

# AFTERdark deceives students to preach Gospel



Phil Jarrett

This column is about honesty and candidness. What about honesty and candidness, you ask? Keep reading. I'll tell you all about it.

I am going to give you an opinions piece the likes of which you have neither seen before nor dreamt could be real. It is designed to speak to the heart of the Truman population in the most gripping way possible.

Are you confused yet? I am, also, because I still have not told you why I am writing this particular column.

For weeks now, I have been bombarded by online invitations, personal messages, posters and chalkings for an event called AFTERdark. I was in the dark about what the event actually was. The invitations, from individuals I do not

know, only told me when and where the event was. Students in my classes wore T-shirts asking, "What is AFTERdark?" However, they were not from a support group of befuddled Truman students. The back of the T-shirt read, "You should probably find out."

What?

I took the T-shirt as a challenge and inspected one of the many posters for the event on campus. Apparently, AFTERdark is "the campus event of the year" involving two people: Dave Barnes, a recording artist, and Joe White, who makes compelling drama. Who sponsored the event still was a mystery. Not satisfied, I visited the event's Web site, tantalizingly named [whatsafterdark.com](http://whatsafterdark.com). Here's what I found, according to the Web site:

"AFTERdark is a dynamic and highly energetic one-night event specifically designed to relate to today's college students. This event will convey the most compelling story in our world today in a manner that translates perfectly into a language and culture that is relevant to college students from coast to coast."

Again, what?

Further exploration on the Web site led to the discovery of the recording artist's Web site. The music was not half-bad. But who is White? The Web site tagged him as "one of the countries [sic] most compelling and dynamic speakers." It also mentioned that he was the president of Kanakuk Kamps. That means nothing to most individuals, but I know from my involvement with churches that this is a popular set of Christian summer camps. In short, White is a preacher, or at least a dramatist with an evangelical message. His message at tonight's event will be about Christianity, thus making AFTERdark a theatrical sermon preceded by a concert. The sponsors of the event, Campus Christian Fellowship and K-Life, have cleverly marketed this event without any mention of Christianity so as to not be off-putting. So what is AFTERdark? Deceitful.

Now would be a good time to clarify that I am not anti-Christian, nor am I looking for an excuse to get upset about Christianity. White is going to tell

students about the Gospel while building a cross on the Quad, which actually sounds kind of interesting. I have no gripe about evangelism in general. However, I do take issue with consciously misleading students into an event they think is a free concert. I would feel the same about a free haunted house that had a Wiccan service at the end — tricked and slightly freaked out.

The motivation behind the event is simple: bring kids to Jesus. At no point is this information being conveyed to students. Is withholding information unethical? That is up for debate. However, I steal one look at AFTERdark T-shirts, and I have no trouble spying intentional ambiguity. This is slightly ironic coming from a religion that taught me a partial truth is as good as a lie. Still, hiding one's motivations is a good form of marketing. I would ascribe that kind of tactic to online pop-ups telling me I have won a free iPod, not organizations affiliated with Jesus Christ.

I think AFTERdark can serve to teach all campus ministries the impor-

ance of candidness. Those not already pre-disposed to religion probably will not respond warmly to tonight's spontaneous sermon. In my mind, the most effective means for reaching out to such individuals is to simply befriend them — the real them — before you change their minds. Afterward, you can feel free to share your point of view. For those who still prefer to address mass audiences: Just tell us that you are preaching to us out of care and compassion. We might not believe you, but it will be less scandalous than the back-door approach.

I encourage students who were considering attending tonight's event to go. You might learn something or, at the very least, have a good time. Thankfully, you now have answers to the seemingly unanswerable question, "What is AFTERdark?"

*Phil Jarrett is a senior communication and philosophy and religion major from Chesterfield, Mo.*

## Around the Quad

**This week's question:**  
"What issue will drive your vote in the 2008 election?"



"Being successful in Iraq and preventing nationalized health care."

John Shikles  
Freshman



"Bringing the troops home and finishing what we started."

Melinda Bross  
Freshman



"My mom works in a doctor's office, so I hear a lot on both sides — so I think health care will be big for me."

