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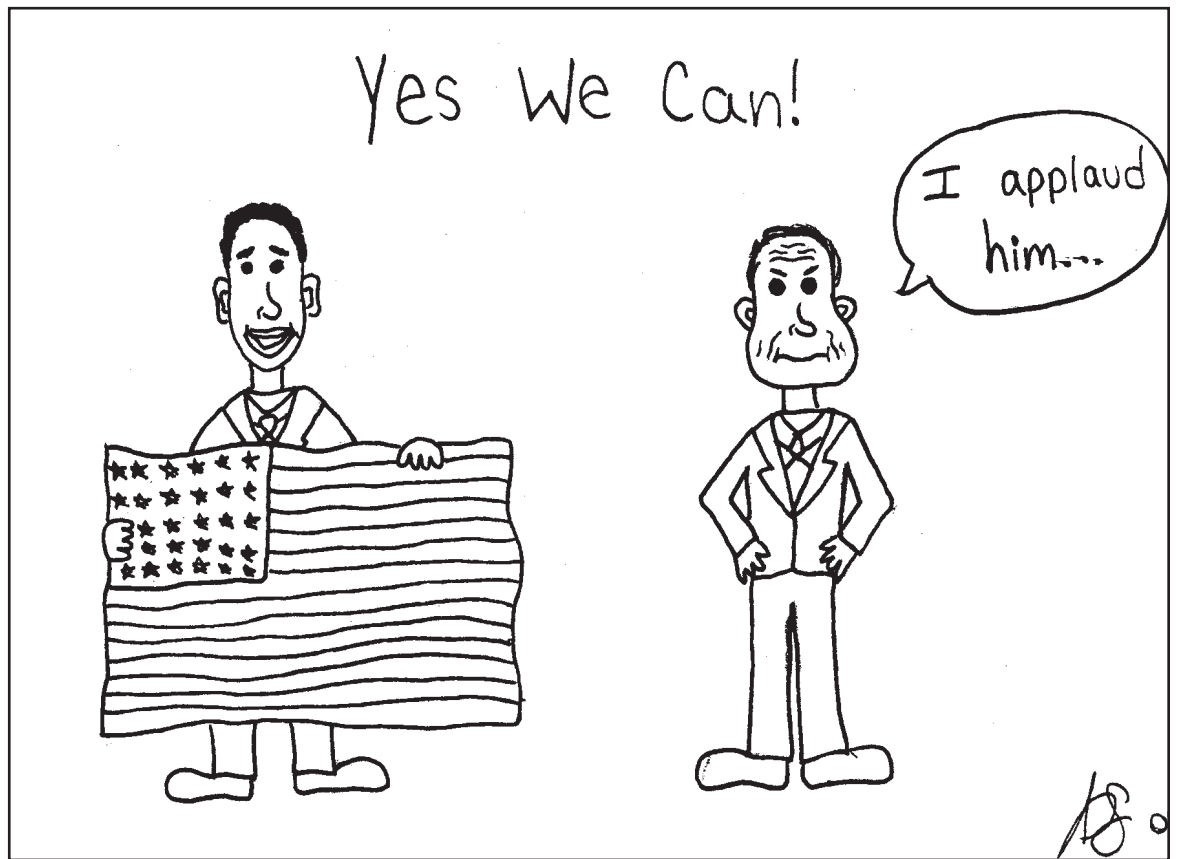


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The *MONITOR* is funded by the district, by the Associated Students of Ohlone College, and through advertising revenue.

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

A new president, new hope for our country

By ANNA BIARITZ ROLDAN
Staff writer

Watching from the sidelines in the near end of the campaign process and election up to the declaration of Barack Obama as the new president of the United States of America, I was very impressed by how smoothly everything seemed to have happened. I observed how every member of this nation gets all caught up in political events.

It's amazing, this electoral process, isn't it? How people can be so civil despite their opposing views, how those who never seem to talk about things that truly matter suddenly sound so intellectual.

