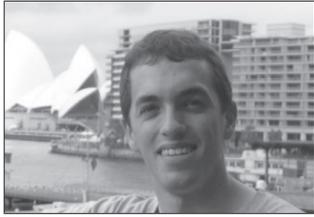


Decisions about new hall lack foresight

Let's talk about the Residence Life office for a minute.

Expected to house and feed a couple hundred college-age students (and all that that implies), they do a pretty good job. Generally speaking. Lately, though, Residence Life seems to have lost its edge. They've goofed this new dorm thing, and they goofed hard in three different ways.

First, Residence Life decided the new, unnamed dorm would be limited to upperclassmen. I'll be honest with you: One thing that strongly attracted me to Truman was the egalitarian lack of distinctions. If I wanted these sorts of housing policies, I would've applied to a lot more Ivy League schools than I did. Unlike a lot of universities, Truman allows freshmen to bring cars to campus. Most profs know your name and aren't above sacrificing 15 minutes of their day to help you understand something you don't. A lot of the Greeks aren't "too cool" to be seen partying with non-Greeks, which is another very important thing you don't see too often at other schools. We don't have an honors program to differentiate the mental elite from the rest of us. And, up until now, we let anyone live wherever they wanted. Sure, Centennial Hall is more or less the de facto upperclassmen hall, but that was by mutual choice, and there were still plenty of freshmen roaming the halls. By closing the doors of



Josh Fenton

Dorm X to anyone without a couple semesters of credit, we lose a piece of that social equality.

Residence Life also is charging a two grand premium to live in Dorm Brand New. It's no secret that living on campus is – even by the most conservative estimates – at least a thousand dollars more expensive than living off campus. It's true that living on campus isn't all bad, especially if you're on scholarship. Waking up and walking to class inside of five minutes, not cooking, the lack of bills – depending on your situation, the benefits are sometimes worth a little more money. Except that housing scholarships won't cover the new dorm (you'd have to pony up the two zero zero zero difference yourself), further separating campus into pseudo-haves and have-nots.

Let's say the egalitarian thing doesn't bother you, and I'll assume the spendy price tag really doesn't strike

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you as unfair. The way Residence Life chose to announce all this information should. It was all sent out in a densely worded e-mail, just before winter break. Most of Kirksville's off-campus housing for 2006-2007 was already closed up. There just aren't many options for those that planned on living in the new dorm.

Although this seems awfully sneaky and convenient and weasely, I can't believe it was deliberate. I have no doubt that the people at Residence Life are every bit as helpful and well-meaning as most every other employee at Truman. This whole hullabaloo does, however, seem to show pretty pathetic forethought for a school that tells its students "excellence is no accident."

Josh Fenton is a senior communication major from Troutdale, Ore.

Alito episode speaks volumes about sorry state of hearings

Did anyone watch the Alito confirmation hearings two weeks ago?

I know the answer is probably "no." With confirmation looking like a sure thing almost from the beginning, one of my friends noted, "It would be like watching a race you already know the winner of." Admittedly, I only watched it because I don't have cable at home and so I was left to choose between the hearings and "Reading Rainbow."

The confirmation hearings to decide who will be on the Supreme Court are probably one of the most important exercises in the U.S. government. To prepare, nominees undergo a grueling series of practice hearings known as "murderboards." This name belies just how seriously these hearings are taken by the participants – after all, a lifetime appointment is at stake. The Supreme Court is an equal partner in the governing of the United States – remember the triangle diagram from high school government class? According to the landmark Supreme Court decision *Marbury v. Madison*, "It is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is."

The Court interprets the Constitution and makes key decisions in terms of citizens' rights. These decisions have led to integrated schools, and the Court also has determined it is protected speech to undertake such actions as burning a flag. The gravity of the decisions the Court hands down and the implications of those



Rachael Spavone

decisions make it important that we appoint quality people to the court. And I am not talking about party affiliation (although who wants any crazy radical legislating from the bench?). I simply am talking about making sure the most qualified, knowledgeable people get on the bench.

