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Bush Administration's mishandling of shooting incident demonstrates incompetence, hilarity

by James Longhofer

Of all the people in the Bush administration, it makes sense that Dick Cheney would be the one to shoot someone. Let's face it: the vice president has always seemed to have a not-so-hidden anger. There's the permanent scowl, the patented glare, and the constant unease of everyone around him. During the 2004 vice presidential debates, it was clear that Dick couldn't wait to tear apart the young, angelic John Edwards. I've even always thought Cheney bore a striking resemblance to Darth Vader after the mask was removed. In light of all this, I shouldn't have been surprised our vice president nearly committed homicide.

I'm not saying this wasn't an accident. I have no doubt Cheney didn't mean to shoot his friend (and huge Republican fund raiser). But I have a feeling that if he didn't shoot Harry Whittington, he would of shot someone else. I'm sure there is someone that Dick wouldn't mind bumping off. How about Patrick Fitzgerald, the prosecutor in the Plame case? John McCain may want to watch out too. After all, he was the one who pushed to make torture explicitly illegal over Cheney's objections. Harry Whittington may actually be taking one for the team. After all, now that Cheney's shot someone, he's got the urge out of his system and probably won't feel the need to pick up a gun any time soon.

However, I have a feeling the hunting incident means something larger than I can describe. Dick Cheney shooting someone has to be a symbol of something with the Bush administration, but I'm not quite sure what. "The Daily Show" has already done a good job making it into an analogy for faulty intelligence of weapons of mass destruction, but surely there is something more. Maybe this just epitomizes that the Bushies are the team that can't shoot straight. Or how about it shows a general dislike for lawyers in the White House? Maybe it's just a warning not to drink beer and then play with shotguns.

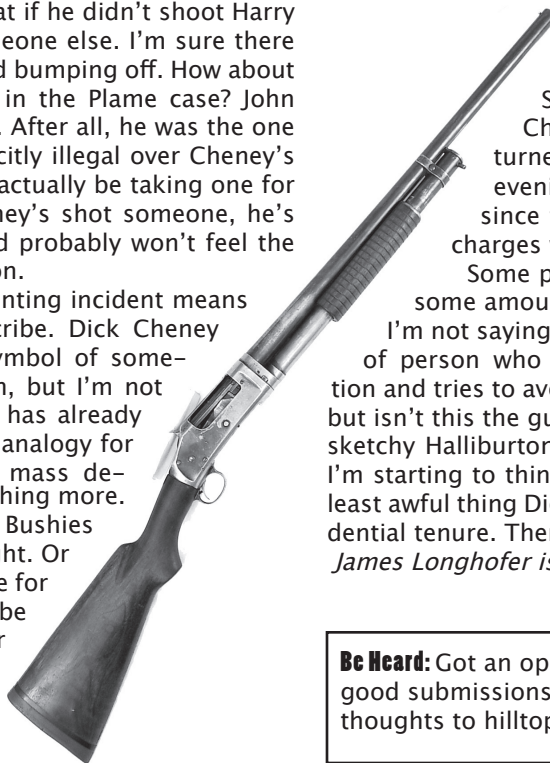
Jokes aside, the reaction of the vice president and his staff is clearly an indication of the Bush

administration's response to bad news. It's clear they did the right thing in taking care of Whittington and immediately getting him medical attention. However, they didn't do some other things. First, they didn't tell anyone until almost 24 hours had past. Then, when the news did come out, it was released by the owner of the ranch instead of the vice president's office, and she only released the story to a local newspaper where a close friend worked. This isn't necessary wrong, but it is weird. The White House has the most extensive press resources in the world and could have easily released it themselves, exerting direct control over the story, but that's not what happened. Instead, the public found out from a private citizen that the second highest public official in America wounded his friend. Secondly, the Secret Service kept the Kenedy County Sheriff's Department from interviewing Cheney until the next day. A sheriff was turned away from the gates of the ranch that evening. Again, this is just weird, especially since this was a hunting accident and criminal charges were very unlikely.