I never realized how great the effects of the presidential elections can be, especially its social and psychological impact on people as individuals and in groups. Politics aside, it truly is a wonder. Observing such a sophisticated process that

has been perfected throughout the years, it's amazing how the elections can bring out the best and worst in people.

Walking to my next class early in the morning, I hear faculty members talking about the presidential debates over coffee. While in class, biology teachers find themselves elaborating on the effects of nuclear power plants - how costly they can get and how much damage they may cause, along with the threats they

pose. While on my way home on the bus, I hear teenagers talking about their views on gay marriage and Proposition 8. It truly is amazing how everyone gets so hooked on the matters that are of this election season.

This election has gotten everyone so enthralled. I think this was one of the best. And at this rate maybe we should have more elections. Seeing how good it is for a country, for its people being able to bend their

thoughts and direct their attention to something more than what they usually focus on, the way I see it is very healthy.

Now that the election is all over and everyone is looking forward to how President Obama will turn this economy around, strangely enough I am already looking forward to the next elections. I'm hoping this new presidency will turn out a success but I'm hoping for further success on the next one as well.

A strike at the heart of freedom—unjust death

By FARNOOSH VAHEDI
Staff writer

The Islamic Republic of Iran is currently reviewing a new law called the Islamic Penal Code under which all male citizens who convert from Islam shall receive the death penalty and all women citizens who convert from Islam shall receive life imprisonment.

The punishment for apostasy - the process of conversion from Islam - previously was hard labor, imprisonment, or the death penalty.

But under this law the punishment is death, the accused cannot plea to the court for mercy or hope for any other punishment.

Unfortunately the Iranian parliament voted 194 to 7 in favor of this

law. Although the new law requires another vote in the parliament and the signature of the Ayatollah to become a law, the current support for the draft of the bill makes this almost certain.

The right to freedom of religion is one of the most basic human rights in the modern era, written in stone in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and in the European Convention of Human Rights.

Fortunately, actions are being taken by various agencies; a number of governments and organizations outside Iran, including Germany, European Parliament, Amnesty International and the Baha'i International Community, have recently expressed their grave concern.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom calls on

the U.S. government and its allies to exert pressure on the Islamic Republic of Iran and to reject this so-called law.

The General Assembly has been concerned as well.

Chaim Weizmann, who was president of the World Zionist Organization from 1935-1946, once said "A law is something which must have a moral basis, so that there is an inner compelling force for every citizen to obey." However, it seems that his words have fallen on deaf ears.

Another important characteristic of this law is that other laws allow for leniency from the judge, where this one does not.

This law is worded in a way as to take away the discretion from the judge, also taking away leniency by saying the only way to escape punishment is to renounce

your decision and convert back to Islam. The draft bill states Under Article 225-1: any Muslim who clearly announces that he/she has left Islam and declares blasphemy is an apostate.

Also, under Article 255-7 punishment for an innate apostate is death. In my opinion it is important to remember that this law does not reflect the ideologies of most Muslims and that this law strikes at the heart of freedom.

The fact that recanting the current religion and converting back to Islam allows the citizen to avoid the death penalty shows again that there is absolutely no freedom of religion in Iran.

There are currently two Bahai's and two Christians sentenced for apostasy who await their sentence. I think it is the duty of every human to do what they can to end this injustice

and to ensure that change will be brought about, that evil actions will not survive while there are enlightened minds to oppose it.

Elie Wiesel, author of "Night," once said, "I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

So it is my humble request to each and every one of you, to write to your congressmen, write to the Iranian embassy or undertake any peaceful action you can think of to protect our fellow humans who will suffer an unjust death under this law.

For more information about this law visit <http://news.bahai.org/> and search for "death penalty."

CAMPUS COMMENT >>

Where are we headed under Obama?



Alan Benzel
BUSINESS

"I think he's a socialist...people voted for him because they want change."



Tauheed Safi
PRE-MED

"In a good direction - we'll take steps forward, not back."



Arvin Buenaobra
NURSING

"Hopefully he keeps his word."



Sheila Vison
NURSING

"I think it will lead to good change."



Ahmad Ebtikar
PRE-MED

"It depends on his judgments - will he be liberal or more centered?"