But instead of deciding the qualifications of nominees in the chambers of the Senate, how the nominees will rule on a narrow range of issues quickly is decided in the court of public opinion. It is absolutely disgusting to me just how farcical these hearings have become. The hearings are dominated by grandstanding politicians apologizing for the behavior of the other party or justifying their own outlandish behavior. Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) had this to say during his allotted time for questioning Alito:

"So it's apparent you're going into this because you love your country. You want to serve it. And anybody who knows you knows that. And I know

“Even barring actual substantial questions about constitutional law, the proceedings could be at the very least used to educate Americans about the role of the Court.”

you." What a waste of time. Questions like, "If you were a tree, what type of tree would you be?" and, "What is your favorite color?" would be more appropriate. Even barring actual substantial questions about constitutional law, the proceedings could be at the very least used to educate Americans about the role of the Court.

These hearings are a resource that isn't being used properly by anyone. Not by the nominee, whose main job is to play a cat-and-mouse game, efficiently ducking hardball questions from the Senators. Not by the senators who use their time to give ideological sermons from the bench and most definitely not by the public which for the most part doesn't watch. But in a crowd like this, who can blame them?

Rachael Spavone is a senior political science major from Springfield, Ill.

Makeover show could have an adverse effect on younger viewers

I watched "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" for the second time yesterday. And it disgusted me more than the one I watched the first time.

The first time I watched it, my friend Mandy tearfully exclaimed, "This show makes me cry all the time."

I waited. Was she going to say something along the lines of how the show made her cry because she was jealous that random people got picked to have beautiful houses?

No answer. If Mandy got more emotional as we watched the show yesterday, I sat there – angry, bitter and every bit vocal about the wrong message the show sent to people everywhere.

"What has he done to deserve this?" I said. "At least participants in 'Survivor' compete for the prize, but this man has done nothing."

"He's looking after his dead sister's children," Mandy responded, certain that it was a good enough reason for his dump of a house to be converted into a mansion complete with a mini-castle.

"Like I wouldn't look after my dead sister's children," I screamed.

"I would feel sorry for them if you did, and I am never, never watching this show with you again," she let me know.

Fine, Mandy and I might never watch the show together again, but, heck, I still have a column to write.

"Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" has been a much-watched show for some time now. And it's also the



Prajwal Sharma

one show that has made more people cry than I care to count.

"It makes you realize that a miracle is possible," people say. "It reaffirms your faith in humanity."

OK, maybe building the house of a random single dad is enough to make people bawl, but I refuse to give in.

First, just what do the children whose house is being given an extreme makeover learn from this? Second, what do other kids watching the show learn from it?

That the world is a nice place – full of lovely good Samaritans – to live in? That no matter how poor you are, you just might be lucky and have a crew come give your house a makeover? That maybe hard work is not so important after all? That you might be ABC's chosen one – so what if you have been poor all your life and done nothing about it?

Given how much the show focuses on the trials and tribulations young kids living in ugly houses face, I am concerned that it reaches and touches more kids and teenagers than we assume it does.

“It's time we stopped looking at the smaller picture – a picture that stealthily prompts us to embrace the world of unrealistic expectations and magic wands.”

And what a cute fairy-tale message of fluffy bedrooms and mini-castles it gives.

Wow! Maybe you don't need money to have a great house after all. If you look after your dead sister's kids, you easily could be a potential candidate. Rent a part of the gorgeous mansion out, and you could live luxuriously for the rest of your life.

Reality shows always have received a lot of brunt from all quarters, but "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition" interestingly has gotten a lot of praise for being a reality show with a difference.

It's time we realize just how harmful the show could be and just what wrong messages it disseminates to its viewers. It's time we stopped looking at the smaller picture – a picture that stealthily prompts us to embrace the world of unrealistic expectations and magic wands.