Some people would say that those actions show some amount of contempt for the press and the law.

I'm not saying this alone shows Dick Cheney is the kind of person who regularly withholds damaging information and tries to avoid the legal consequences of his actions, but isn't this the guy who gave us Plamegate, phony WMD's, sketchy Halliburton deals, and a creepy defense of torture? I'm starting to think this little hunting accident really is the least awful thing Dick Cheney has done during his vice presidential tenure. Then again, it's also the funniest.

James Longhofer is a sophomore political science, economics, and public policy major.



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Page 03: Déjà vu all over again. The Young Conservatives of Texas are destroying their credibility (again) with an attack on special interest seats.

Page 04: What was the last good book you read? If you can't remember, you're probably not alone on SMU's campus. What happened to reading for fun?

We welcome submissions from all members of the SMU community. Letters to the editor should be up to 300 words in response to a previously published article. Contributions should be articles of up to 300-600 words on any topic or in response to another article. Please email your submission to hilltopics@hotmail.com by Wednesday at 8:00 PM to be included in the following week's publication. Special deadlines will be observed for breaking campus events. The opinions expressed in *Hilltopics* are those of the authors solely and do not reflect the beliefs of *Hilltopics* or any other entity. As such, *Hilltopics* does not publish anonymous articles.

Lend a hand to promote safe sex: sexual education in American schools needs some creativity

by Anjolie Patel and Amanda Wall

"If they could just teach how to give a good hand job in school, there would be less teenage pregnancies." And so began an ongoing conversation about the ignorance of today's youth and the pent-up, unfulfilled needs of our peers. We decided that something must be done about our current sex education system. It isn't working. Our generation is still getting infected and impregnated and having some really bad sex. We are starting the Campaign for Better Sex (Ed).

Current sex education sucks—for the schools that even have programs. Other high schools, like the ones we went to, are blind to the entire subject. Abstinence-only education does not educate anyone. By telling teens that they should wait, wait, wait, it reaffirms the idea that sex is taboo and refuses to recognize their sexuality. We prefer other sex ed programs such as "abstinence-plus" or "comprehensive sex" programs. They teach that abstinence is the best way to avoid negative side effects but that there are ways to protect yourself if you choose to be sexually active. While we applaud these programs, even they could use a few changes.

If we ran the world, this is what sex education would look like. Sex ed would be based on the idea that sexuality is a natural and necessary part of human life, *not* something that needs to be hidden, cured, or shunned. Though it could be a separate program, sex ed could also be included in Health, Biology, or Home Ec classes (pleasurable and respon-

sible sexuality is much more a household skill than making a throw pillow). The bottom line, of course, is health and safety. Abstinence is definitely the best idea until students are both knowledgeable (they know what sex means, how it works, what can happen) and comfortable (they can talk about sex without blushing or laughing and can confidently make their own decisions).

