'Pushing Back': Demeaning the dead is un-American, unacceptable, unnerving

by Andrew Baker

As many of you know, the University of Colorado-Boulder is finding itself in a bit of a crisis these days. One of its tenured faculty members, Ward Churchill, has come under fire after a paper he wrote shortly after the September 11 attacks was unearthed prior to his taking part in a panel discussion at Hamilton College in New York.

On January 31, Churchill resigned as the chair of the Department of Ethnic Studies; however, the University has kept him on as a faculty member pending an investigation of his works by the regents. The Hamilton College discussion has since been canceled.

In the controversial paper, Churchill asserts that “the combat teams... finally responded in kind to some of what this country has dispensed to their people as a matter of course,” and that those who worked in the World Trade Center were part of “the ‘mighty engine of profit’ to which the military dimension of U.S. policy has always been enslaved – and they did so both willingly and knowingly.” Churchill goes on to state that U.S. military personnel, not the 9-11 terrorists, may be considered to be the cowards for dropping bombs on Iraqis. Churchill also holds that Madeleine Albright is the incarnation of evil, that efforts to protect the homeland are really just smoke and mirrors, and that Kissinger, Powell, Clinton, and G.H.W. Bush are war criminals.

Should a member of the University of Colorado-Boulder’s faculty be fired for his or her beliefs? This is a loaded question, I realize. Let’s say that Churchill never presented these thoughts to students in a classroom setting, and that what he wrote was simply an exercise of his first amendment rights. Or, what if I were to mention that Coloradans are paying his salary? I ask you, should tax dollars pay a man’s salary?

Let’s bring this issue a little closer to home. How would you like it if SMU hired a nut-case like Churchill and allowed him to spew his filth in the name of academic freedom? I’ll be honest, I have heard some crack-pot things while here at SMU, but mostly, we the students are the ones making the outrageous claims. I’ve had a few professors who were totally out to lunch with some of their beliefs, but I have great respect for them all—you have to give respect to get respect.

I cannot, however, respect a man who essentially says that Americans who died in the WTC had it coming to them because they ran the capitalist machine. Moreover, I hope that no faculty member at SMU would ever say such a thing, let alone think it. But I know somewhere on our campus, a professor is lowering this paper to his or her desk and thinking “Damn, this guy’s a crazy conservative who knows nothing about the real world.” Yeah, you’re probably right. I mean, I am just an ideologically-blinded kid who thinks America, despite its past, is a place worth living in and a nation worth defending—from all enemies, foreign and domestic. I respect Churchill’s right to free speech, but I freely say now that his loathing for America has no place within American education, and that we, as students, should not have to suffer through such vile hypotheses.

Professors expect certain levels of decorum from their students; in turn, we expect civility from our teachers. I am, therefore, not suggesting that every despicable paper warrants a professor being fired, or that SMU should keep a list of ‘controversial’ professors on file in Perkins. I am also aware of the ironies of this article: how else would this uncivil article have been written had Churchill not expressed his views and encouraged debate? However, as a favor to those of us who love this country and who believe the first amendment rightly protects you from being fired, take your invective elsewhere, Mr. Churchill—I hear they have job openings in Baghdad now.

Andrew Baker is a senior English and political science major. Ward Churchill’s paper is entitled “Some People Push Back: On the Justice of Roosting Chickens.”
America’s collision course: Why dependence on foreign oil is such a danger

Energy and resource consumption underpins the American lifestyle. We drive our gas guzzlers everywhere, carelessly leave our lights on in the house, freely pump the A/C when a window could suffice, and do not even think twice about recycling.

Everything about the way we choose to live is largely inefficient. With just 4 percent of the world’s population, Americans consume 25 percent of the energy produced. Where is American headed if we maintain this level of energy dependency and what are the effects on the world stage due to our consumption habits?

In this article, I want to highlight some of threats that I personally judge to be certain to abound unless America adjusts its present course and becomes much more energy efficient.

