

Getting David to Vote

Campaigning in Ohio offers new perspective on America

By Eamon Kircher-Allen

“Are you sure you don’t want to vote?” It was 7:05 p.m. on Election Day and my friend Crissie Ferrara, Communique’s photo editor, was making a last-minute phone call from the local Democratic party headquarters to plead with David, a 20-year-old resident of Lancaster, Ohio, to get to the polls. “I know, we’re all really tired. But this election is really, really important and what happens in Ohio is going to decide it.”

David had just returned from a long day at school, and said he was just too tired to vote, even though he supported Barack Obama. He even declined the campaign’s offer of a ride.

“He’s hung up,” Crissie said. “And now he won’t answer his phone.”

My friend Matteen and I were in the field office sitting on the couch next to Crissie, along with about 20 other volunteers making similar

calls to hundreds of potential Obama supporters in the final minutes of voting.

“Let’s just go to his house and pick him up anyway,” Matteen said, glancing around the room full of tired volunteers. Without a second thought, he and I jumped up. Moments later, we were tearing through the streets of Lancaster in a rented green minivan with an Obama-Biden placard masking-taped to its side door. A local teenage volunteer rode shotgun, guiding us through the dark streets to David’s house, whose address we had from the voter roles.

I knocked on the door of David’s back-alley apartment, but no answer came. I called his phone from my cell. No one picked up. In only 15 minutes, David’s dwindling opportunity to vote would be a long-gone memory.

The race to get David to vote was the final effort of a weekend-long push to make

Continued in Page 4



Celebrating victory Volunteers for Barack Obama’s campaign in Lancaster, Ohio, including SIPA students Amali Tower, left and Victoria Okoye, center, celebrated the news of another state going blue on the night of the election. The volunteers traveled from New York by van to canvass for the campaign.

Photo: Eamon Kircher-Allen

New Dean to Inject Change at SIPA

By Shiori Okazaki

Barack Obama is not the only one talking about change. SIPA students too are eager for transformation, and it is that vibrancy and passion that excites Cassandra Simmons, the school’s new associate dean of Student Affairs. “The animation and the conversation is contagious here,” she said. “This is a very happy and hopeful place.”

The passion for change Simmons shares with SIPA students keeps her friendly and approachable despite her numerous responsibilities overseeing Student Affairs, Career Services and the Office of Admissions. She intends to keep her door open for any student who might come to visit, and has been known to pull people in when she feels like a chat.

“I’ve just always had this curiosity,” says the self-identified “army brat,” whose international upbringing inspired a love and respect of cultural differences and similarities.

Simmons spent her childhood in Germany, France and Taiwan before moving to Michigan, where she received her master’s degree from Michigan State University. She went on to get her Ph.D. in Counseling, Personnel Services and Educational Psychology and taught Clinical Psychology as tenured faculty.

While in Michigan she also fed her deep interest in public health, helping initiate a major breast cancer awareness and detection program among minority communities. Until recently breast cancer awareness campaigns featured only white women – and many minority women did not participate in detection programs because of the mistaken notion that they were safe from the disease. “Even though the incidence was lower in women of color, the mortality rate was higher because it was detected at a later stage,” says Simmons, who went on to become the director of the Minority Postdoctoral Fellowship Program at Harvard University’s School of Public

Health.

The new dean drew a parallel between preventive health and the curriculum of SIPA. “You can’t cure the top three health diseases but you can prevent them,” she said, noting that while many of the conflicts in this world are difficult to resolve, they too can be averted. “With the skills the students are acquiring in this graduate program, I am completely confident that they will work to decrease the kind of strife that we see around the world.”

This is not the first time Simmons will serve as associate dean of student affairs. She held the position in Michigan and at Harvard before becoming program director at the New York office of The Conference Board, a business membership and research organization best known for compiling the Consumer Confidence Index and Leading Economic Indicators.

Although The Conference Board offered Simmons a

Continued in Page 5

SIPLOMACY

Nuclear menace or potential partner? Students put forward two different views on Iran -- and how the United States should deal with it.

Page 2-3



Sainath at SIPA: India Is Hurting Its Farmers

Page 5

DIPLOMACY

Iran Needs Power, Too

Because of Bush's failures, the U.S. may have to live with a nuclear Iran.

By Gazelle Javantash

This summer I spent several months in Tehran visiting family and completing an internship. My trip was pleasant and I enjoyed learning more about Iran without the filter of international media.

Despite Iran having the third largest oil reserves in the world, I saw firsthand how daily rolling blackouts disrupt cities throughout the country for hours at a time. Another strange occurrence was seeing lines at gas stations, often of 50 cars or more, waiting to use "ration cards" that determined the amount of gasoline that people could fill up at the tank.

But how could an oil giant face such energy problems? The answer: sanctions and U.S. foreign policy against Iran.

Since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Washington's approach toward Iran has become more difficult to understand. It is often threatening in its tone, confusing in its objectives and ultimately a failure in bringing about a resolution. Both nations have caused each other harm, of course, but both are at fault for not taking positive steps toward normalizing relations.

The consistent policy since President Carter's administration has been to impose sanctions and isolate Iran, with the goal to collapse the government. This 30-year old approach has failed, just as it did in Iraq.

Sanctions have deci-

imated the Iranian economy by preventing foreign investment. They have prevented the growth of its infrastructure and blocked any private wealth to build in the hands of the Iranian citizens, who may have been able to accomplish something positive if they had the financial freedom to do so. Politically, sanctions have allowed the most radical elements of the Islamic regime to consolidate their financial power by controlling much of the economy.

Perhaps most damaging, the sanctions prohibit investment in oil refineries, power plants, and other methods of energy production for Iran. The oil and gas fields sit in disrepair. It doesn't take a psychic to figure out that when you keep a country from getting new technology to provide energy for its people, they will resort to any means necessary to do so, especially when the government is afraid that their livelihood is at stake. For Iran, this 'last resort' includes nuclear energy.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is consistently on the offensive, and it's

easy to understand why. They strive to keep the masses as complacent and content as they possibly can. After all, Iranians have historically shown themselves capable of overthrowing a government that made them unhappy, and the Islamic regime could find themselves on the other side of a revolution.

