively titled European Treasury, which oversees Public Spending by EU member states. This is a good start, but much more is needed. In reality, a self-sustaining economy needs one currency and one government. So for the long term, the EU needs to either further consolidate itself into one state or the member states need to become more independent regarding their financial policy. If neither of these shifts happens, then we could very well find ourselves in the exact same debt crisis all over again. [Z]

A Tide Turns in South Sudan

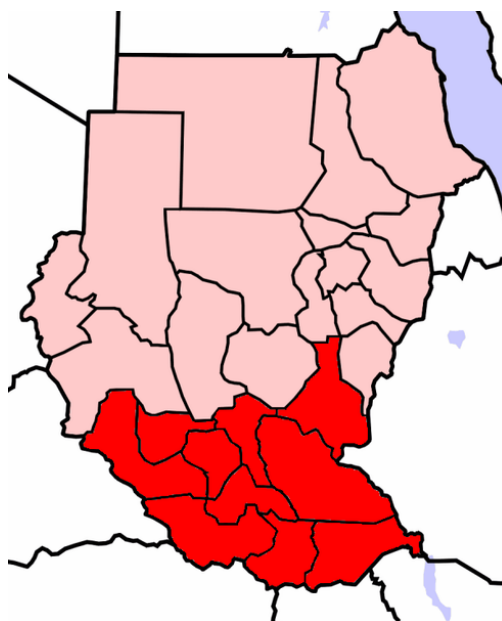
By Michael Whelan '12

In 1884, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck of Germany convened a conference of European powers in Berlin. Historians view this conference as the formal beginning of what came to be known as the "Scramble for Africa": a period of rapid colonization, conquest, and plundering that created immense wealth for European powers at the expense of millions of Africans. At the

Berlin conference, it was decided that any nation could stake a claim to any African land so long as they notified the other powers and set up an effective government and economic system. This policy led to the partitioning of Africa into a "patchwork quilt". (Algeria was blue on the map for France; Kenya was pink for Britain, etc.) When Europeans were staking their claims, they didn't really consider the effects on native Africans. As a result, borders rarely followed traditional African boundaries.

Tribes that were mortal enemies were grouped together while those in the same family were divided between different governments.

In no region is this colonial byproduct as visible as it is in Sudan. The northern part of the country is dominated by the Nubian ethnic group. They follow the Muslim faith and speak Arabic like their Egyptian neighbors to the north. In the South, however, Arabization has not occurred. Most



southerners identify with local tribes and practice animist or Christian beliefs. They are not as wealthy or educated as northerners. Essentially, southern Sudan belongs to the Sub-Saharan region, while the north is more Middle Eastern. This stark contrast can be traced back to the colonial period.

During colonial times, South Sudan was bordered by Belgian Congo to the south and French Equatorial Africa to the west. Both countries encroached, and by 1896 the French held a firm grip on large parts of South Sudan. But when France tried to formally annex all of South Sudan, they angered Britain, who controlled the northern part of Sudan already. This led to an international conflict known as the Fashoda incident.

In 1898, the British, along with some Egyptian reinforcements, repelled the French. An agreement was signed in which France ceded control of all its possessions in South Sudan. (Belgium would later do the

same.) Britain's new possession was tacked onto northern Sudan largely out of convenience: a stable government already existed right next to the new territory. Thus, Sudanese unification began.

For some time, the British did recognize the cultural differences between the two areas in that they were governed largely as two separate colonies until 1947. In that year though, the British met with northern Sudanese leaders in South Sudan's capital, Juba, as part of their colonial exit strategy. There, control of the South was essentially handed over to the north. The British would be the colonial masters of North Sudan for a few more years, while northern Sudanese would be the colonial masters of the South.

Even as the British moved off the scene in the 50's and Sudan became independent, the repression of the South by the North continued apace. Since Sudanese independence, southerners have endured political marginalization, discrimination and repression. Their economy has been neglected while the North grows rich off oil. Southerners have been culturally subjugated through the national imposition of Islamic Sharia law and Arabic teaching in schools. Worst of all has been the indiscriminate war and bombing that has killed thousands and created even more refugees. The Second Sudanese Civil War, which began in 1983 and ended in 2005, has killed 1.9 million non-combatants, the highest civilian death toll since World War II.



