

Under Attack in a So-Called Haven

by talia liben

My religion class was talking about the moral implications of Nat Turner's revolt, when a student made the comparison between Turner murdering fifty-five slave owners, wives of slave-owners, and children of slave owners, and terrorists killing Americans. "It's hard to understand where they are coming from, when they have been enslaved their whole lives, and they are fighting against what they believe to be evil..." To that, I replied that I agree that although it's difficult to place a moral value or judgment on Turner, I resent the comparison with the current political situation. After all, America did not do anything to those who carried out the attacks on September 11, 2001. It is not as if we had enslaved them. "Oh but we did..." and "they are fighting against our actions and ideals and we need to question ourselves." And then it was I who was under attack. Sixteen people with one unanimous voice turned on me with a barrage of hostile corrections and insults, the professor not attempting to guard me from the firing squad. "We do not even try to understand why terrorists hate Americans, and we should consider that and try to change," one student suggested. Understand? Consider? Change? What are we expected to do, sit down with the nice, misunderstood terrorists and have a little tea party? "I know you want to blow up me and my children and my friends, but maybe if you just told me what to do differently, we can work this out." At what point should we be able to defend ourselves against a fundamentalist enemy who wants us dead? And why should I be castigated for believing that my life is as valuable as that of the terrorist who wants me dead?

After three years of Bryn Mawr education, and being told that everyone's opinions and beliefs – whether religious, political, social, etc – are accepted and welcome on campus, I have come to the conclusion that it's a lie. I have been told on a plethora of occasions, beginning with my initial visit as a high schooler, that Bryn Mawr is a haven. "We embrace

everybody,' 'All women have a forum for free speech and individual thought,' the various statements illustrating a tolerant college campus for young adults to feel at home seem endless. What I have come to realize, though, is that those accommodating messages apply only to those who have specific views that comport with the liberal status quo here on campus.

My political views are, in the world outside of the Bi-Co, middle of the ground. I am conflicted about where I stand on the issues of abortion and gay marriages. I am pro-death penalty, but understand that there are problems with the system. I believe that we should hunt terrorists and stop them, by any means necessary, before they hurt us. I consider myself slightly to the right of liberal. However, once I set foot on campus, I feel as though I am treated as an extremist fundamental conservative. What's more is that though I, and those like me, am largely outnumbered at Bryn Mawr, the students and the professors alike don't allow for my voice to be heard. I am often left in a situation in which I am cowed into not voicing my opinion, since the liberal is automatically assumed to be the truth. And when I do muster up the courage to speak what I believe, I am instantly trampled.

Everywhere I turn, I am surrounded by people who are so set in their own personal views of the world that they are unable to fathom a person on this campus thinking differently. Difference is not welcome or considered rationally. Difference is demonized. My own friends refer to me as "the enemy" when speaking politics. Sitting at a table with four of my closest friends, I said plaintively to those I trust, "I am completely undecided about who I'm voting for. But I'm leaning towards Bush." Silence. And then, the questions began pouring in, with such a tone of contempt. If this is what I get on a regular basis, from my friends, please just imagine what it is like listening to the babbling of liberal professors pour out their political views in classes that have little to nothing to do with politics. Or imagine what it is like

to be silenced, not by force, but by intimidation and threat of estrangement.

The War on Terror is but one of many instances in which a non-liberal view is silenced on campus. It is assumed that since we are all intelligent, free-thinking, young women, we are all pro-choice, anti-death penalty, for gay marriages, etc. I am constantly appalled by the anti-Semitic rhetoric masquerading as anti-Israel venom. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., "anti-Zionist is inherently anti-Semitic," and I still cannot understand how anyone could begrudge a people the right to defend themselves from bus bombings and suicide attacks on innocents. I should be able to express these views freely without being considered some sort of neanderthal. As a Jew anywhere, no less on my college campus which is supposed to be a haven, I should not have to defend my right to exist. When a woman publicly voices a pro-life opinion, or even an unfixed opinion, she is viewed as a fundamentalist attempting to appropriate the rights of all women. If she wasn't a far right religious zealot, then she would agree that pro-choice is the only choice. If someone has the view that marriage is a sacred act for two heterosexuals, she is thought to be homophobic, and since homophobia has no place on campus, neither should she. Why are we so afraid to allow for individual thought, and why must we be threatened simply because someone refuses to sacrifice her principles to comply with group-thought?

I was misled when I came to this school, and this institution has continued to mislead me. I am told every day that Bryn Mawr is accepting of me for who I am. But in reality, I must conform to the overarching beliefs of those here in order to be accepted.

Geology Trip

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most important prerequisite for the trip. Thanks to generous funding from the department, non-majors and majors alike will pay the same heavily subsidized \$200-250 trip cost. Once the hiking began, we would see that this spirit of inclusion was not limited to finances; all students were considered geology scholars.

Upon landing in Calgary International Airport, we were welcomed by Sharlene Bund, Barber's wife, who had made the trip a couple of days earlier. A biologist and self-described "hobbyist geologist," Bund grew up in Calgary and spent her childhood weekends in the mountains. She drew upon these experiences to create an itinerary that included a variety of hikes and other activities that sampled from the best that the region has to offer.