This government posturing also has much to do with U.S. policies that have continuously promoted "regime change" in Iran. For example, in one of many attempts to overthrow the Islamic regime, the U.S. provided chemical weapons for Saddam Hussein to use against Iran during the Iran-Iraq war. This and other historical grievances have led to a fundamental mistrust by Iran that needs to be resolved in order to move forward.

Tehran in return wanted recognition of their government, no more plans for regime change, and a removal of sanctions. This was denied by the Bush Administration, likely because they were close to declaring victory in Iraq and had their sights set on Iran. The "Axis of Evil" label also provided an easy target for finger-pointing by Bush, particularly since Iraq and North Korea no longer share this label.

Additionally, Bush's botched job of the Iraq War and the mission in Afghanistan has completely destabilized the region and weakened the U.S. position in the region. Iran has risen to be a superpower in the Middle East, whereas previously other big players kept Iran's regional role in check. And the 2003 deal is now completely off the table since Tehran

istan are not members). Even though many critics say that 'peaceful' is not Tehran's true intention, this no longer matters: Iran will not give up on this defense of their rights without some serious perks, and obviously punishment is not working.

Realistically, Iran does not have a death wish; they know they have few allies in the world. They know that if they ever considered using a nuclear weapon against any country, they would be facing complete nuclear destruction themselves. However, we are now left with a situation where the opportunity to solve the problem was passed over by a hawkish president eager to make war.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is also facing tough times domestically as the financial crisis causes a drop in world oil prices,

which greatly affects the Iranian economy. The nuclear issue is one of his last political assets. Further U.S.-imposed isolation only strengthens Ahmadinejad's claim that nuclear energy is an issue of Iranian rights. His upcoming re-election bid is counting on the success of this policy.

Both U.S. presidential candidates agree that dialogue with Iran, in some form, is necessary to easing tensions. The winner will unfortunately have to pick up the pieces of Bush's grave mistakes over the last eight years. A nuclear Iran, however, is something the U.S. may have to live with because of Bush's fail-

ures.

Iran can't be blamed for trying to provide energy to its citizens when the world has turned its back on them. However, it is vital that the next president of the United States use more logic than Bush in shifting Iran to an ally, rather than an enemy. If this can be accomplished, we won't have any reason to be afraid of our new Iranian allies, regardless of what type of technology they possess.

Gazelle Javantash is a 2nd-year Middle East and Management concentrator. She spent last summer working at a consulting firm in Tehran.



Members of the Security Council of United Nations vote 14-0 on a resolution to increase sanctions against Iran at U.N. Headquarters Monday, March 3, 2008

Too Little, Too Late

The question now is how to contain a nuclear Iran. Unfortunately, I'm afraid we may have missed the boat.

First, it is difficult to take Washington's double standards seriously. To be clear, are they saying it is justified for Pakistan but not Iran to have a nuclear weapon, even though it is the likely hiding spot of Osama Bin Laden? Is a nuclear India okay, too, even though they are regularly faced with suicide bombings by Hindu and Muslim extremists?

More importantly, tensions over Iran's nuclear capabilities are high because of President Bush's policies. In 2003 the Islamic Republic of Iran reached out to the Bush Administration with a deal that could have made enormous progress toward normalization. According to many sources, the agreement included a call for peace with Israel, an end to support of militant groups in the region such as Hamas and Hezbollah, and complete transparency of their (peaceful) nuclear program.

Sanctions have allowed the most radical elements of the Islamic regime to consolidate their financial power by controlling much of the economy.

is no longer as concerned with what the U.S. thinks of its nuclear program.

Elections and the Future

Iran has made nuclear capabilities a rights issue, citing their participation in the Non-Proliferation Treaty that safeguards nuclear development for peaceful purposes (India and Pak-

SIPLOMACY

A Nuclear Threat in the Middle East

For peace to prevail, Iran must prove its peaceful intentions. That's not likely.

By Omar Al-Nidawi

Nuclear proliferation in the Middle East is not a new source for concern. Dating as far back as the 1950s, several countries in the region have sought to build nuclear programs and ultimately, to acquire nuclear weapons.

As is the tradition in the Middle East, countries are suspicious about their neighbors' power potential, particularly when it comes to achieving a nuclear breakthrough, even if that means just a few weapons could be produced.

This suspicion is logical. Nations in the region are relatively small and only have a limited number of urban centers and no vast or redundant industrial infrastructure. In my country for instance, an attack on Baghdad and Basra with one nuclear warhead each would incinerate or irradiate a third of the population and simultaneously strip Iraq of 90% of its national income. This is one reason why we tend to be wary of nuclear weapons in the hands of neighbors, perhaps more so than people elsewhere.

A History of Tension

Iraq and Iran fought a long war during which both countries worked furiously to build nuclear weapons. During the fighting, both countries attacked each other's nuclear facilities. It took Iraq several air strikes over a span of five years to cripple Iran's program. Iraq's reactor was only slightly damaged in an Iranian raid in 1980, but was dealt a grave blow in the Israeli Operation Opera of 1981.

Looking back at all the havoc Saddam Hussein wrought, many in Iraq were not unhappy with that attack—nuclear weapons in the hands of impulsive militarist dictators are more

likely to undermine national security than reinforce it.

Tensions between Iraq and Iran may have eased now as a result of Operation Iraqi Freedom, but not as much as you'd think.

Iraq and Iran are officially not hostile to each other and they maintain formal diplomatic relations. Moreover, the current government in Baghdad is friendly towards Tehran, largely due to the fact that both are Shiite Islamists.

However, this does not mean that things are rosy between the two neighbors. Interests conflict quite often and when that happens, tensions and the possibility of conflict lurk in the background. Iran needs to understand that its pursuit of total security brings with it a sense of total insecurity among its neighbors.

In other words, in the Middle East as in other places, states have neither perpetual friends nor eternal enemies. Iraqis are no exception to this rule.

Despite their limited experience, Iraqi leaders understand this intuitive balance of power and do not put full trust in anyone. This is exacerbated by the fact that Iranians have played the factions of the Iraqi Shiite majority bloc against one another at different times.

As for other Iraqi groups, Kurds don't really trust Tehran either and consider Washington their main ally. On the other hand, many Sunni Arabs, whether pan-Arab nationalists or Islamists, consider Iran their number-one enemy – even ahead of Israel and the U.S.