However, there is hope. After all these years, it seems as if the violence, discrimination, and repression are finally coming to an end. Signed in January 2005, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement

ended the civil war and guaranteed democratic government, the sharing of oil revenues, and most importantly, a referendum on independence for South Sudan. This year, from January 9th to the 15th, that referendum was finally held. 98.83% came out in favor of independence, and Sudan's president/dictator, Omar al-Bashir, pledged to respect the results. It is true that problems still remain. The oil-rich Abyei and Nuba Mountain border regions remain contested. Darfur, another oppressed region of Sudan, is still violent. But it seems as if the abusive marriage between North and South Sudan is finally coming to an end. The people of South Sudan will surely be better off for it. [Z]

Liberty and Justice For All

By Henry Burbank '12

We are living in a period of civil unrest.

Revolution has spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa like a wildfire. Protests have occurred from Morocco in the west, across North Africa, and into the Persian Gulf region. Egypt's three-decade President Hosni Mubarak has been ousted, and Libya's Muammar Gaddafi looks as if he'll soon be next. While all of these changes are exciting, we can't help but ask ourselves what the future holds.



In the United States, we like to think of a revolution as being inherently positive. After all, we gained our independence in that exact manner, and the concept of the oppressed rebelling against the oppressors has been established as a near-mythological event in the social consciousness. The sad truth, however, is that revolutions are bloody, violent affairs, and while they throw political powers out, they theoretically open the doors for even more chaos. This theory was tested, and proven, in Egypt a few weeks ago after the fall of the Mubarak security forces. Gangs of looters roamed the

streets, convicts had escaped from jail, and the police were nowhere to be found. As a result, violence spread and the country was in a state of shock. Fortunately, Egypt has a strong military force which ended up intervening, taking a neutral stance during the fighting and seizing interim power after Mubarak's resignation.

What effect does this shift in power have on the rest of the world? Essentially, it all depends on who takes power after the military holds elections. There are three foreseeable leadership scenarios:

1. The Muslim Brotherhood: The Brotherhood is a huge force throughout

Egypt and the Middle East. A few years ago, I wrote a piece for Zeitgeist explaining how the Brotherhood was on the rise, both in Parliamentary seats and popularity with Egyptian citizens. While there may be certain elements of the Brotherhood that are quite

extreme, the majority of them are quite moderate. They base a lot of their decisions on Islam and its teachings, but they are a nonviolent conservative political party. They have many enemies throughout the world of Islamic Extremism, including Osama bin Laden, who has accused them of betraying the values of jihad. If the Brotherhood takes over, we could see a tougher stance on Israel, although the alliance probably wouldn't completely break down, as well as a more conservative social policy than the one that existed under Mubarak.

2. A Military Leader: This would not be a surprising outcome. Over the past fifty or so years, Egypt's executive has always been a military man. Before Mubarak, there was Sadat, and before him there was Nasser. Even the pharaohs of Ancient Egypt had military backgrounds. The military government would probably function similarly to that of Mubarak's, cracking down on opposition groups and establishing alliances with countries that would give them the most money. A military leader wouldn't be particularly bad for United States' interests, but the Egyptian people would be living under the same circumstances that they had been for the past thirty years.



great deal of trouble. We rely on Egypt not only for economic purposes (oil, Suez Canal) but for diplomatic ones as well (Israeli-Arab Relations). Therefore, if an anti-US or anti-Western leader were elected, consequences could be dire. However, the beauty of a democratic system is that anyone can take control. In the past few weeks, we saw the

head of marketing for Google Middle East and North Africa, Wael Ghonim, guiding the masses, using social networking sites to organize and rally protesters. He says that he doesn't want to get involved in politics, but through these measures, he

already has.

3. A Democratic Leader: Ironically, this type of leadership would probably be the most unattractive for the United States, a country that often claims democracy to be its core value. There is a large portion of Egypt that is not wholly accommodating toward the United States, and if they elected a leader who felt the same, we could be in a

Whatever the outcome of these events, the United States has to be prepared to adapt to the idea of change in this region. We have to be willing to go beyond rhetoric and actually take action. We as a nation must show support for a system of government that might not agree with our interests, but shows a commitment to what makes the United States great: liberty and justice for all. [Z]

Quote of the Issue:

"There is no state with a democracy except Libya on the whole planet."

—Libyan Leader Col. Muammar Gaddafi



This Is What Democracy Looks Like!

