

11-15-2004

Hilltopics: Volume 1, Issue 7

Hilltopics Staff

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Recommended Citation

Hilltopics Staff, "Hilltopics: Volume 1, Issue 7" (2004). *Hilltopics*. 6.
<http://scholar.smu.edu/hilltopics/6>

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HILLTOPICS

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volume one, issue seven
week of november 15, 2004

Time to adopt some common sense

A troubled liberal introduces a fresh view of the abortion issue.

by Benjamin Bingman-Tenant

In light of the recent election, and because the President is probably going to make the Supreme Court more conservative, I feel it is my duty, as a liberal, to discuss the effects these things could have on the issue of abortion.

Now, I am not going to argue from a legal perspective, primarily because I am not a political scientist; however, legal issues aside, abortion statistics speak volumes.

According to statistics taken from the Alan Guttmacher Institute, a non-profit organization that monitors reproductive health, approximately 1.37 million abortions occur in the U.S. each year. I invite Republicans and the religious right to contemplate and think what the U.S. would do if those 1.37 million extra children were born in the United States.

More concretely, we may consider that in 1992, 1,528,900 abortions took place in America. This, of course, can be compared to the fact that only 127,441 adoptions took place in that same year. The 127,441 does not include those children for whom there was no adoptive family and were introduced into the foster care system.

So conservatives, what can be done? Should we bring back orphanages, or will you complain about government spending and the raise in taxes required to fund them?

Here is my proposal: if you are part of the religious right, pro-life movement, or you voted Republican, you should be required to register as an adoptive family. You will not be allowed to place any stipulations on the child you get; however, you will be responsible for raising it as your own despite the child's race or cultural background. Also, to make it fair, the system would work like military service, so, since 59,459,765 Republican votes were cast in the presidential election, Republican voters would only be required to care for a new child about once every 60 years: a maximum of two in their lifetime.

In conclusion, I want to say that I hope this challenges the ivory tower SMU student body. The issue of abortion is not as simple as the it-will-never-happen-to-me SMU population would like to believe. Keep in mind that by age 45, 43% of women have received abortions, while 90% of women at risk for unplanned pregnancies are using contraception. Therefore, if next time you vote against abortion directly or indirectly, remember that you may be the one caring for the child, and I do not want to hear any of your complaints.

Benjamin Bingman-Tenant is a senior English and history major.

Let's get wet: why have a dry campus?

SMU's alcohol policy hurts school spirit and residential life.

by Jared Dovers and Emily Jordan

After a year of divisive campaigning across America, the nation is, not surprisingly, divided. Almost fifty percent of the nation thinks the other slightly-more-than-half is crazy, and vice versa. Here at SMU, the division can be felt as well—though maybe more like 70/30. We need issues that bring us together as a community. We need commonality—we need a wet campus.

The logic is clear. The students of SMU can come together under a common banner: beer in the commons! Why not, guys? We believe that the solution needed to gain campus unity is not a low-ranking football team, not summer readings, but a campus bar.

The new alcohol policy on the Boulevard is an utter failure that has resulted in a Greek boycott. Instead of promoting the open, festive atmosphere of the tradition we have so fondly embraced during our time at SMU, the alcohol policy has driven people away—to The Green Elephant. We're screwing up the very thing we're counting on to build community. The Boulevard was dismal, but the Green Elephant was hoppin'. The Greeks' boycott not only affected themselves, but it also affected the non-Greeks: the Boulevard felt lonely without sororities and fraternities, and many independents did not know about the festivities on the *other* boulevard: Yale Boulevard.

We understand that the policies have been implemented on the Boulevard for a reason, but the fact of the matter is that our students have been forced off campus by our drinking policies. If SMU were a wet campus all of the time instead of only for a few hours per week in the fall, we could have a year-long community surrounding a University establishment: a bar.