Reality on the Ground

To put it bluntly, Iran's nuclear program is a threat to Iraq and the rest of the Middle East and it will continue to be perceived as such until



(AP Photo/ Hasan Sarbakshian)

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, speaks at a ceremony in Iran's nuclear enrichment facility in Natanz, 186 miles south of capital Tehran, Iran, April, 9, 2007.

proven otherwise.

Iran's nuclear ambitions are not the challenge, per se. Nuclear power doesn't threaten people-people threaten people. In fact, I would not have any objection to a guaranteed peaceful nuclear program that can be subject to unconditional inspection.

The problem is that with the current system in Iran, that guarantee is all but impossible.

For those Iranians who aspire to the pride and benefits of technological advances in nuclear energy, a clear choice must be made: the regime or the nuclear program, but not both.

Iraqis simply don't trust Iran and we don't have a reason to do so. Even if our current leaders in Baghdad seem to befriend Iran, the state and the people are not willing to be hostage to Iranian preponderance.

If the goal is nuclear weapons, which I believe to be the case, then we in Iraq and others in the region have justified concerns. As a student of international security policy, I was taught that threat is a function of the potential adversary's capability multiplied by his hostile intentions. I'm a realist—that is I believe relations among states are governed by power and interests—and therefore believe that intentions are neither measurable nor do they matter: what matters is capability.

Complaints about "double standards" that tolerate Israel's nuclear capability, but not those of Iran, do little to convince. Conflict of interests and the potential for hostilities between Iraq and Iran exist, whereas those between Iraq and Israel don't.

Additionally, nuclear weapons in the hands of Israelis have always been for

deterrence on the regional level. In Iranian hands, they will be used as a tool to coerce neighbors and deter outsiders. In any case, Iraq doesn't want to be in the crossfire between a crazy regime in Tehran and a wary Washington or Tel Aviv. We have had enough.

A Gloomy Future

The solution to this crisis is in Tehran's hands. If the Iranians decide to avert catastrophe, then they must come clean and let the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors do their job. By obstructing inspections, Iran appears to be hiding something fishy. Tehran needs

A clear choice must be made: the regime or the nuclear program, but not both.

to reverse course and honor the Non-Proliferation Treaty it signed and begin implementing the obligations the document entails.

Unfortunately, I don't think Iran will wise up and spare us yet another war in the Gulf. The signs are ominous and there is a striking resemblance between the way Tehran acts today and the way Baghdad did under Saddam. The missile tests, the gloating about military industrial breakthroughs, the work of Quds Forces and yes, talk of annihilating Israel sound all too familiar to me. As we say in Iraq, "I've seen this movie before."

Omar Al-Nidawi is a 2nd-year ISP concentrator. Check out his award-winning blog at <http://iraqthetmodel.blogspot.com/>.



Elections and SIPA

Getting David to Vote

Continued from Page 1

sure every Obama supporter in the area had made it to the polls. For the last three days, after making the 11-hour drive from New York City, our cadre of eight current and former SIPA students and several other New Yorkers had relentlessly pounded the pavement in Lancaster and other towns in southeast Fairfield County, Ohio — a former Republican stronghold — to canvass for the Democratic candidate for president. With the help of local organizers, we had knocked on thousands of doors. We talked to 92-year-old matriarchs, 18-year-old high school students, young parents and recent retirees. We walked through subdivisions with seas of McCain-Palin lawn signs, trying to motivate islands

The 78-year-old Ohioan loved Obama. “I’m just a-waitin’ on the results, sittin’ on pins and needles.”

of hesitant Obama supporters. On the Appalachian fringes of the county, we searched for Obama voters on dirt roads that wound through coves where confederate flags hung in the windows of single-wide trailers.

It was a weekend of not turning back, of going the extra step to approach the places most unlikely to house Obama supporters.

To be sure, there were disappointments. There was the woman who told Matteen she “just can’t trust a Muslim.” There were the provocateurs who came by the campaign headquarters the night before the election and hurled racist slurs.

But more than anything, there were the rewarding moments that showed Obama had real support, in a town where everyone goes to church and the population is 97.4 percent white. There was the young farmer on a rural route who had a giant Obama sign in his yard, and gave an encouraging thumbs up from the seat of his tractor. Or the woman with a country drawl who hadn’t voted in 20 years, but said this time she was going to the polls for Obama. Or the elderly woman I called on Tuesday evening to check that she had voted. She had.

“I’m just so excited about Obama,” she said. “I’m just a-waitin’ on the results, sittin’ on pins and needles.”

Those interactions spurred us on to make sure that every Obama vote in town was cast.

So rather than accepting defeat as we waited outside David’s silent apartment, we tried one last tactic.

“Hey David!” Matteen yelled, with the familiarity of a long-time friend.

There was a pause, and a noise deep within the house. Finally, a reluctant response.

“Yup...”

“Come on, bud, we’re here to take you to the polls,” Matteen shouted. “You only got a couple minutes left to vote.”

Soon David shuffled out with a sheepish look on his face. A tall fellow with braces, he wore sweats and white plastic slippers.

“Ah, OK. Let’s go, man.”

We careened to his polling place, and convinced the poll workers to hold the door open for one last voter — it was 7:29.

When he was finished, David grinned and gave me a firm handshake. It was the first time he ever voted.

It was only one vote, but it was a moment that epitomized the grass-roots basis of Obama’s campaign. Thousands of volunteers throughout Fairfield County, the state of Ohio and beyond had made similar efforts again and again. One and two voters at a time, they had turned Lancaster into a battleground. They won Ohio, and they won America.

So as a mix of local and out-of-state volunteers at a Lancaster sports bar watched the first black President of the United States take the stage on the night of November 4, 2008, tears flowed freely and glasses were raised because, as Obama said, we were the ones who had put him there.

“Above all, I will never forget who this victory truly belongs to — it belongs to you,” Obama said at Grant Park,” Obama said at Grant Park in Chicago.

For once, from Lancaster to Los Angeles, from Albuquerque to Albany, we felt that there really was one America.

Eamon Kircher-Allen is an executive editor of Communiqué. This article originally appeared on his blog, www.thelongonedaddy.wordpress.com.