By Quinn Myers '12

In the past month, the attention of the entire world has been fixed on the Middle East, where some of the most genuine attempts for democracy in recent history have been taking place. Citizens of over ten countries have organized and rebelled against the oppressive governments that have held power for decades. It is truly heartening to see such an outpour of justice and humanitarianism in countries once overcome with violence and tyranny. However, with the constant coverage of these historic events, it would be easy to miss the beginnings of what seems to be a huge labor movement in

Wisconsin. Tens of thousands of people all over the state are protesting a new budget bill introduced by Governor Scott Walker. Both sides of the spectrum have become involved, which has led to the unfortunate but inevitable "spin" often induced by talk show pundits. Before we get into all of the partisan politics, let's first examine the facts and context of the bill and resulting protests.

To start off, it's important to understand what is actually being proposed in Governor Walker's bill, and how it will affect the people of Wisconsin. Wisconsin is currently facing a \$137 million budget gap, one of the largest in the country. Obviously, this is a huge problem, and Wisconsin's politicians

need to deal with it quickly. Spending cuts are bound to happen, regardless of party affiliation. The real controversy with the bill, however, is the issue of collective bargaining. The Republicans, who are the backers of this bill, say that the problem lies in powerful unions who are "exploiting the government". To take away some of this

perceived power, the bill would strip unions and their members of their collective bargaining rights. Collective bargaining, which is most basically defined as the negotiation that takes place between a union and an employer, in this case the government,

currently benefits hundreds of thousands of public sector workers in the state of Wisconsin. These workers use their collective bargaining rights to negotiate with the government over health care, pension, and most notably, wages. Many see this as an attack on the unions of Wisconsin, and this has caused much of the anger felt by protesters around the state. The protesters have gathered in the capitol, Madison, to demand that the state legislature does not pass this bill.

Another big cause of the protesters' anger is the fact that in early January, soon after taking office, Governor Walker gave \$117 million in special interest spending to some of the state's largest corporations, many of



whom “coincidentally” have close ties to the Republican Party. Before this tax giveaway, Wisconsin’s nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau, the equivalent of the Congressional Budget Office, actually predicted a *surplus* for the state of Wisconsin. However, all hopes for such a surplus were dashed with this recent corporate giveaway. So, Governor Walker, who is asking the working people of his state to sacrifice previously understood rights, gave tax breaks to his corporate backers. Is this fair? Is this democracy? This is another classic example of the corporate influence that is rampant throughout our government on both sides of the aisle. This is what the people in Wisconsin are angry about. They, along with most of America, are tired of the Über-rich getting whatever they want while the middle class is being destroyed. The fact is, our politicians are more focused on their pockets than the people they are supposed to represent. Is this what should be happening in a supposed “democratic” and “open” society? The problem lies with the dominance of the two party system, giving voters two different versions of the same thing: corporatism.

Moving on, let’s take a look at the protesters themselves. On February 19th, there were over 60,000 people protesting in Madison. Groups have gathered at coffee

shops, universities, and have basically taken over the capitol building, chanting, “Kill the Bill!” The crowds are extremely diverse, consisting of teachers, students, professors, union workers, firefighters, policemen, and regular citizens who are standing up for what they believe in. It is the epitome a grassroots movement. As a country founded and sustained by the working and middle classes, we should be proud of the current protests and encourage more people to stand up to the corporate welfare machine.

To conclude, I think it is important to remember the value that unions have in the United States. For decades, unions have provided basic rights to workers who have been exploited by the social elite. Providing safe working conditions, adequate wages, access to health care and pensions, and political protection are all necessary services; services that unions provide. We should be working as a country to protect these rights, not throw them away in budget cuts. This is why it is extremely important to stand in solidarity with the Wisconsin protesters and those in other states as this movement grows. We must, above all else, respect democracy and equality. [Z]



The Media's Role in the Iraq War

By Miles Steinert '12

In April 2010, Wikileaks released a video taken from an American Apache gunship in 2007 titled "Collateral Murder". This has been one of the most viewed items on Wikileaks because it revealed an aspect of the war that the average American civilian had previously been blind to. What the American soldiers do in the video is described by Dan Froomkin for the [Huffington Post](#) as "repeatedly opening fire on a group of men that included a Reuters photographer and his driver -- and then on a van that stopped to rescue one of the wounded men." He goes on to write that, "None of the members of the group were taking hostile action, contrary to the Pentagon's initial cover story; they were milling about on a street corner."