We spent the first two days in Canmore, a small town that was once one of Alberta's most important coal mining centers. Though the mine was closed in 1979, the quaint town provided us with a home base as we explored the nearby Bow River Valley. During our first two hikes – up Jura Creek and along the Grassi Lakes Trail – we looked to both the rocks beneath our feet and the slopes of mountainsides to understand how this once marine environment composed of almost horizontal layers of sediment had tilted, folded, and faulted, rising above the earth and forming the front ranges of the Rockies.

Much to our delight, we weren't the only hikers who found the Grassi Lakes of interest. At the base of the lush, alpine forest trail, we met a retired geography professor from the University of Calgary – a man likely in his early 70s. "Herb" put us to shame as he blazed the trail through the lush, alpine forest to the clearing at the top, home to a pair of shimmering lakes with waters that are a marbled swirl of emerald and azure. He listened while we talked about the pockmarked limestone cliff that towers above the lakes. The cliff brought Alberta much of its petroleum wealth, thanks to oil and gas trapped in cavities that were created by fossils of small, sponge-like stromatoporoids – organisms that even us non-geology majors would come to know and love after a few days of fossil-hunting in the Rockies. A final scramble up a steep staircase of rocks led to prehistoric pictographs. While some students and professors discussed the age of the native drawings, others crawled into a cave in the cliff or watched a couple of rock climbers begin their ascent.

Though these longer hikes provided a framework for our itinerary, the spontaneous stops we made – particularly exercises in "roadside geology" – often provided the most unexpected learning experiences. On our way to Banff, the historic tourist locale where we stayed on Monday and Tuesday nights, we pulled off to the side of a busy highway for a quick look at an outcropping of rocks. More than an hour later, we were taking turns scaling the slope and learning how to recognize striations in the rock as indicators of glacial flow. Just as some students were joking about how funny we

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Edwards Comes to the Main Line

by adina halpern

On Monday, October 18, 2004, Democratic Vice Presidential Candidate John Edwards spoke at a "Town Hall Meeting" at Haverford college. The doors to the event were supposed to open at 2:00 p.m. By that time, a stream of Bryn Mawr and Haverford students stretched from the Alumni Field House across the campus and past the Dining Center. Eager chatter emanated from the line. Students were thrilled at the idea of seeing a vice-presidential candidate for the United State of America, and morale was high. It was getting cold out, when slowly but surely, the line began to move at about 3:00 p.m.

Reserved seating at the front of the gymnasium accommodated members of the community, and Haverford and Bryn Mawr students sat on chairs near the back and on bleachers, which gave a surprisingly good view of the makeshift stage. Then the speeches began. Speakers included State Senator Connie Williams (D), Democratic Congressional candidate for Pennsylvania's 6th District (which includes Bryn Mawr College) Lois Murphy, Democratic Congressional candidate for Pennsylvania's 7th District (which includes Haverford College) Paul Scoles, and Democratic candidate for Attorney General, Jim Eisenhower. Each speaker spoke briefly about the need to elect John Kerry and John Edwards and not to re-elect George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. The speakers also spoke about their own merits and why they should be elected for the positions for which they were running. It was then announced that John Edwards would begin to speak as soon as he arrived from the Philadelphia airport.

Music began to blare and after a few minutes a giant Mexican Wave began, circling the huge gymnasium multiple times. People might have been annoyed about waiting, but suspense was certainly building. The audience was then amazed to hear *Hey Ya!* by Outkast. It was not a song one would expect to hear at such an event, and a few people began to dance in their seats and in the aisles. Then, just when it looked like he would never show up, one more speaker spoke before handing the microphone to John Edwards.

Edwards began his opening speech by denouncing claims that President Bush had made earlier that day that John Kerry did not view the world as changed

since September 11, 2001. He also criticized Bush's handle on the War in Iraq. Edwards then spoke about health care in America. He talked about how he and John Kerry would make health care more affordable in United States. For example, he proposed that prescription drugs should be imported from Canada and that all Americans should have the same health plan choices as government officials.

Then, members of the audience were called upon to ask questions. All of the questions asked were about health care. One woman with Multiple Sclerosis described having to pay more for her medicine than did another person on a different health insurance plan. A man asked Edwards to simply explain his policy on medical malpractice litigation in a positive light.

Many Mawrtys were disappointed that no Haverford or Bryn Mawr students were called upon to ask questions. Jacqui Bores '07 said, "Of the great number of people, whom he noted were young, he did not take any questions from anyone under the age of about 37." However, Bryn Mawr students were generally pleased with what they heard. John Edwards was a captivating speaker, and Health Care is regarded as one of the stronger aspects of the Kerry/Edwards campaign. Sara Mantin '07's only complaint was, "My hands hurt from clapping!"

At Haverford College, Bryn Mawr students were able to witness what was quite possibly history in the making. In early November, we will know if the person who spoke at Haverford really is "the next Vice President of the United States of America."