OMG! :-) Can u believe it?!

After the announcement of results on November 4, Obama supporters began sending each other spontaneous expressions of love via text message. Here are some sent to SIPA students.

“The city of Oakland is partying! People are cheering and honking everywhere. **Church bells rang.** It’s beautiful.”

- Marisa Traylor, 28, school teacher, Oakland, California, 19:32 PST.

“At the little bar by my house on Wilshire. ‘I can see clearly now the rain is gone’ is playing on repeat along with **2pac ‘Changes’**. I am part of a community **AS an American!**”

- Noah Kircher-Allen, 25, public relations specialist, Los Angeles, 19:45 PST.

“Holy crap, **I f---in love you!**”

- Anonymous SIPA student, sent to classmate, 22:18 EST.

“**I have a country** again.”

- Lawrence Foster, 67, orchestra conductor, American citizen, Nice, France, 4:07 GMT+1

“I’m so **elated**. This feeling has lasted all day. History in the making.”

- Will Bratz, 29, human resources manager, San Francisco, November 5.

-SIPA editors

Election ADD

Emmett Fitzgerald finds it hard to focus on school-work after basking in the glow of a historic day.

On Wednesday I went down into the bowels of Lehman Library, where there are no windows, no real light and no people. I went because I had no choice but to find a quiet place.

Above me, the corridors were full of the same rush, bustle and happy buzz that usually make me love coming into this building. All the deadlines, high ideals and hormones mixing in with the hum of laptops and the smells of coffee, perfume and newly-bought books.

But on Wednesday, I had to get away and bury myself downstairs, alone. To think about and to soak in the day. I asked myself, how can today look the same as any other day upstairs in the halls of SIPA? How can people be talking of weekend plans and papers due?

On Wednesday I couldn’t go to class and listen to a cynic warn me about chemical and biological warfare. I had no interest in my class on Iran’s nuclear plans. Soon I’ll be ready again to pick up my books and my SIPA life — ready to learn more and prepare for all the work that needs to be done — to re-engage with all the reasons that made me want to come to SIPA in the first place. But not on Wednesday.

How many times do you experience world events that you will always remember? Moments that I will describe to my future grandchildren?

All around me, people were hurrying to classes, worried about their assignments—the worries that I normally share. And in the coming days, I know that I will get back into it too. But on Wednesday, all I could do was watch and re-watch the news. I watched footage of the jubilant crowds at the moment that the election was called for Obama and I re-lived again and again that moment from the previous night. I re-watched his acceptance speech. Poor fool that I am, I even re-watched the Will.i.am video of Yes We Can.

I did all this in my solitary cocoon because I didn’t want to move on from this moment. I didn’t want to re-engage with real life.

In the future I will regain my composure and sense of judgment. One day I will be able to look back on the realities, the mistakes and disharmony of the inevitably flawed Obama administration. I’ll be able to see and judge its imperfections. But in these first days none of that matters. Imperfections are not what I see. For these precious few days, I only see the symbolic importance of this election.

And it strikes me that these are the last few moments we have to see these events through a similar lens to that of a future historian. From today’s vantage point, when Obama’s presidency is nothing but an idea, we get some picture of how these events will be categorized by scholars.

From history’s long remove the bumps and wrong-turns which will loom large as we live moment to moment will smooth themselves out. Only the broad strokes and bold statements will be seen. Only the great moments and the darkest hours assert themselves. So when reading history books about the benighted days of September seven years ago, old and wise eyes will skip pages, leaping in seconds over long years of darkness to a day when Americans listened to their better angels. When they buried fears and suspicions and reached for a common future. Brighter. Better. All of it fueled by hope.

There will be other days to talk about the iconography, the style, the flawless campaign, the perfect political storm of events at Obama’s back. Let the talking heads knock all those ideas about, and I’ll join them. But not just yet.

For a few fleeting days we get to see the long view. We can see what the history books will say. Before we once again start dredging through the tawdry partisan realities of day to day politics, let’s take a breath.

Because these moments are the last opportunity to see the true significance of a turning point in the history of this country and how it is viewed here and abroad. These precious few days offer a chance to think fondly of the children we hope to bring into the world one day, and the stories we will tell them. Stories of what can be achieved through the power of skillful oration, intellect and integrity. And yes, hope.

Emmett Fitzgerald, MIA 2nd year, is naïve enough to be happy

Sainath at SIPA: India Is Hurting Its Farmers

By Anya Schiffrin, IMC Acting Director

More than 166,000 Indian farmers committed suicide between 1997-2006 and the Indian government needs to do something about this crisis in agriculture, investigative journalist P. Sainath told Columbia students and faculty on Thursday.

Sainath, who is considered the foremost Indian journalist writing on rural development and conditions in farming areas, spoke at Columbia on his way back to University of California at Berkeley where he is a visiting professor this semester. Based in Bombay, Sainath works at the prestigious newspaper, The Hindu, and has won numerous awards for his hard-hitting coverage.

In a gripping one-hour talk, Sainath blamed the Indian government for turning over farming to major corporations. For decades, India's economy was relatively closed to foreign investment but this changed in the early nineties when it began to open up and pursue more neo-liberal policies.

Since then, Sainath said, subsidies for and investment in agriculture have been slashed, banks in rural areas have shut their branches and agricultural extension services have collapsed. Today, farmers buy seeds and fertilizer from multinational companies such as Monsanto and are forced to borrow money from rapacious money lenders who charge exorbitant interest. The quality of seeds has dropped and the cost of pesticides and fertilizer has risen. The results have been disastrous, Sainath said, adding that many farmers have simply left the land because they can no longer make a living from farming.

"The disruption to the fabric of the countryside is simply stunning" Sainath said.

He blasted the "moral bankruptcy of corporate owned media" saying that Indian media neglected this critical story and citing studies showing that both English and local language newspapers rarely cover rural areas. "Where we needed skeptical journalism, we got sycophants."

He urged the Indian government to pursue land reform, develop new seed types and to expand rural credit in order to help farmers survive. He said the tendency of farmers, in places like Kerala, to start growing cash crops such as vanilla is extremely risky as it exposes them to the volatilities of export markets.

