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OPINION

Testimony of a veteran from the war in Iraq

By ERIC KOVACS
Student

As a veteran of the Iraq war, I have a first-hand account of the situation there. The situation is much more complicated than the "blood for oil" that we hear at protests on

the streets. The thing that we need to understand, and that I cannot stress enough, is that democracy is not for everyone. This is a difficult thing for me to say because I took an oath to defend it with my life and, while democracy is no doubt a

good thing for us, it is quite another for the Iraqis. The Iraqi people are quite poor and poor people usually concern themselves with more basic needs such as keeping themselves and their families alive.

I was unique in that I studied a lot about Iraq, and even my family helped by acquiring some 400 pages

of reading material for me regarding the country that I would call home for the better part of a year. I tried to understand the tensions of the whole region and its history leading up to those tensions.

However, by studying the whole, I ignored the human factor. In all the data about chief mineral exports

and terrestrial microwave links (did I mention the report was thorough?), no mention was made of the people other than its population. When I talk to Iraqis, whose major concerns are trying to survive when people die every day as a result of roadside bombs, they couldn't care
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A further response from a devoted reader

DEAR EDITOR,

I'm very sorry that your publication has allowed your Opinion Editor Matthew So to explain his rationale and reasoning as a response to my submission to your opinion section. Since Mr. So feels that the opinion page is a section for debate, I feel it necessary to respond to his points in the April 12 edition of the *Monitor*.

First, Mr. So states that the *Monitor* welcomes letters from readers. How is someone supposed to feel comfortable writing a letter when the editorial staff is going to go to such lengths to justify or counter a letter from a reader? Few professional publications respond to opinion submissions unless there is a clear conflict of interest. I do not represent the electronic publishing industry, the debit & i.d. association,

the association for female athletes nor the professional grounds-keeps union.

Second, I do not blithely expect that the *Monitor* can enact changes to social, economic and gender issues. However, the *Monitor* should recognize that it plays a large role in influencing views and opinions for those who happen to read your publication. The role of mass media and its impact on society is easily reflected in the recent firing of Don Imus. His firing was due in part to his misuse of the powerful medium at his disposal while those without the same medium have no voice. If Mr. So is not clear about the power of the pen, press, television and internet then he should withhold his cutting remarks to my simple opinion submission.

Mr. So also attempts to paint my commentary as a lack of understanding of the demands of the profes-

sional journalism environment. I would like to point out the current precipitous decline in newspaper industry since the advent of on-line journalism. While the decline in newspaper industry isn't necessarily its death knell, it should be acknowledged that the print news media is being forced to publish on-line regardless of the desire to do otherwise. Mr. So shouldn't wait for the newspaper publishing industry to print on-line primarily... it already is. In this case, publishing primarily on-line does not exclude the secondary hard copy that you might see at a newsstand.

Mr. So should recognize that intelligent news and information found on-line probably got its start in the print arena. Now, however, I can have articles from the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *The Economist* sent to me by email by subject or topic. Mr. So's

suggestion that print media is more objective than online or televised media speaks volumes of the lack of critical thinking ability in our society rather than his "ours is better than theirs" stance.

It is interesting to note that, by Mr. So's reckoning, the *Monitor* can adeptly calculate up to a 94 percent usage rate of publication printed. Not even experienced and well established credible newspapers can make such claims. Even as I write this message, I see 4 copies of the *Monitor* on the floor and tables of the computers surrounding me. If Mr. So wishes to take an environmental view on how the *Monitor* is managed, then he needs to understand that reducing the demand for "precious few resources" equals conservation. Simply recycling the *Monitor* doesn't excuse or rectify the problem when there are viable alternatives.

Finally, the very fact that Mr. So responded to my opinion is a shock. I thought the job of a Opinions editor was to act as a moderator, not a mouthpiece. Having said that, the rather condescending manner in which Mr. So opens and closes his response, encouraging people to write to the *Monitor* reduces the credibility of your publication even further. The type of journalism being exhibited by Mr. So is eerily reminiscent of tyrannical regimes which suppress hints of free speech and free thinking.

TOUCALIT BENTON

DEAR TOUCALIT,

Thank you for your feedback.

MATTHEW SO,
Opinions Editor

CAMPUS COMMENT >>

How would you enhance yourself biologically?



ANTHONY SHOUGH
Pharmacy

"I would make myself a better swimmer and join the team."



CHRIS COBB
Sociology

"I would be 6 feet tall."



MARISA NAVARRO
Teaching

"Maybe I can be taller. Oh, and no more split ends."



BRITNEY LEWIS
Undecided

"I wanna see what cops see; have a cop radar or something."



MONIQUE CLARK
Psychology

"My retention skills. I would enhance my memory."