Sound radical? Our Bible Belt neighbors, Vanderbilt, have such an establishment on their campus in the heart of Nashville. If SMU is serious about moving toward a residential campus complete with an actual on-campus community (via required housing for sophomores and perhaps, one day, juniors and seniors), a bar should be a serious consideration—because you need alcohol if you expect to keep students on campus. At Vanderbilt, it is the norm to live on campus all four years, but it is also the norm to go to the campus bar every Tuesday for Trivia Night. Hell, maybe we'd all get smarter, too.

Jared Dovers is a senior philosophy & religious studies major. Emily Jordan is a senior political science major.

INSIDE
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Politics: *Hilltopics* tackles the abortion debate from all sides, more on page 3.

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Trends: A Facebook addict's journey from confused to obsessed, page 4.

Bush: His reelection was real, but the reaction to our coverage was surreal, page 4.

On the web: Go to www.smu.edu/honors/hilltopics to read all of the stories in this issue and more. You can also submit your thoughts to hilltopics@hotmail.com.

Thanks of an ungrateful nation: why we're getting out of school in two weeks

The holiday season is here, and Thanksgiving is upon us (sort of). So why is there already so much fuss about Christmas?

by Andrew Baker and Gaines Greer

Once upon a time, the people of this nation celebrated the holiday we call Thanksgiving by solemnly gathering around a plump, savory turkey, delicious green bean casserole, homemade stuffing, canned cranberry sauce, and maybe even some sweet potatoes (preferably with those little marshmallows on top). And they embraced the meaning of the meal. But not today. As we begin rolling out strands of Christmas lights in early-November, the Pilgrims are surely rolling over in their graves.

Every year, Christmas seems to come earlier and earlier—but why? What is the fascination with bypassing Thanksgiving, and even Halloween, for the sake of cheesy music and tacky lights? Certainly, Christmas is a significant and special time of year for many people, and it deserves to be respected—but keep in mind, it's only a time of year and not the *entire* year.

So when does the Christmas season officially begin, and when does it become acceptable for you to drag your cornucopia of Christmas crap from the attic? Although setting an arbitrary date is difficult, we are certain that this year, the date doesn't fall before next Thursday.

Let's think about the word "Thanksgiving." Although we are thankful for the people who have thus far abstained from decking the halls, a deeper meaning lies behind the holiday. On Thanksgiving, we show our gratitude for what we have

now and reflect on those who came before us. Or at least that's what we should do.

To all the Mustangs who flunked eighth grade history, here's a refresher. Back in 1620, a group of British subjects left behind everything that was familiar to them in order to brave the dangers of crossing the Atlantic Ocean and establish themselves on an unknown continent. Somehow, they managed to survive, and the legacy of what they created remains with us today.

Therefore, those whose front porches go from being festooned in orange and black to red and green seemingly overnight deserve the ignominy of spending a fortnight on the pillory. And to those radio stations playing Christmas music 24/7, and to those naughty children already fashioning their Christmas lists, we wish you a good, hardy smiting, and a lump of coal in the stocking that you will receive *over a month from now*.

But if you insist on focusing the next few weeks on December's commercialization instead of November's thankfulness, allow us to make one parting holiday wish (and by "holiday," we mean Thanksgiving): take off the Santa suit, don your tri-fold hat and black buckled shoes, and remember the reason for *this* season.

Andrew Baker is a senior English & political science major.

Gaines Greer is a senior English & German major.

FREE SPEECH

The University and Academic Freedom
From the Berkeley Free Speech Movement
to the Patriot Act



The 13th Annual Stanton Sharp Symposium

Thursday, Nov. 18,
Hughes Trigg Theatre

3:00 pm - Lecture on the Berkeley
Free Speech Movement

4:30 pm - Panel discussion on
the Patriot Act

6:30 pm - Lecture on
Faculty/Student Activism

Friday, Nov. 19,
McCord Aud., Dallas Hall

3:00 pm - Film on
Berkeley in the Sixties

4:30 pm - Panel on
Free Speech Movement

6:30 pm - Lecture on Civil Rights
and the Student Movement

For a schedule of events, visit

www.smu.edu/history

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point/counterpoint: abortion

As the likelihood of changes on the Supreme Court grows, that old debate is raging again. Here's how two ponies feel about abortion.