Sainath's visit was organized by the Committee on Global Thought and International Media and Communications Concentration and sponsored by the newly-formed South Asia Students Association at SIPA. Some 60 people attended.

Anya Schiffrin is the Acting Director of the International Media and Communications Concentration.

Faces of SIPA: Linda Jones

By Eliza Bates

Photography: Crissie Ferrara

Editors' Note: Over the course of the semester Communiqué will publish a series of profiles of non-academic staff at SIPA. Have ideas for a good profile? Please email Crissie Ferrara at cmf2128@columbia.edu.

Linda Jones's face is the first you see when you walk into the Office of Student Affairs. We've all talked to her before, but most of us know very little about her beyond her role as the gatekeeper of OSA. We sat down with her on Thursday afternoon to find out more.

Q: How old are you?

A: Don't you know you never ask a woman her age?

Q: How long have you been working here?

A: January 3rd will make my eighth year.

Q: What's it like working in the same office as all the deans?

A: You know, they have never made me feel like they are above me. We work as a team. I think that this office is one of the best in the building. Every Thursday we have a staff meeting and that's why none of us can ever lose any weight, because someone always brings in something to eat!

Q: What changes for the better have you seen since you've been here?

A: One of the biggest improvements was moving from the 14th floor to the 6th floor in 2005. We're more accessible to students now. I love it down here. I have the best view.

Q: What changes for the worst have you seen?

A: Every year we get more and more students and there's just not enough space for everyone. That's why Manhattanville will be great. I won't be around in 2015 when we move there. I'll be out the door when I hit retirement in 2012, as

long as the economy gets better.

Q: What do you think of SIPA students? Tell us honestly.

A: The majority of SIPA students are great, but, like anywhere, we have some difficult ones, but we handle them the best we can.

Q: Are there a lot of whiners?

A: (Laughs) Yeah we have those.

Q: Can you give us an example of a totally ridiculous interaction with a SIPA student? What was the most annoying experience you've had with one?

A: One thing about SIPA students is that they don't adhere to deadlines. Everyone has got one excuse or another-- until missing deadlines becomes the norm. I mean if there is a serious issue, we can make an exception, but we have deadlines for a reason.

Q: How do you feel about having the first black president?

A: Due to the fact that I was around in the 60s, and I know what we went through as a people, having the first black president in my

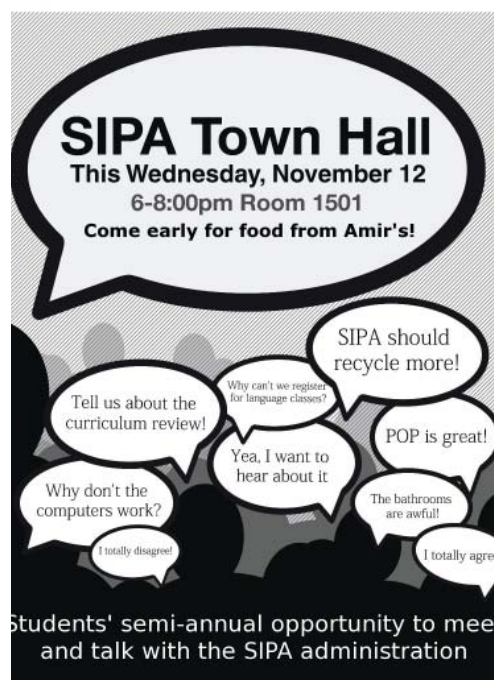
lifetime is really fantastic. People are going to put a lot of pressure on him, with the market the way it is. I can't tell you about my 401k--I'm basing everything in my retirement on this-- that's why I might have to work past 2012. But we've bounced back before. Not in my lifetime, I don't think we've ever seen an economic situation like this. But we have bounced back before.

Q: Where were you when the election results came in?

A: I was at home. At eleven o'clock I was like "oh, yeah!" My husband was there with me and he actually dozed off. But I woke him up and we stayed awake until 2AM watching everything.

Q: Do you read Communiqué?

A: I do. I like the fact that you're interviewing people [for this column]. You learn different things about people when you read about them. Oh, you can put this in the story: I'm a grandmother. I've got two children and three grandchildren. I have a little one--she's five. She keeps me alive.



Please join us for the SIPA Town Hall this Wednesday, November 12 at 6:00pm, Rm 1510.

Town Hall provides the opportunity for SIPA students to meet and converse constructively with SIPA administration about issues that affect us most.

New Dean

Continued from Page 1

new view on corporations, she says she missed being away from graduate students and faculty. When the opportunity at SIPA arose, she saw it as a chance to return to the dynamic, interactive environment academia provided. And SIPA represented "everything I was seeking in an academic program."

Having settled in, Simmons is ready to undertake her goals for the school. She plans to build on the programs that are currently in place and to "design, recalibrate and retool services that will enhance the students' achievement of their personal and professional goal." She also plans to identify additional funding sources to increase the number of fellowships available. Other goals

include supporting the faculty and building relations both within and outside the university.

An avid golfer who used to host the Dean's Cup at Harvard, she also plans to take students, particularly women, on golf outings for "the business opportunities and the relationships" they provide.

With her extensive career in both academia and business, her many talents from the sciences to golf, and the drive she shares with SIPA students, it is clear that Simmons will bring welcome change to her new position.

Shiori Okazaki is a dual-degree student at SIPA and the School of Journalism. She is from Tokyo.

Energy, Central Asia Are Key for Obama

By Kathryn Critchell

Three years ago, everyone was terrified when they heard I would be doing my 2 years of Peace Corps in... Turkmenistan. Closed off by its vast deserts, it's not all that well known and probably made for a frightening prospect for my parents. But it's not what it used to be. Turkmenistan, a country long forgotten, is now making headlines in the *Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*.

So why the sudden turnabout? It's all about the energy. From about 1991 to 2006, the repressive regime under then-President Niyazov, aka Turkmenbashi, pretty much prohibited any sort of external auditing of its natural gas fields. Nobody wanted to go anywhere near Turkmenbashi which left the door wide open for the Russians. This worked just fine for them, as they had exclusive rights over Turkmen gas.