First: China. If America thinks that our energy consumption is high, give China another 20 years. The continental United States is only 1,000km larger than China, yet China’s population of 1.2 billion dwarfs our near 300 million people. The scarier thing is that China knows they are going to have a massive increase in demand for energy at the rate they are growing. That is why they are moving into areas previously off limits to many countries seeking energy solutions. To show their level of concern about protecting the energy assets they have abroad, China now has People’s Liberation Army troops protecting their production facilities in Sudan. The point is, as America depletes the reserves that we have abroad, we will have to find new regions for extraction. The bigger problem remains, and that is that other large energy consumers (or future consumers) like China are moving to capitalize on resource rich areas where America is not yet operating. The more consumption the world demands, the greater the threat of future dispute. When it comes to non-renewable energy sources, though, dispute most often means war.

Second: Resource importation. Reliance means less control on the world stage. Thus, America, because of its immensely important political and diplomatic role in the world, is undermined and ultimately weaker when dealing with countries from which we extract resources. Our political capital depreciates, and America loses bargaining capacity. When dealing with rogue states that are, more often than not, abundant in these natural resources, the ability of the United States to act diplomatically by imposing sanctions or enacting embargoes is limited, as that state controls the natural resource assets that our lifestyle demands.

Venezuela provides a nearly perfect case example. Firebrand President Hugo Chavez is nothing short of a tyrant. The ex-paratrooper is basking in the revenue of profits made from the oil sector, which accounts for one-third of the nation’s GDP. The most important thing to note is how he is spending this money. In a November 2004 visit with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chavez pledged to buy 40 new Russian made M-17 combat helicopters and an unspecified number of advanced MiG–29 fighter jets equipped with precision bombing systems. Is Mr. Chavez the type of person the U.S wants to see buying up advanced weaponry? Most definitely not. The less military capability Chavez possesses, the more stable the southern hemisphere will be. But, don’t count on America halting its near 1.5 million barrels/day imports from Venezuela anytime soon.

Because of America’s reliance on foreign energy, we are weakened in our capacity to act diplomatically and internationally. Politicians in all countries around the world know that energy is America’s weak spot. Americans need to manufacture a new mindset and elicit more ingenuity in how we deal with our energy consumption needs. If we do not, then gasoline will be the driving force behind future confrontations with fledgling superpowers like China and rickety autocracies like Venezuela.

Graham Radler is a junior international studies and political science major.

Bickering amongst denominations solves nothing: Christians must be united

Other Christianity? What exactly does that mean? Another faction of faith that our society has created—that’s my answer.

Liberal Christians, conservative Christians, evangelical Christians, fundamentalist Christians. Methodist, Baptist, Episcopalian, Pentecostal, Assembly of God. The list goes on. Why should we further this man-made gap, as implied in the January 24 article, and create further disunity amongst God’s people?

To be sturdy, a building must have a strong foundation on which to rest. If the foundation cracks, unless something is done, the building will collapse. The Christian faith was founded on a strong foundation, but throughout the course of history, our ancestors have furthered the original cracks and created new ones. It started with the proto-orthodox and Gnostics, and the battle continues to rage amongst modern Christian groups. This was not the intended outcome. “I [Jesus] in them [the church] and you [God] in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:23). The plan was unity; but due to human arrogance and ignorance, we have created anything but. The aforementioned article, written by a Christian, continued in the historical patterns set by our ancestors and separated this gap even further.

We must unite together under the common ground of love and begin to repair the foundation so many have worked to destroy. “Beyond all these things [put on] love, which is the perfect bond of unity” (Colossians 3:14). In repairing unity through love, we will accomplish the common goals of Christendom, and help to rescue a suffering world. Instead of furthering the gaps created by our ancestors, let us change the patterns of history and fulfill that which God has commanded—then we too will make the history books. “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus” (Romans 15:5).