Reasonability demands responsibility

If one chooses to have sex, one must accept the consequences.

by Andrew Baker

Contrary to what some may think, one chooses to have sex—yes, it is a choice. But, one must live with the consequences of one's choices. One chooses to eat, to go to school, to party, to get drunk, and maybe even to have sex. These are the choices we make, and there are consequences (good, bad, or indifferent) to every action—that's reality for you.

While I am certainly not a militant Christian (or militant anything) and although I will not condemn any woman who decides to abort her child, I simply do not agree with the stance that it is a woman's choice whether to bring a child into this world. She made her choice when she chose to have sex.

So why should my morals trump those of a pro-choice person? Here's why: taking a life is wrong no matter how you slice it. I doubt there is much I could say to convince a pro-choice person that abortion is murder; likewise, I doubt I can ever be swayed to believe abortion should be a legitimate option for unwilling mothers to eradicate their little problems.

Ask the average pregnant woman what she's carrying around inside her and she will likely tell you that it's her baby. It's not a useless clump of cells, or even a fetus. No, what she has inside her is what we call a baby, a child—a life. I don't recall any of my neighbors having fetus showers or signs that read "It's a clump of cells!" displayed on their front lawns.

Alas, we come to the sticking point of the abortion debate: is it really a life inside the mother? Until science can finitely discern when life actually 'occurs,' it seems this abortion debate will continue without any declared victors. Worthless glob of cells or the potential to become a baby? I choose to accept the latter, which is what makes me pro-life—end of story.

Accidents happen, and I sympathize with women and men dealing with unwanted pregnancies. As many resources as possible should be made available to assist and support women during their pregnancies, and no one should ever condemn a woman having to deal with the possibility of an abortion. That being said, unborn children should never be made victims to choices that didn't work out the way they 'should' have.

Andrew Baker is a senior English & political science major.

Only a woman should control her body

The right to choose belongs not to a government, but to a woman.

by Courtney Underwood

Abortion is not primarily about preventing unwanted children from being born. Abortion is about giving women the right to govern their own bodies. Legalizing abortion says to women that the government will not force them to bring a pregnancy to term nor will it allow them to be mutilated as a result of illegal, back-alley abortions. The brutal truth is that abortions will occur regardless of legality, and whether you think legalization illustrates progression or government-sanctioned murder, it is pertinent for everyone to recognize this grizzly and bloody fact. Furthermore, individuals should recognize that their personal opinions on morality should not be extended to govern everyone in the nation.

However, the question of when life begins is typically what makes this issue so contentious. I won't argue about whether a parasitic existence really represents life, but I will point out that despite the lack of scientific answers to this question, other countries, such as Great Britain, have progressed past the idea that abortions should be illegal. Furthermore, the law currently draws the line at abortions that occur after the second trimester; this is an important and necessary distinction. A significant difference exists between a four-month-old fetus and an eight-month-old fetus that is viable outside of the womb.

Also, if you believe that women who have sex have made a choice and must deal with the pregnancy, what happens when a woman is raped? If the presence of choice is so important, do you allow a woman who did not choose to have sex to regain control of her body by deciding whether to continue a pregnancy?

Moreover, concerned pro-lifers should stop yelling outside of abortion clinics and start doing something to reduce the number of abortions, such as supporting birth control as an over-the-counter and more affordable preventative drug. The "Morning After Pill" should be cheaper and over-the-counter as well. Instead of fighting abortions, why not work to improve the preventative measures currently available to women?

Regardless, the idea of returning to a time when abortion was not legal, when women were being mutilated and killed by doctors they trusted to help them, is a terrifying and foreboding prospect—one that results in a much greater loss of life.

Courtney Underwood is a senior psychology major.

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

we're listening at hilltopics@hotmail.com

Confessions of a facebook addict

What happens when a trend becomes a way of life?

by Anonymous

Psychologists have a term for an average, not-too-popular person who spends hours each day in a fantasy world where he is witty, creative, and well liked: delusional. I prefer to call myself a Facebooker.