With Turkmenbashi finally out of the picture (via heart attack in 2006), President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov opened the floodgates to foreign companies and governments. It was finally confirmed that Turkmenistan is home to the largest gas reserves in the Caucasus, which brought with it, the dubious prize of being the most highly coveted prize in a race between Europe and Russia.

Now with energy being a crucial national security issue, the Europeans are finally waking to their vulnerability un-

der the heavy thumb of the Russians. With nearly all but one of the pipeline systems controlled by Gazprom, the EU is aggressively (and desperately) pursuing other alternatives.

Nabucco, the key strategic pipeline system to be supplied mostly by Turkey and Azerbaijan, is touted as the alternative that would save Europe from the evil clutches of Russia. It is now barely hanging by a thread. The Turks are arguing with the EU over transit minutiae while the Azeris are dithering over a competing Russian counteroffer. (Russia's recent display with resource-rich and pro-Western neighbor, Georgia, also probably didn't help.)

And one gaping problem? Experts believe that Azeri gas from the Shah Deniz field (and also Turkey's contribution) will not be able to maintain long-term sustainability of Nabucco. That's right. This expensive, difficult pipeline will dry up if other countries are not brought into the fold, which makes Turkmenistan that much more necessary.

On the part of the Europeans, they need to keep at it...aggressively. EU Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs is kicking off a round of meetings this month to smooth over problems and hopes to do everything possible to get an agreement signed and locked in by January 2009. And he has already publicly confirmed his intentions to bring Turkmenistan into the fold at the ear-

liest convenience—finally acknowledging the critical importance of its gas reserves.

These looming problems aren't just an EU thing. It would be utterly naïve for the U.S. to simply brush this off as a European problem. If there wasn't enough for President-elect Obama to deal with, a resurgent Russia has decided to end its hibernation with an incredibly cranky and brutal display of its ambitions. Having Russia 2.0 pulling Europe's puppet strings while dangling energy carrots will put the U.S. in a dangerously defensive position.

Obama must construct a proactive, supportive policy towards these Central Asian countries. They really are our last physical buffer against Russia. For one thing, Obama could spend some honeymoon time smoothing over frazzled nerves in the region. He certainly doesn't need to go so far as to promise military action per se, but showing up (in person) and continuing gestures of support for Central Asian and Caucasus countries would have a huge psychological impact on finalizing these agreements. Ultimately, most of the heavy lifting will have to come from the EU. But reinforcing our Central Asia policy is critical and important cornerstone in continuing to contain Russia and protect Europe.

Kathryn Critchell, (MIA 2) works at the Harriman Institute

Morningside Munchies

When the Parents are in Town

By Christian Kim

BABBO, 110 Waverly Place (6th Ave), 212-777-0303

Primo piatto: "Mint Love Letters"—envelope-shaped ravioli filled with mint and sweet pea pesto, merguez sausage, tomato, and chili flakes. Mint is a distant cousin of basil and works beautifully in this delicate dish. Secondo Piatto: Pork Arista—half-inch thick slices of pork loin roasted whole over a bed of onions and sage (the onions and sage later pureed with milk as base sauce), served medium with a fennel salad and anchovy vinaigrette. "Arista" means "best" in Italian, and it certainly was—and I'm not even a huge fan of the pig. But Mario is, and that's what counts. I struggled mightily over my dish choice, so much I enlisted the opinion of not just the waiter, but the maitre d'. I asked them, "Look, what should I order to taste what Batali is all about?" Apparently, the Arista was a special and specials are offered only on Sundays, so that sold me. The first bite was so good, I almost cried and thought to myself, "Now this is what food is capable of." If you have the means, you certainly must go to Babbo, Mario's labor of love.

THE MERMAID INN, 568 Amsterdam Ave. (88th St.), 212-799-7400 (another location in East Village)

My friend tells me this type of dressed-up New England fisherman food was quite fashionable a decade ago, but has since lost some of its luster. No matter. I am a fan of fresh seafood, and in fact, I generally don't order seafood unless I'm at a restaurant of some quality (because of food poisoning concerns), and I am willing to pay more for it so long as it's done well. Fried clams, a seared calamari salad with feta, mushrooms and frisee, and their famous lobster sandwich with Old Bay-seasoned fries. The lobster is prepared like tuna salad with a mayonnaise-based sauce. In combination with a well-buttered brioche bun and the fries (excellent with Old Bay)...well, it was a bit too heavy for summer. I'll have to go for clam chowder when the weather gets a little cooler. If you like raw seafood (e.g., oysters), this might be the closest, safest place to get it.

Editors' Event Picks

We won't be missing these. Neither should you!

Monday, November 10

Six Hundred Years of Religious Conflict and Accommodation in India

A conference looking at India's tradition of social peace and tolerance in public life, a counterexample to the assumption that a successful democracy depends on a decline in religious belief.

10:00am - 1:00pm IAB 707

Sponsored by the Center for Study of Democracy, Tolerance and Religion

Tuesday, November 11

Domestic Surveillance: Critical Issues for National Security and Civil Liberties, with Dr. Abraham Wagner, Senior Research Fellow, Center for Advanced Studies on Terrorism (CAST), and Research Scholar, Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies.

12:10-2:00pm, IAB 1302

Wednesday, November 12

Is China As Strong As It Seems?

With Rob Gifford, London Bureau Chief, National Public Radio

12:00-1:30pm, IAB 918

Suicide Bombers: A Path to Paradise, with Dr. Anat Berko, and Ms. Farhana Ali

12:10-2:00pm, IAB 1501

Thursday, November 13

Current China Policy Issues, with Thomas J. Christensen, Professor of Politics and International Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University.

12:15-2:00pm, IAB 1512

Round Table: Rethinking Secularism—Refining the Concepts of Public Religions, Principled Distance and the Twin Tolerations with José Casanova, Rajeev Bhargava, and Alfred Stepan

4:30-6:30pm, IAB 802

COMMUNIQUÉ

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF
EAMON KIRCHER-ALLEN
LEEHE SKULER

SIPA NEWS EDITORS
ELIZA BATES
SARA SCHONHARDT

OPINION EDITORS
SARAH KIM
ALEXA WINNIK

WORLD AFFAIRS EDITORS
TODD BOOKMAN
NICOLE FOSTER

PHOTOGRAPHER
CRISSIE FERRARA

INCOMMUNICADO EDITOR
CHARLES LIM

CARTOONIST
CHIDO

STAFF WRITERS
CHRIS THURLOW
SARAH BUICK
CHRISTIAN KIM

CONTRIBUTORS
KATHRYN CRITCHELL
ANYA SCHIFFRIN
SHIORI OKAZAKI
EMMETT FITZGERALD

Communiqué is the student-run newspaper of Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs. The editors are responsible for its content.