Ashley Payne is a first-year religious studies and English major.
RLSH is just covering up the bad taste of Boaz GPAs by adding honors floor

Two years ago, they brought us “Real Food on Campus”, ending the decades—old tradition of serving imaginary food in Umphrey Lee. Last year, they decided to blatantly disregard roommate requests in the Service House...without alerting residents until the (very awkward) move—in day. This year, the red-tape labyrinth known as Residence Life and Student Housing (RLSH) has topped itself.

Boaz has a low average GPA. By a decent margin, it has the lowest of all residence halls. This statistic is not particularly surprising or alarming in my book. After all, some residence hall has to have the lowest GPA, and Boaz seems to fit the bill nicely. The response of RLSH, however, is genuinely befuddling. Respectably enough, RLSH determined that there should not be a wide gap between the Boaz GPA and the rest of the pack. Unfortunately, rather than attack the problem at its core, they might just paint a veneer over the statistics. Next year, to improve the GPA of its problem child, RLSH is considering filling one floor of Boaz Hall with Honors students.

Is RLSH concerned about the floundering grades of its first-year residents or the Excel spreadsheet that assesses its performance? A true success story would involve a determined effort to help the recurring stock of Boaz residents with study habits. This solution is The Mighty Ducks equivalent of Emelio Estevez hiring a bunch of NHL ringers rather than teaching his ragtag group “The Flying V.”

In the end, RLSH may not even get the jaded results it seeks, and SMU stands to lose some of its finest academic students. While a few Honors students may find Virginia—Snider, the Honors community, too stuffy and prefer the fes—students. While a few Honors students may find Virginia—seeks, and SMU stands to lose some of its finest academic potential and an abysmal retention rate. Honors first—years could have their transfer papers filled out before fall exams.

Every Honors student that Hilltopics interviewed about this situation voiced extreme dismay – even the fun—loving ones. One senior predicted that he would have transferred to UT Austin if he had lived in Boaz during his first year, while a sophomore quipped, “It could be worse. The building could be on fire.”

The best course of action is for RLSH to realize that “Boaz will be Boaz”. After all, Boaz students are a self—selected bunch. Every prospective student learns that Boaz is the party dorm, and those who want the most vibrant social community elect to live in this hall when registering. Many Boazers proudly wear shirts comparing their hall’s average GPA and blood—alcohol level (BAC wins), so is a solution really necessary? These students are old enough to make their own decisions. The only necessary change is to simplify the process of changing halls for those who unwittingly end up in Boaz. Everyone is happy: the partiers (honors and non—honors) can still live in Boaz, Honors first—years are not forced away from the true Honors community, and students can opt out of Boaz if space is available elsewhere.

The RLSH plan simply sweeps the problem under the rug, and in doing so, ruins the rug. I really do not believe that I am falsely creating a dichotomy between the stereotypical honors students and Boaz residents ... this plan could be an enormous disaster, and RLSH should not implement it. Craig Zieminski is a senior accounting and economics major.
University's technology help desk could stand to be a little more...well, helpful
by Ashley Payne

The only phrase synonymous with technology is eventual failure. We have all been there: wireless internet not working, networking not found, hard drive overheats, spy ware, pop-ups, worms, viruses, junk mail, and my personal favorite— it just does not want to turn on.

But thanks to our substantial tuition payments, SMU provides its students with ITS for all of their computer and technology needs.

For anyone not familiar with ITS, they are our on-campus Information Technology Service in charge of the University website, e-mail documentation, networking on campus, and all kinds of computer issues. ITS also has a staff of qualified Help Desk Consultants to answer all your technical questions via e-mail, phone, or in person.

Now, I am completely confident that each person at the Help Desk is individually capable of computer solutions; however, with the seemingly overbooked schedule and split-level communication, solving computer problems is a constant struggle. In fact, calling ITS reminds me of going to the dentist: absolutely necessary, but full of anxiety and frustration.

However, there are some positive aspects. ITS has the hilariously ironic phone number of B-HELP. While on hold, Mustang pride-themed music plays on repeat. And there is a simple pre-recorded option menu where you get to press buttons on request.