Sitting in class on October 28, I overheard a conversation about thefacebook.com and its addictive powers. I asked what it was, and they tried to describe the site. "It's, like, this website where you can put up a profile and a picture," one student tried to explain. "And you can poke people," another chimed in. I was confused. By October 29, I was an addict. I had an account, a profile, a few friends, several group memberships, and a nasty Facebook habit. Since then, my enthusiasm has turned into an obsession.

I skipped a class last Thursday to update my Facebook. I consider my profile to be a work of art. I've spent class time inviting professors to join. I found myself last week shouting to a friend (and I am not making this up), "Hey! If you can't get a hold of me on my cell, just Facebook me about it!" For God's sake, I'm writing an article about the damn site.

The truly pathetic part of this addiction, though, is the truths it has forced me to recognize. Among the more painful: that I have more Facebook friends than "real" friends, that I'm involved in more Facebook groups than SMU groups, and that anyone who reads my profile (which, by the way, is a work of art) before meeting me will undoubtedly be disappointed; the profile (did I mention that it's a work of art?) is a compilation of my moments of brilliance, which are few and far between in real life.

I have come to realize that this habit is both less productive and more addictive than an attraction to crystal methamphetamine, but still I love the Facebook. I love to update, I love to message, I love to search profiles, and most of all, I love to poke.

According to the site's "Co-founder and Press Guy" Chris Hughes, there are currently over 2,000 undergraduate students from SMU registered on Facebook, out of about 6,000 undergraduate students at SMU. That's one-third. And the site was opened to SMU users less than 8 weeks ago. At least I won't be wasting my time alone.

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Hilltopics is a weekly publication, published Mondays. It is financed in large part by the SMU Students' Association and sponsored by the University Honors Program.

An open letter to an idiot with a PC

by Gaines Greer

You may recall an article appearing in last week's issue of *Hilltopics* that suggested expatriation as a response to President Bush's election to a second term. As one of the co-authors of that piece, I was pretty proud of myself. I thought it was smart and funny, and I knew it'd be provocative (i.e.: enrage conservatives throughout the Hilltop, including several of my colleagues at *Hilltopics*).

However, last Monday evening as I returned home for the night, I realized that the intended provocation was apparently a little too much for one conservative to handle. When I looked at my computer screen seconds after walking in the door, I found something that I hadn't expected: hate mail. Or rather, a "hate instant message."

Since I realize that the above phrase sounds ridiculous, let me explain. Some anonymous right-winger acquired my AOL Instant Messenger screen name and felt the need to accost not me, but the "away message" I had posted while I was in class:

LuvyaDubya2004: i have 3 words for you... GET OVER IT

LuvyaDubya2004: BUSH WON

LuvyaDubya2004: and he will remain president despite your futile attempts to bitch and whine about it

LuvyaDubya2004: if you werent so naive, you would realize that him winning is the best possible outcome

LuvyaDubya2004: period.

The message goes on, but the foul language and abominable syntax make the remainder of it unfit for publication in *Hilltopics*. (For the record, the above message has not been edited. The screen name has been changed to protect privacy).

I can only assume that this rabid Republican wanted to get under my skin, but unfortunately, the ludicrous method of assault makes it impossible to fully appreciate this invasion of my privacy. Instead, having received this "hate IM" makes me feel even prouder of myself and my co-author than did the original expatriation article.

So to this combative conservative, whoever you are, allow me to commend you on the bravery of your attack and the compelling nature of your argument. Additionally, thanks for the ego boost- it's strangely empowering to create such strong feelings of hate in an individual that I've never even met.

And finally, to anyone else out there who's harboring a little resentment against yours truly, don't bother instant messaging me. Just save us both some time: if you're dying to end my "futile attempts at bitching and whining" or can no longer fight the urge to break my kneecaps with a leftover Bush/Cheney stake sign, I usually study late at the library on Mondays; you could probably catch me unaware as I walk to my car.

Gaines Greer is a senior English & German major. The article from last week is available on our website.

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.