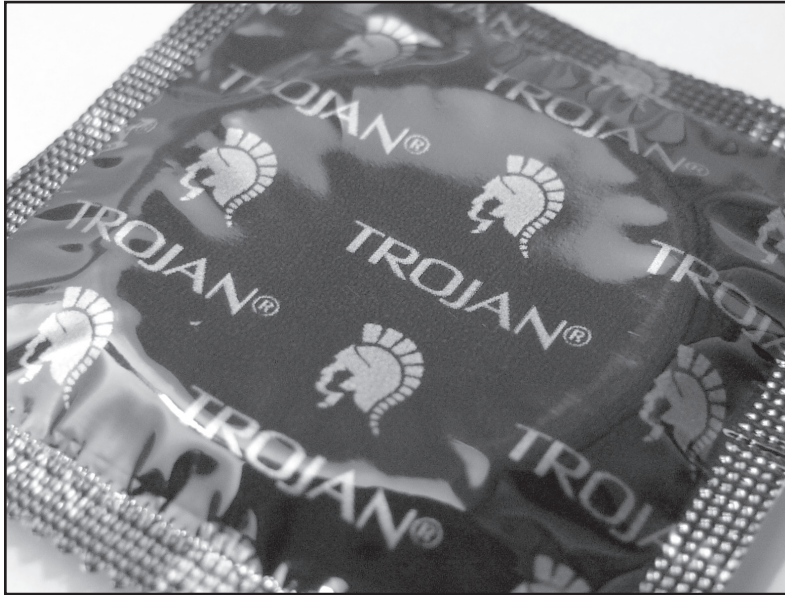
Education should start in middle school and progress in content as students mature. Students should have an understanding of what sex is and that there are many enjoyable alternatives (masturbation, hand jobs, oral sex). It is *not* okay for anyone to think that you can't get pregnant having sex standing up, that you can't contract HIV from oral sex, that being on the Pill prevents STDs, or any of the other ridiculous myths surrounding sex. Students should understand

the male and female reproductive systems. *Everyone* should know where the clit is (and yes, the perineum too). Students should have ready access to information, contraceptives, and counseling. And of course, they should know all the risks involved with sex (pregnancy, STDs and HIV, and any emotional or physical trauma—painful sex is *bad sex*).

Like the abstinence-plus programs, we would include role-playing activities and discussion so that students become comfortable with their own sexualities and assertive about making decisions. They will become less vulnerable and less likely to feel pressured in sexual situations. When we do not provide young people with the benefit of our knowledge, we are forcing them to stumble painfully alone through the sexual experience. Each person is entitled to make his or her individual choice when it comes to sex, but this choice must be based on *all* the options and *all* the facts. We must put young people in control of their own sexualities instead of letting ignorance control them.

People are still uncomfortable talking about sex even in college, or they are unsure about their own needs or how to obtain fulfillment. If this is going to change, it has to start in schools, because despite our smart-ass comments about throw pillows, sex is a household skill. It is perhaps the only stage of human life that is both utterly universal and utterly ignored by our education system. The sex education system needs to be reinvented, and we are starting the campaign. Hell, we're starting a revolution. Starting now, America is having sex with the lights on.

Anjolie Patel is an international studies, public policy and Spanish major. Amanda Wall is an English, Spanish, and women's studies major.



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With the Young Conservatives of Texas at it again, a conservative wonders where his party went

by Douglas Hill

Ben Franklin's definition of insanity is so overused it has become cliché, but I can't think of any other way to respond to the Young Conservatives of Texas' recent campaign against Student Senate special interest seats. Quoth the old sage, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."

Somehow, despite last year's sound defeat of their referendum to abolish the seats, YCT is at it again. They seem to be no more willing to acknowledge their side's defeat in this fight as they are to acknowledge their side's defeat in, say, the Civil War.

Before I go much further, let me start by saying I'm no member of Citizens for a Better Society or SMU Democrats. In fact, I don't even think the special interest seats are that great. I voted for George W. Bush. I supported his war in Iraq. I've worked on Republican and other conservative political campaigns, and I am a self-described conservative—if you don't believe me, check Facebook. But for every Ronald Reagan, there's a Pat Robertson, and I like to think of these guys as SMU's 700 Club.

Special interest seats are Student Senate seats reserved for individuals wishing to represent minority interests. Naturally, these seats are typically filled by minority senators. I won't presume to speak for YCT, but I gather they oppose these seats on the basis that giving special representation based on race is unacceptable, no matter which race benefits.

I tried to figure out for myself exactly what YCT thinks about this issue, but they are no more successful at articulating their views on their Web site than they are at their West Bridge table. Their Web site (people.smu.edu/yct) claims race does not determine a person's worldview, and therefore the expectation that an "Asian American Senator" can represent all Asian American students "is stupid." I'm not making that up. That's what their Web site says—no warrants, no explanation, just "it's stupid."