After the majority of the people had been killed, a soldier surveys the area and remarks, "Oh yeah, look at those dead bastards." Later, when they realize that they had harmed children in the van, they state, "It's their fault for bringing their kids to a battle."

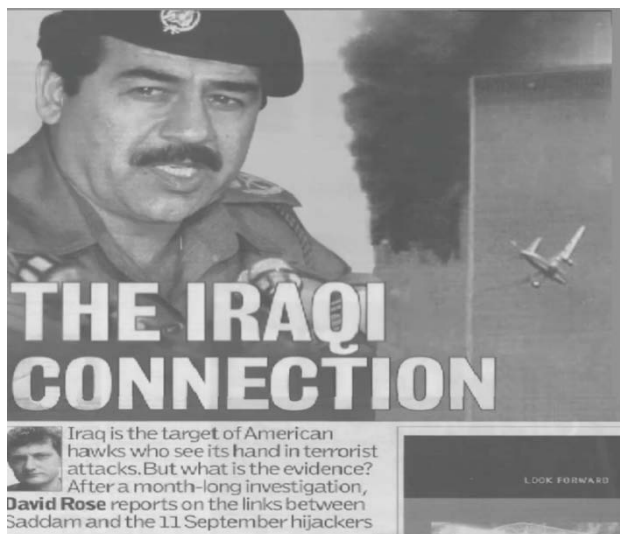
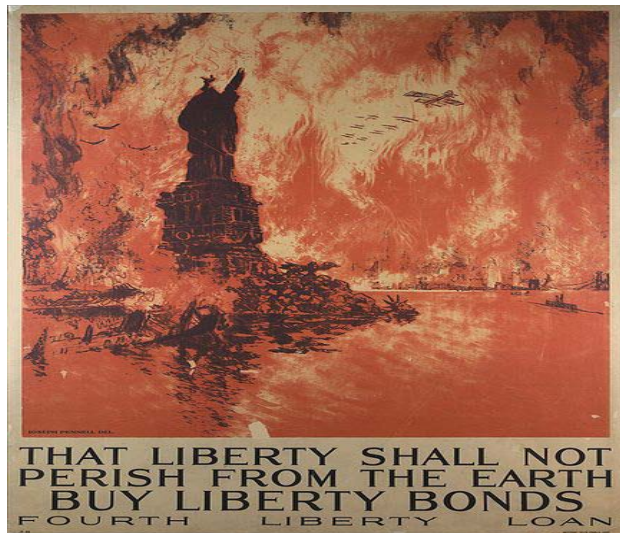
As financiers of this war, how are the American people *not* privy to information like this? Who is responsible for relaying the truth to us, and more importantly, why

aren't they doing their jobs? What has the main stream media been doing to fuel the war?

Edward Bernays, part of a group called the U.S. Committee on Public Information, wrote, "The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country." The CPI was employed by Woodrow Wilson to persuade reluctant Americans to support World War I. Wilson agreed with the Committee that images which

conjured up an emotional response in the viewer were a much more effective persuasion tool than cold, hard facts.

On the right is a poster distributed during World War I to persuade Americans to buy



war bonds to support the Allied Powers. It depicts a burning Statue of Liberty with planes flying over it, clearly designed to implant the image that America was in serious danger of being invaded.

This poster is comparable to the image of the World Trade Center used in the background of articles written about Saddam Hussein. Despite the fact that Saddam Hussein had nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks, the two became linked in the minds of American people, justifying the war for them.

An example of this were issues of the Observer and the [Guardian](#) published November 11th, 2001. These are both highly respected publications, and could even be considered a bit left-leaning. The article is titled, "The Iraqi Connection" and the subtext includes, "David Rose reports on the links between Saddam and the 11 September hijackers".

David Rose has since spoken out about articles like this, writing, "I feel nauseated and ashamed about what I wrote." John Pilger, an Australian journalist and documentarian, interviewed Rose in 2010 and brought up this article and his retrospective comment, asking him what it meant. Rose said, "It is now, and has been for a number of years, painfully apparent that the facts that I believed to be true in those articles were not true: they were a pack of lies fed to me by a fairly sophisticated disinformation campaign."

