



Associated Collegiate Press /
National Scholastic Press Association
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Journalism Association
of Community Colleges
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Fall 1994
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Fall 2000
General Excellence
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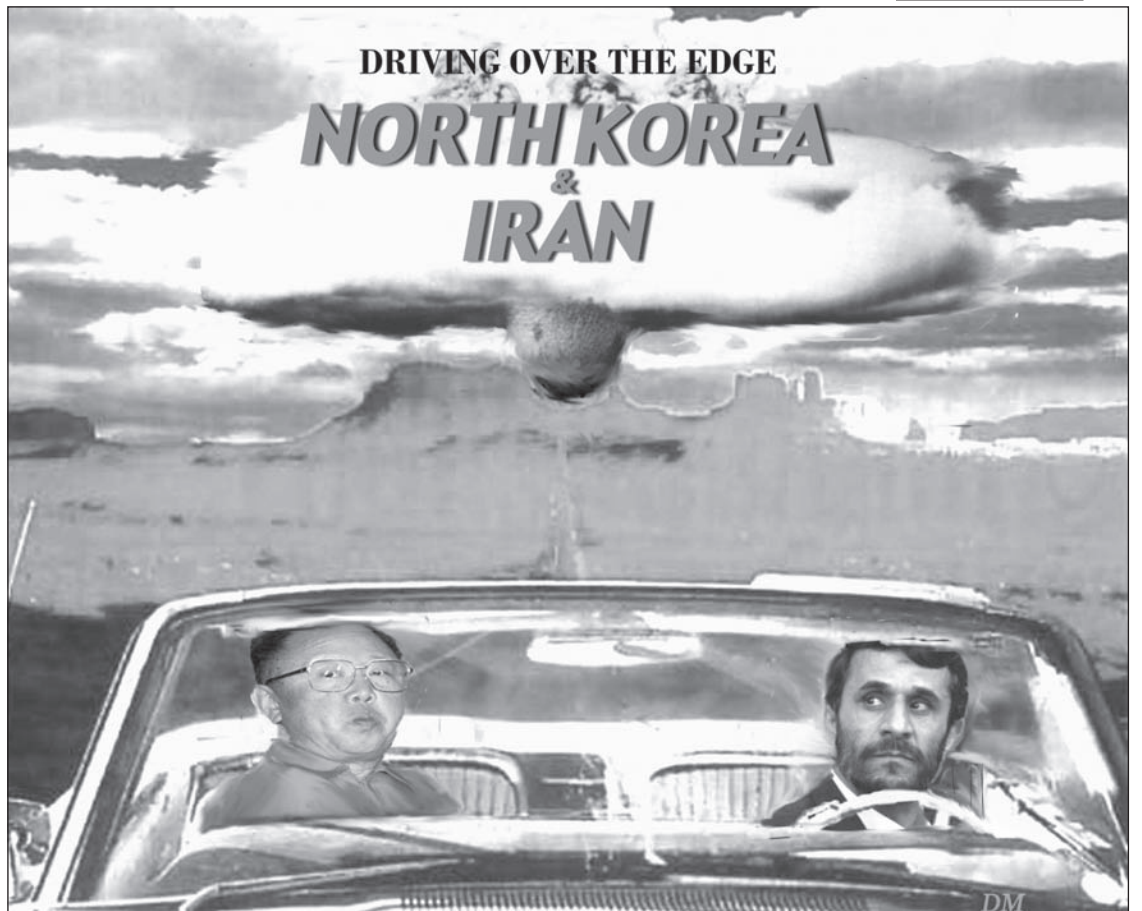


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The *MONITOR* is funded by the district, by the Associated Students of Ohlone College, and through advertising revenue.

The *MONITOR* is a member of the Associated Collegiate Press, Journalism Association of Community Colleges, Community College Journalism Association, California Newspaper Publishers Association, College Media Advisers and Society of Newspaper Design.



OPINION

America needs leader with strong moral background

By **MANIKA CASTERLINE**
Staff writer

The sex scandal plaguing former Congressman Mark Foley is not about what you think. It is not about politics or liberals versus conservatives. Nor should it be blamed on what his particular sexual preference is. In a diversified culture that embraces television shows like "Will & Grace" coming out of the

closet does not resonate with the same narrow-minded ripple effect that it did when comedienne Ellen DeGeneres came out in the '90s.

What it comes down to is the blatantly extravagant usage of the drug PCP - Power, Corruption and Privilege. This is a different drug that can seep into the veins of an individual and with each incremental increase, the toxicity morphs into something lethal.

"Pagegate," as it were, broke in late September 2006 when the "Stop The Predators" blog posted explicit e-mails stating that Foley had exchanged with former Congressional underage pages. After the news came out, inappropriate personal messages sent by Foley were also released to the populace. In said correspondence, Foley alludes to lewd conduct and in one conversation offered to provide

alcohol to a minor.