I'm not going to attack that claim, though, because I tend to agree with it. The biggest problem YCT has isn't their beliefs, it's the causes they choose to fight for and how they

choose to fight for them.

Why stop the fight against the special interest seats? For one, they aren't very important. In what measurable way has Student Senate been disproportionately minority-centered? What important bill was defeated by the special interest lobby that YCT would have us believe is so powerful?

In short, what harm do they do? Even if the seats are ideologically unsound, they're not hurting anyone. If nothing else, they give more people a chance to be involved in student government, and that's good.

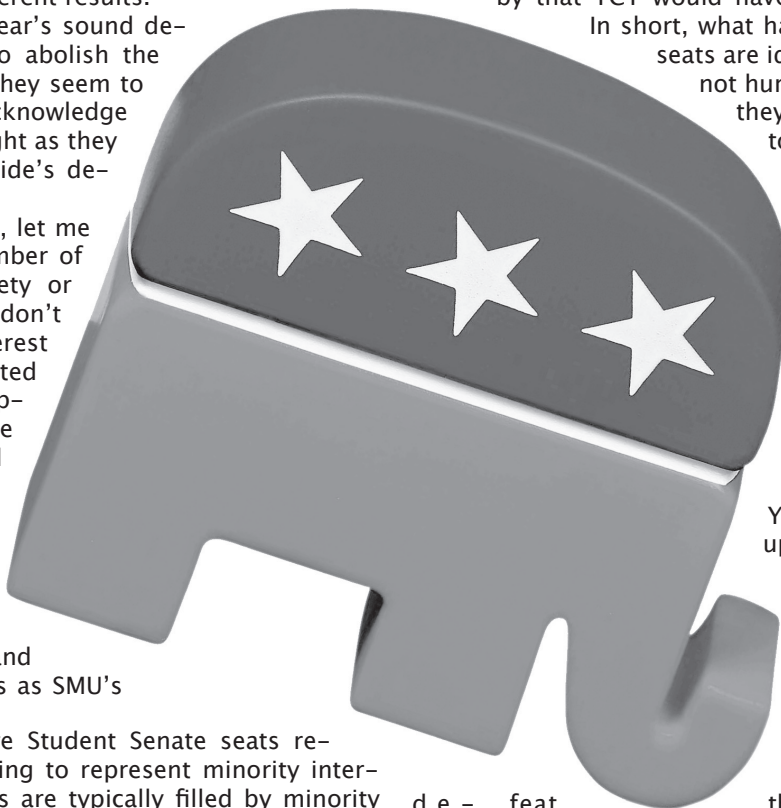
The other reason YCT should abandon this cause is that it is, and always will be, a losing battle. There are only two groups of students who care enough about these seats to be actively engaged in keeping or abolishing them: minorities and members of YCT. So the only thing YCT accomplishes by stirring up controversy over this issue is to mobilize their own opposition. If the theoretical infeasibility isn't enough to convince these good old boys that their strategy is ill-conceived, they should have gotten the point from the resounding they experienced in last year's abolish the seats.

defeat referendum to

Furthermore, the brash and confrontational tone they adopt is counterproductive. Rather than engaging their opposition in discussion or compromise, they adopt an all-or-nothing abolitionist approach. Such an approach further motivates supporters of the seats, who view YCT's protest as a threat, rather than an opportunity for cooperation and compromise.

Nevertheless, here we go again. Tables are set up. Posters are illegibly scribbled. Petitions are signed (by a few people, anyway). And I'm trying to figure out how to convince people that these radicals don't represent all conservatives. In the meantime, the only way I can think of to describe this movement is to borrow a line from YCT's own position statement: this is stupid.

Douglas Hill is a junior international studies major.