I have earned the status of a help desk connoisseur because I call ITS almost once a week. For me, calling ITS is similar to playing the telephone game. You know the one where someone starts a sentence, and then by the time it gets to the end person, the story is completely different. Let me explain. My most recent telephone game with ITS entailed a virus-infected computer in the Office of New Student Programs.

The initial call seemed relatively straightforward. I gave the ITS worker the information, and he seemed to understand my problem, but after a week, I became skeptical. I was surprised to find out that ITS had taken the whole computer. After about another week with no news of my beloved computer, I called ITS...

“ I’m calling to check on the status of my computer”. “Well, I don’t see it here and can’t find a heat ticket.” I looked at the blank spot where the CPU used to sit, sighed and continued... “Well you have my computer, because it’s not here”... “Can I put you on hold?”... Oh goody Mustang Pride music— 50 Cent doesn’t have anything on this beat...

A few minutes later, a woman comes back on the line... "Ok, I found it and it says it’s ‘in progress’... “Could I have an estimated time frame”... “No.” Now I feel like one of those No Hassle Capital one credit card commercials, but I patiently waited in silence for a further explanation.

“I think the consultant has it”... oh, a consultant, great... “Can you connect me to the consultant?”... “Let me put you on hold.”... About one Varsity and two Pony Battle Cries later, I hear the connecting sound, a ring, and the answering machine of the consultant picks up. I think that I was just forwarded to the first absent consultant desk she could find, but that’s just my opinion.

Now, I have several more stories about misinterpreted networking instructions and lost heat tickets, but what would a good complaint be without positive suggestions of improvement? To the members of the ITS Help desk, it is imperative that you listen to the problem, restate the problem asking for verification, write down the entire problem for anyone else working on the job, and when in doubt, ask for help. Also, inform us on how long the service procedure is going to take and stick to that timeline. Finally, practice good customer service techniques and take responsibility for your mistakes, because we know you are capable.

For everyone wondering about my computer, I did eventually have it returned virus-free. Good job ITS, I’m sure we will talk again soon.

Samantha Needham is a senior marketing and psychology major.

Why the hype? Super bowl advertisements turn out to be not so super after all
by Gaines Greer

I love commercials— good ones, that is. But there are few things that irritate me more than being forced to watch a poorly written or illogical advertisement. In fact, for years, I’ve wanted to keep a running list of products I won’t buy simply because the commercials are so miserable.

Fortunately, last night’s Super Bowl commercials gave me the opportunity to realize this goal, albeit on a lesser scale. What follows are the top three items advertised during the Super Bowl which, based solely on the utter wretchedness of their commercials, I will never purchase/support.

1) Diet Pepsi— P. Diddy shows up to an awards show in a diet Pepsi truck and other celebs catch on to the “trend,” purchasing similar trucks for themselves. So the moral of the story is... drink Diet Pepsi because a very bizarre assortment of celebrities (ranging from Halle Berry to Carson Daly) drive gas-guzzlers with “Diet Pepsi” plastered on the side. Waste gasoline and drink NutraSweet? Sorry, I’m not buying.

2) GoDaddy.com— This ad was definitely the raciest broadcast during the Super Bowl, but that’s not why I hated it. The commercial featured a trashy, airheaded woman pleading the case of GoDaddy.com in court while “accidentally” falling out her skimpy top. Unless there is a pornographic element of GoDaddy.com that I somehow missed, I fail to see the connection between a barely clothed woman and domain names. And as a result, I remain uninterested in a website that doesn’t even seem interested in itself.

3) Cialis— I realize that it’s difficult to tastefully advertise medication for “erectile dysfunction,” but that doesn’t make this Cialis advertisement any less awkward. This commercial, which featured grandparents canoodling to “Be My Baby” and warned users against “four hour erections” had me more grateful than I’ve ever been to be twenty-one and female.

As a conclusion, I would like to issue a premature apology to any SMU student whose parents might be employed at/own one of the above companies. If you’re offended, I’m sorry, but at least you can take comfort in the fact that my boycott will, most likely, be a lonely one.

Gaines Greer is a senior English and German major.