The Congressional Page program began in 1839 and is no stranger to scandal. There have been three other separate incidents that have occurred in the history of the program. In 1983, Illinois Republican Congressman Dan Crane and Massachusetts Democrat Gerry Studds were accused of having inappropriate relationships with their congressional pages. In 1996, five

pages were let go because they participated in underage drinking. And in 2002, eleven pages were found to possess marijuana and were discharged from the program.

Apathy and lack of leadership go hand in hand. When the electorate perceives their politicians to be corrupt they are naturally less inclined to re-elect the official. What America wants and needs is a leader of strong moral integrity.

Student faces life trials, overcomes homelessness

By **MORGAN BRINLEE**
Features editor

I never understood the homeless. "Get a job," I'd think, "Go to a shelter, get help, do something! How do people get this far without realizing that their life is spiraling out of control," I'd wonder.

It wasn't until I became homeless and found myself a step away from rock bottom that I began to understand how fast things can get beyond your control. In the span of one year I had been homeless on two different occasions, dropped out of college, gone through an outpatient drug treatment program, attempted suicide, moved across country and back again, all by the tender age of 19. Please do not get me wrong, I

understand that every event stated above is a direct consequence of my actions, but you'd be amazed at how fast life's problems can overwhelm you.

I first found myself homeless in the springtime of 2006. The exact date is hard for me to remember. I didn't have a car, so on nights when I couldn't convince friends to stay out all night with me I would pick a bus and ride it to the end of its line and then beg the driver to let me ride back to the VTA station because I had gotten on the wrong bus. Most drivers were sympathetic and would let me stay on, but there were a few times when I got kicked off and would have to find some way to get back to my local area. I can remember one night when I found myself lost on the east side of Santa Clara and being followed

by another bus passenger. I walked to a shopping center where I called my boyfriend and begged him to come pick me up. That was the day I realized just how much danger I was putting myself into every night by traveling and sleeping alone.

On nights when I got lucky and was able to get a ride to the main VTA station, I would sleep at the station pretending to wait for a certain bus. Other nights I would sleep near the library in Milpitas, or at Cataldi Park in San Jose. The key was to not let anyone know I was homeless. I even told my mother, who had kicked me out of the house, that I was living with a friend. I didn't want anyone to see me vulnerable, I didn't want anyone's help, and that I now know was one of my biggest mistakes.

For awhile I made it to Ohlone using the bus. Sometimes if I

missed my transfer I would miss my morning class, but for the most part I did OK. I had been signed up for the Total Gym Fitness class that semester and while I quickly stopped going to the gym, I would use the showers in the locker room. I started to develop a routine.

I hated to ask people for money on the street. It made me feel so ashamed and embarrassed that I would have preferred to just not eat anything. I had a job, so for the most part I always had a little money, but there were weeks when I couldn't get into my checking account and had to make do with whatever I had in my pocket. My brother tried to teach me how to scam cashiers out of a few bucks by asking for change several times in a row, but I could never get it to work.

After a few weeks I was able to move back in with my mother,

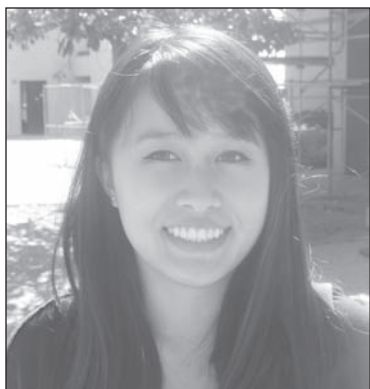
only to get kicked out again about a month later. This time I was able to take my car with me. Having a car made everything a lot easier. This time I was dead set on making it on my own. In an effort to make more money I upped my hours at work and started working full time. I dropped out of school because the real price of gas to drive from San Jose to Fremont was my breakfast and lunch for the day. I slept on the couches of a few friends, I slept in my car, I went out to parties just so I wouldn't have to deal with where I would sleep that night. I would sit at Denny's reading and drinking coffee all night just because I had nowhere else to go.

I even went to my father's wedding while I was homeless. I thought I had everything under control, but really I was just in

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CAMPUS COMMENT >>>

How long would you survive homelessness?



LITA VO
Undecided

"Six months, maybe."



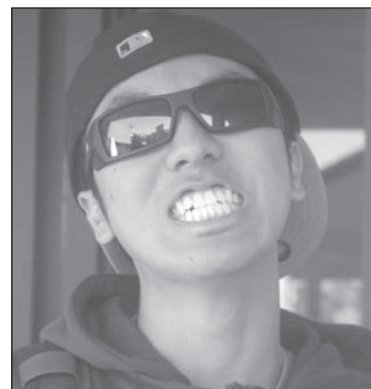
MAKENZIE DECUIRE
Performing Arts

"Probably like, a year."



KUSHBOO CHABRIA
Biology

"Two weeks."



VEASNA MOTH
Undecided

"As long as I can live in my car, it's all good in the hood."



HESSAM NIKFARJAM
Business

"Unless I'm doing serious drugs, I wouldn't be homeless."