COMMUNIQUE@COLUMBIA.EDU

With Attack on Syria, Bush Leaves One More Mess for Obama

By Eamon Kircher-Allen

On October 24, American commandos snuck into Syria and attacked the village of Sukkariyeh near the Iraqi border, killing eight civilians. (That description has been confirmed by the Syrians; the Americans have claimed success in killing a smuggler of militants into Iraq.)

We should be extremely concerned about this as Americans. The United States is acting as an incredibly retrogressive force in the region in terms of peace. France and other European countries have been reaching out to Syria, while we have been maintaining our ridiculous stand-off, despite numerous indications that the Syrians are willing to reach out to us. Whatever its problems, Bashar al-Assad does not have an isolationist regime, and we could have made Syria into a partner for peace and security in Iraq and in Israel/Palestine.

But instead we've withdrawn our ambassador (2005), accused Syria of allowing foreign fighters into Iraq (oh right, so they could contribute to their own massive refugee problem!), pointed the finger at them for every single thing that has gone wrong in Lebanon since Rafiq Hariri's assassination, accused them of being a dictatorship when it suited us and asked them to be more of a dictatorship when it didn't. We've actually encouraged Syria's worst practices by dropping off rendition-ed prisoners there with the expectation that they would be tortured.

At this point, we should be thanking Syria, especially the Syrian people, not attacking them. With more than 1 million Iraqi refugees, Syria has footed the bill for our stupid war.

And the United States is actually lagging behind Syria's sworn enemy, Israel, in improving things in the region. The U.S. reportedly urged Israel to attack Syria in addition to Lebanon in 2006 (they wisely refused). This year, Syria and Israel have made important moves

toward peace, talking indirectly under Turkish auspices. Washington has all but discouraged the talks, and certainly has done nothing to promote them.

The Bush administration has forged ahead with its idiotic good-versus-evil, non-realist foreign policy. Now Bush has made this devastating final salvo (at least, I hope it's final), which is going to leave President Obama with a mess to clean up.

Let's hope that Syria can figure out how to forgive us by the time we have a more intelligent president and cabinet. Otherwise we will never fulfill our potential as a broker of peace in the Middle East.

Also extremely worrying is the legal basis that we are citing as an excuse for this. The New York Times writes:

"But administration officials said Monday that the strikes in Pakistan and Syria were carried out on the basis of a legal argument that has been refined in recent months to justify strikes by troops and by rockets at militants in countries with whom the United States is not at war."

To me, that equals all-out war (in the form of police action) any time, anywhere that we want. The world is our ghetto and we treat it however we want, apparently.

I wonder how far back our relations with Syria have been set. High profile activists have been working step-by-step for years, and have seen painstaking progress. I guess as long as W is in power it doesn't make a damn bit of difference. Have our hopes for an evolution to peace been completely dashed?

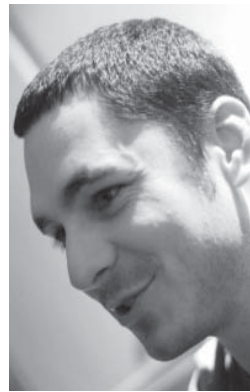
I can't wait for the new White House.

Eamon Kircher-Allen is an executive editor of Communiqué. He lived in Syria in 2005 and 2006, where he worked for the United Nations. This article originally appeared on Themorningsidepost.com, the SIPA blog.

A Well-Oiled Campaign

By Chris Thurlow

Chris Thurlow (MPA 2) is Communiqué's resident campaign writer and a former finance director for the Democratic party



After spending the four days before the election in an Obama field office in Springfield, Ohio, I return to New York thoroughly impressed. For the past few cycles, Republicans have typically won close races due to their superior Get Out The Vote operations. Their strategy was simple. Go to college campuses and find the most dedicated and capable members of the College Republicans. Train them to run a field office. Every election, fly them around the country to strategic locations and have them set up shop with local Republican groups. At its heyday, this operation was worth as much as 4% of the total vote in any given election. In 2004, Kerry outperformed his target for voter turnout needed for victory in Ohio by 2 points, but still lost by 9 votes per precinct because the GOP outperformed their targets by a greater margin. That was just one example of how Republicans kept winning, election after election, in tied races all over the country.

Turning out the vote has been traditionally easier for Republicans because of the demographic advantage they enjoy. Republicans tend to be wealthier, which means they are easier to get in touch with. Information about them is more reliable because they move less, allowing for continuity in registration. By contrast, getting to Democratic voters is more difficult because they often don't live at the houses where they are registered, or live in dangerous and less accessible areas. While the republican vote operation could largely rely on phone calls, be it person-to-person or from a robocall machine, a democratic ground game was volunteer intensive, needing door-to-door canvassers to knock on doors in potentially unsafe neighborhoods. I went canvassing in such a neighborhood this week and saw a number of people smoking weed on their porch during the middle of the day on a Monday. These are the voters that the Democratic Party needs to win consistently, but consistent voters they are not.

While this dynamic didn't change this year, a perfect storm allowed Obama to capitalize to the fullest extent on some very favorable conditions. Republicans were disillusioned with the last 8 years. President-elect Obama is a generational candidate who served as a catalyst to not only recruit dedicated volunteers, but also to retain them. And third, he had nearly ¾ of a billion dollars to spend. Add up the total amount that every democratic candidate spent in the general election since John Kennedy in 1960, and Obama still had more. In other

words, Barack Obama could have funded every single democratic presidential general election campaign since the color TV was invented and still have some left over.

