It’s Time to Ditch the Superficial Crap

By Conrad Ebh

Opinion Editor

Just yesterday evening, President Bush set the stage for a conflict that may result in 100,000 thousand civilian deaths (UN estimates), may cost our country around $10 billion each month (according to Pentagon sources, as reported recently in the New York Times), and will set a historic precedent with his doctrine of pre-emptive military action.

Now, I’ll say that I’m not terribly supportive of Bush’s war plans, but let me assure you that this is not an anti-war article. Plenty of those on this campus—and I wouldn’t want to suggest something as radical as actual discussion on the moral and political aspects of war, anyway.

However, watching the chief executive unravel the cooly wrapped sweater of international diplomacy, I was struck by how the various elements of my life are of little importance relative to the lethal politics we read about in newspaper headlines. Our leaders teeter on the brink according to, but as we witness tomorrow’s history lessons on today’s CNN news-bites, we do the same thing every day, speaking in the same controlled, courteous tones and trying to ignore the fact that the world—as my not-so-nuanced peers would say—really sucks.

Some of you might not be convinced that the world is as bad as I see it, and I hope that I’m not so arrogant that I think I can convince you otherwise in 600 words. I would like to suggest, however, that the weight of this crisis can help us clarify our minds toward the critical issues in life: Nair for Men and Maxim magazine covers also make us look dumb and superficial. Along with the information on civil wars and food shortages, they tell us that we aren’t cool, sexy, or big enough.

So, I think that it’s time to eschew superficiality and reclaim the meaning in our lives. Every day, we wake up to a planet that has been dragged in the mud by previous generations, and now we hand it over to us like some kind of present. It makes sense that we would retreat into our shell of inward-looking worry. Now, the posterboy for the speak-properly movement is sending our friends and family members into a possible urban melee without demonstrating that our enemy represents a clear and present danger to American security.

Oh well. Who cares about war? While few individuals in our society use their freedom of expression to speak out, most of us (myself included) usually cash in our precious chips of liberty for golden silence and lives empty of direction.

Enough is enough. If we are indifferent to suffering of biblical proportions, so be it. But let’s not keep sitting on the fence with every issue. It’s about time that we—students, specifically—make a cynical, biting slogan. Make a cynical, biting comment at the next opportunity in class or in chapel. Tell a faculty member how you really feel about their class. Be militant or be friendly. Walk out of the pointless meeting and join a meeting about something that you care about. Remember that a good shot of honesty does wonders to dissipate the superficial and bring some meaning back into our lives.

Let’s buck the trend and bring some meaning back into our lives.

After he finds his way down from his soapbox, Conrad can be reached at erbh@emu.edu. He suggests Barry Manilow’s ‘Destruction’ to accompany this article.

Compiled by Linell Smith

On the Sidewalk:

“If you could pick one work of fiction to become true, what would you choose?”

“Star Wars or Lord of the Rings.” - Andy Hurst, senior

“Cinderella.” - Martha Sachs, junior

“Miss Frisbee and The Rats of NIMH.” - Duane Miller, senior

“Smyth of Wooton Major.” It’s about this guy that gets a fairy star in his birthday cake. It basically gives him access to the land of the fairies. - Thaddeus Hollingsworth, senior

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