Prajwal Sharma is a junior communication major from Gangtok, Sikkim.

Around the Quad

This week's question: "Are you sticking with your New Year's resolution?"



Clement Warr
sophomore

"I actually didn't make one."



Deana Judah
senior

"I didn't form a New Year's resolution, but I have a set of ongoing goals. For the second week of school, I would say, 'so far, so good!'"



Megan Arns
junior

"I am. I have an exercise plan now."



Chris Peterson
junior

"Well, to be honest, I didn't make a New Year's resolution in general, but this school year I'm paying attention to my health."

Wartime reporting debate is complex

Journalism is dangerous work, especially during wartime.

Charged with the imperative task of gathering and disseminating the most objective information about the U.S. occupation of Iraq, reporters in the field struggle every day to survive. Knowing their lives are in danger, journalists basically have two options: to go it alone or to embed themselves with certain factions of the U.S. military.

The buzzword "embedded" has sparked much debate concerning the accuracy of stories coming from Iraq. Embedded journalists are constantly with the U.S. military, relying on military personnel for protection and information. On one hand, reporters can experience and report the activities of the war with relative safety. On the other hand, reporters are allied so closely with U.S. forces that the objectivity of the news is potentially compromised. After all, how could you ever write a negative word about those to whom you entrust your life on a daily basis?

I will not attempt to settle the debate, even if doing so were possible. I will say that it is absolutely necessary for reporters to obtain and share objective information about the single-most important government function – war. If a free press is ever needed as a check on government power, it is during wartime.

Perhaps a look at a few recent developments and statistics concerning journalists in Iraq will help contextualize the debate. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), since full-scale combat began in Iraq in March 2003, 60 journalists have been killed on duty, an additional 23 media support workers have been killed and 36 journalists have been abducted.

Jill Carroll of The Christian Science Monitor, the center of much media attention lately, is included in this abduction statistic. Carroll, a freelance reporter who was not embedded with the military, was abducted Jan. 7 and held for political ransom. On Jan. 17, her captors said the United States had three days to free all Iraqi women prisoners in U.S. military custody. As stated in the lyrics on the latest Scott McClellan record, "The United States does not negotiate with terrorists." As of this writing, nothing more has been heard about Carroll's condition.

A more fortunate female journalist in Iraq, Jackie Spinner, was almost captured outside Abu Ghraib prison in June 2004. However, the U.S. Marines accompanying Spinner thwarted the attempt. Her book "Tell Them I Didn't Cry," which describes her experience



Chris Matthews

“Knowing their lives are in danger, journalists basically have two options: to go it alone or to embed themselves with certain factions of the U.S. military.”

reporting in Iraq for the Washington Post, is set to be released Feb. 1.

This sword is double-edged, however. The U.S. military also captures journalists in Iraq. On Sunday, the U.S. military finally freed Samir Mohammed Noor, a Reuters journalist who was detained for nearly eight months without any charge of a crime.

According to Reuters, "Noor was the third journalist working for Reuters to be freed from military custody after two others were released a week ago. At least two journalists for other international media organizations are still being held."

Noor was taken from his Tal Afar home and sent to Abu Ghraib prison. The U.S. government never said Noor had committed a crime nor relayed any evidence that would cause them to speculate he had.

In an article for the CPJ, Ann Cooper said, "Open-ended and unsubstantiated detentions of journalists in Iraq have undermined the ability of the press to report on the conflict. [CPJ] has documented seven cases in 2005 alone in which reporters, photographers and camera operators were detained by U.S. forces for prolonged periods without charge or the disclosure of any supporting evidence."

These statistics and selected stories about the dangers of being a wartime journalist illustrate the complexity of the debate concerning embedded reporters. As a democratic public, we have a strong need for journalists to convey an accurate, objective portrait of our government's war. But at what cost?

Chris Matthews is a junior communication major from St. Joseph, Mo.