As in every other business, campaigns make decisions on what to spend money on and what they can't afford. If you make a big TV ad buy, that's less money for direct mail. If you spend a lot on direct mail, that means less staff. Obama didn't have to make those decisions. He opened offices all over the country. He had the most sophisticated data targeting operation that's ever been invented. If you were a Latino household and you cared about healthcare, you got a glossy mail piece in Spanish with his healthcare proposal. If you were a suburban white gun-owner, you also got a glossy mailer – but one promoting Obama's expertise in constitutional law. How did he get that data on individual voters? The existing platform the party uses – the voter activation network – is often horribly unreliable. It assigns race based on your last name or if you live in an area that is minority concentrated. But for the campaign of the century, that wasn't good enough. So, Obama paid to have people on the ground to knock on millions of doors and correct it. He was on TV in states that he wasn't going to win – just because he could. The decision to spend close to \$2 million on a late TV buy in Arizona served no other purpose than to be a bemusing intimidation tactic. I was in a city of 70,000 people that traditionally votes Republican – not a place one would normally find an Obama office - but he had one along with 8 paid staff. They all got laptops. And when the election was over last night, they were told they could keep those laptops.

My friends are excited that they got new laptops, as I am that I finally have a president who I care to see on TV for the next 4 years. But my trip to southwest Ohio was very sobering. The housing crisis had always been an abstract concept for me, but it's very apparent there, and presumably in many other places as well. Almost entire neighborhoods are vacant, or in complete disrepair. I saw a beautiful Victorian house on a corner in a leafy street that was on sale for \$15,000. The unemployment rate is almost double digits. Obama ran a brilliant and sophisticated campaign to get elected, and in the process he created lofty expectations. Politicians who run on optimism are prone to such caveats. The task is now to address these realities directly, or the après glow victory will soon become a distant memory.



The Campaign Trail: Obama volunteers and SIPA students Eliza Bates (third from left) and Cara Zwerling (far right) celebrated on the night of the election with Michael B. Coleman, the mayor of Columbus, Ohio. Zwerling and Bates, who is a Communiqué editor, organized the Obama volunteers from SIPA who traveled to Ohio last week.

Faculty Shuffle

Communique takes a look at the tunes that turn on your professors' intellects.

Anna Della Valle

1. Francesco De Gregori "Buona Notte Fiorellino"
2. Fabrizio De Andre' "Marinella"
3. Duke Ellington "Don't Get Around Much (cover by Rod Stewart)"
4. Eric Clapton "Lay Down Sally", "Wonderful Tonight"
5. Fiona Apple "Extraordinary Machine"
6. Glenn Gould "Bach's Goldberg Variations"

More recently, her daughter (who is very hip and 23) has her listening to:

My Bloody Valentine

TV on the Radio

Pavement

Cat Power

Anna Della Valle teaches the full-year sequence in economics for international affairs in the MIA program. She is also an adjunct professor in the economics department of New York University where she teaches Industrial Organization.



The Most Awkward Date

By Anderson Franklin Jacobs

If there's one thing I'm never going to get used to is the post-"random drunken, licking tonsil, suckin face, 'what's your name again?', 'you're, like so hot', 'I'm like so drunk right now', 'let's get some Shake Shack!' hook-up-sober date that happens every so often when you are blessed with the facilities to correctly ask for, type in and redial a number that has about a 59% chance of being fake.

Not only are the odds of this actually happening pretty low already but it actually requires the other person to remember you, your number and the fact that you had a mildly tolerable time together.

But it actually happens. And every time, from the first acknowledged glance, if you even remember what she looks like, to the awkward gestures of affection that came so easily in your "happier" state, it's something I vow every time to stop but always seem to fuck up.

I mean, let's take the greeting. It doesn't matter that you were practically eating face for hours just a couple of days ago. Do you swoop in for a kiss? A hug? A mild, but firm pat on the back followed by an oh-so-sensual circular motion?

Then there are the awkward conversations about the one event that ties you together: the hook-up.

What if you don't remember a single detail about that night except for the fact that she wore a scarf? You can't just come out and reveal that. You're probably just happy she told you to that she was

going to be wearing a green sweater without having to ask.

But what if the night was one of the most awe-inspiring, special and joyful-tear inducing nights of your life? Whoa there lover boy! Nothing and I mean nothing is more awkward than hearing about how wonderful an event was in someone's life, especially because of the fact that you were a part of it, and not remembering a single detail about it. You can do your best to pretend, but a little part of you dies inside ever so slowly.

If you can get through the awkward greeting and the painful recounting of the previous night's events, you're almost home free and hopefully clothes free once again.

The last hurdle is the initiation of the post hook-up hook-up. How much of the awkwardness of the night was due to just awkwardness or has the cold hand of "what the hell did I just get myself into?" begun to creep up the backside of your neck, or theirs for that matter? Knowing this, how you gonna swoop in for the kill or hope that they don't?

Once you wade through this potential minefield, you've pretty much accomplished something that has destroyed the best of men. Give yourself a pat on the back you rascal!

Anderson Franklin Jacobs is a 1st Year PEPM student originally from the great state of Colorado. He encourages you to write him at Andersonfranklinjacobs@gmail.com with your comments.

Musicians on the G-Money Train

In this three-part series, we talk to the musicians that we hear everyday

By Charles Lim

Name: Freedom Tickler

Alias: Meriam and Cody

Where found: Metropolitan Ave./Grand St. stop along the G Train in Brooklyn.

How often do you play? 2-3 times a week; 3-5 hours at a time.

How much do you make a day on average? About \$25 a day.

When did you start doing this and why? We started doing this over the summer mainly to have enough to eat and to do laundry. We used to play mainly for the money and for the practice but now we could not imagine not doing this. It's the best interaction we've had with the city.

Is there a reason this is your favorite spot? Cause it's not as loud as the other spots and it takes a while for the trains to come, so people are here for a while. The sound is pretty good. It gives us time to play more songs.

Have you seen a lot of changes in the city?

Meriam: Well, I used to work at two salons in the Lower East Side. The city is just changing in a way that I feel doesn't really pay homage to the spirit that made it such a popular place to be. Unfortunately, it's not the same fusion of art, music and fashion that it used to be. If you're different, you're not as celebrated as much anymore.

Would you consider yourself "starving artists"?

I feel like people have this cliché of starving artists, and we've definitely gone through periods where that cliché has become very real to us. But at the same time, we feel like we live in a day and age where people just buy things instead of achieving the enlightenment that you learn from the struggle of anything that matters to you that you pursue.