Do you have an opinion about... politics, music, class, television, football, shopping, intramurals, fraternities, movies, the Mavs, sex, restaurants, religion, sororities, driving, study abroad, fashion, the war, parking, magazines, bars, the weather, professors, the Mustang Band, dating, books, nightclubs, Texas, club sports, or anything else?

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Illiteracy by choice: An entire generation of Americans seems to be choosing to be stupid

by Kasi DeLaPorte

When distributing *Hilltopics* recently, I tried to give an issue to two girls passing through Hughes-Trigg. Instead of ignoring me, iPod playing and cell phone ringing, or just saying "No, thanks," as many passers-by do, one girl looked blankly at the paper in my hand with a mixture of confusion and disgust, sheepishly shook her head, and walked away.

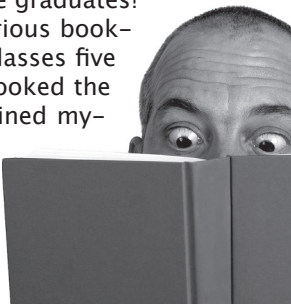
She was still in earshot when she started snickering and said to her friend, as if to defend her rude behavior, "I'm not going to read it!"

She was so matter-of-fact, I had to laugh too, but I was also a little stung. I'm not offended that she didn't want to read our excellent work specifically. It was the deeper implication of her statement. She spoke with such disbelief that I thought she might actually be interested in perusing four pages of opinion writing. Can you imagine what disdain she must hold for reading a news article, sonnet, novel, or even a textbook?!

What's worse, I don't think she's in the minority of students on this campus. There's a sort of bourgeoisie air in such a comment, as if one has so many more important things to do than sit down to read something. It's also a byproduct of the unfortunately pervasive "smart isn't cool" attitude that can lead to the "dumbing down" of our students, coursework, and ultimately, our entire educational experience.

Of course, it's a societal issue as well. For example, news outlets cater to our diminishing attention spans with news briefs and condensed publications like the *Dallas Morning News' Quick*. Television commercials have shrunk from 60- to 30- to 15- to even 10-second spots. And there's overall literacy. The National Assessment of Adult Literacy found that 14% of U.S. adults - some 40 million people - scored at a "below basic" level. Considered functionally illiterate, they can barely read a job offer or a utility bill. Further, less than one third of all college graduates reached the highest "proficient" level of literacy. College graduates!

When I was younger, I was a serious bookworm. With brown, tortoise shell glasses five times larger than my face, I even looked the part. An only child, I often entertained myself by reading; *The Baby-Sitters Club* books in particular overtook my shelves. But somewhere during high school, I found myself too busy to read for pleasure. I'd always put it off until summer,



but then social activities and work got in the way. In college, our busy schedules are amplified and any desire we have to read is often sucked away by dry, dense textbooks.

Conditioning oneself to dislike reading is a dangerous thing. If you haven't stayed up half the night finishing a book you "couldn't put down," you're missing out. If you can't even make it through four pages of good student writing, you're in big trouble. I hope I'm preaching to the choir, considering you've made it through nearly 500 words so far!

There are professors and classes here that allow us to read great books. For several, I felt like I was reading for pleasure, even though it was an assignment - Tom Stone's "Making History," Martha Satz's "Ethics in Fiction Literature," Jayne Suhler's "Literary Journalism." I'm sure there are more; you just have to find them.

So look. Read. Don't dumb yourself down.

Kasi DeLaPorte is a senior advertising and journalism major.

Learn to be literate:

March 2nd - Dr. Seuss's birthday - is the National Education Association's Read Across America Day. Read Across America is an annual reading motivation and awareness program that calls for every child in every community to celebrate reading. The *Hilltopics* editors would like to celebrate by recommending a variety of their favorite books:

- *Still Life With Woodpecker*, Tom Robbins
- *American Tabloid*, John Ellroy
- *Oh, How We Are Hungry*, Dave Eggers
- *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *Angels and Demons*, Dan Brown
- *Me Talk Pretty One Day*, David Sedaris

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