You can hardly blame people for believing inaccuracies about the war that are sown so deep that the journalists themselves believe them. Having been brought up in a fairly left-leaning household, I was exposed to

ideas like the absence of WMD's in Iraq when I was much younger. When a ski coach of mine was deployed, I remember a discussion in which I mentioned this. As I then learned, there was a substantial number of my peers who had been told (and believed) otherwise. Granted, the people who I was talking to were very young, but what they said at that time was still a reflection of what their parents believed, just like what I had said.

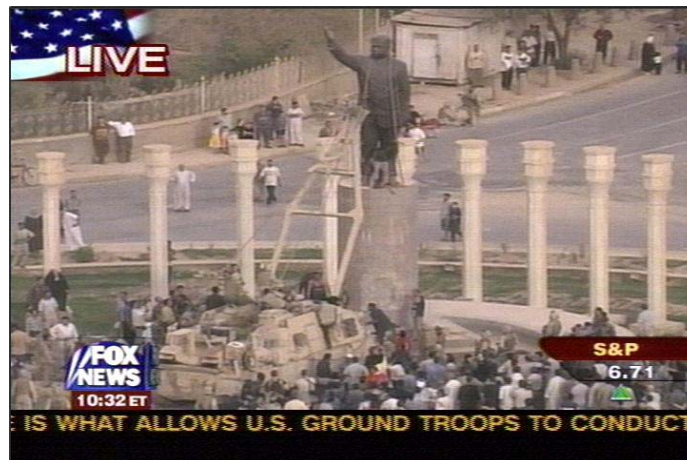
In early 2003, the Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Charles Hanley published a report titled, "Inspectors Have Covered CIA's Sites of 'Concern' and Reported No Violations." In it, Hanley revealed that every site that the Bush Administration claimed was being used to rebuild the Iraqi nuclear weapons

program had been completely secure since 1991 by U.N. inspectors. He filed this report on January 18th. Despite the fact that every major newsroom in the country received it, it was granted virtually no publicity. If this story had been given the attention

it deserved, the people would have had the information we needed to make a well thought-out decision. Many would have seen no reason to invade. Instead, we waved our American flags and talked about how force was the best option.

Now fast-forward past the time of the invasion: for the first couple years of the war it was being publicized as a liberation movement. One of the favorite loops of footage shown was the toppling of Hussein's statue in Iraq, which, contrary to the popular reports, had been ordered by American officers, not Iraqis.

Some of the truths of what civilians deal with are explained by Phil Shiner, a member



of Public Interest Lawyers. He remarks, "Modern democracies don't leave marks, it's stealth torture, which Americans and British both take part in. It can be as simple as putting someone in a wall-sitting position. My clients complain of every type of threat, that your women will be brought here in front of you and raped ..."

He also commented on "embedded journalism", a tactic of reporting where government-hired reporters live with and report from the views of soldiers. Shiner says, "It never shows the point of view of civilians who get on the wrong end of the invasion... there is little to no reporting on the civilians who were abused physically and sexually in detention centers."

During World War II the number of civilian deaths was 50%. In the Vietnam War it rose to 70%. Now, in the Iraq War, it is at 90%. At the Fourth Geneva Convention in 1949 it was stated that, "The killing of civilians and willfully causing great suffering is a war crime." The main reason why we don't hold ourselves to the standards set at the convention is because we don't know how bad it is. There were between 607 and 993 people killed by drone attack in Pakistan in

2010 alone. We hear those numbers, but they don't really mean anything to us because the vast majority of the American population has not seen or been exposed to the true nature of the war. It is estimated that approximately one million deaths have occurred because of the war in Iraq, with over 100,000 of the dead civilians. In 2007, Stamford's population was 118,475. Can you imagine what it would be like if a foreign army invaded and killed literally *everyone in the city*?

My opinion of this war is obviously negative, but the main point that I am upset about is the lack of honest reporting done by the mainstream media in this country and other countries involved in the war. The reason this problem is so large is because we are told that the government's foreign policy is based on the spread of democracy and justice, but if you read leaked documents about what those in charge actually say, this is not the case. And even if you still do not believe this to be the case, it is undeniable that if indeed the government is striving to spread justice, it is not doing its job. Until the masses see their handiwork, we cannot make a true assessment of what needs to happen. [Z]

Cartoons