Lindsey Williams  
Freshman



"More level-headed foreign policy."

David Mohl  
Junior

# Breaking out of insulated study abroad life takes a little bravery



Charlotte Keenan

For about two weeks last summer I was a tourist. It didn't bother me — I was part of a tour group, after all. For my fall semester in Seville, Spain, I was hoping for something a little different. I wanted to interact somewhat naturally with the Sevillian community.

I don't think I'm unique in that desire. Obviously, it's impossible to assimilate into a culture within a matter of months, but having a local friend or two would be nice, not to mention helpful.

However, fitting in at all, especially as an American, is tricky.

My house mother, Reme, says all Americans in Seville look like tourists, whether they're sight-seeing or actually students. And I know what she means.

Obviously, we don't look Spanish. Everything from the color of our skin and hair to the style of our clothing is off. And most of us are just scraping by with basic Spanish conversation skills.

These hang-ups can't be helped,

and I doubt they discourage any locals from associating with us. But we study abroad students also take part in some pretty insular behavior.

It's comparable to living like we never got off the tour bus — traveling in packs, gawking, our cameras and iPods constantly at hand.

Even worse is when this invisible tour bus stops into a restaurant or bar. In Seville in particular, nightlife is huge, with families and friends staying out well past midnight, often much later. Here, social interaction is the goal when it comes to drinking, not drunkenness.

But rather than give it a rest and attempt to do as the locals do, we stick with our American habits and keep the waitress busy delivering round after round. Of course we stand out.

Perhaps most significantly, we again disengage ourselves from the Sevillian community when we try to visit every other major European city within the course of a semester.

Most of the students in my program will be traveling almost every weekend, taking advantage of our four-day school week. They make plans to blow through cities like Rome, Paris, Dublin and Prague in three days.

It's clear that everyone has a different idea of what makes a good cultural

experience. For some, that involves seeing as many museums, monuments, or expansive views as possible.

As I understand it, however, the purpose of a semester abroad, no matter what location, is to reach a deeper understanding of another culture and to thrive within it. We can't do that without abandoning some of our own habits, opening up and giving ourselves time to adjust.

This takes a little bravery. I think the main reason we erect so many walls between ourselves and this new community — whether it be a language barrier, a tendency to hang out only with large groups of Americans, or simply absence — is because when we seek acceptance in a new place, we inevitably invite rejection.

But think about it.

A semester abroad is the best place to face rejection and embarrassment. We're going home to our loved ones in a few months anyway — and people are generally willing to assist and welcome a confused and humble tourist.

*Charlotte Keenan is a junior communication major studying abroad in Spain at the International College of Seville*

# Obscene college editorial smears good name of student journalism



Brenna McDermott

"F--- Bush. This is the view of the Collegian editorial board." These words were published as an opinion piece in the Rocky Mountain Collegian newspaper Friday, Sept. 21. Under the headline "Taser This," the Colorado State University newspaper printed those 11 words (except the Collegian printed the real word, not the lines). The next day, Collegian Editor in Chief J. David McSwane released a letter to CSU students and the community as an explanation for the piece.

"I strongly urge the university community to try and understand that the intentions of the students and staff, including me, were not to cause harm," he wrote. "But rather to reinforce the importance of free speech at our great institution."

McSwane cited the First Amendment in his defense, writing, "We as journalists wish to celebrate it, utilize it and, sometimes, defend it."

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the

freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." The principle of free speech is essential to the foundation of journalism. Unfortunately for McSwane, those 11 words published in the Collegian are not the words of a journalist celebrating the First Amendment. They are the words of a child throwing a tantrum and smearing the good name of collegiate journalism.

McSwane, in an interview for the Collegian, again defended the Editorial Board's decision to run the piece.

"The Editorial Board felt very strongly that it's time college students, especially CSU students, start talking about issues," McSwane said.

This defense is compelling for the right of the Collegian newspaper to publish controversial opinion pieces on controversial issues. But there is no issue to debate in this 11-word embarrassment. The Colorado State newspaper claims in its purpose statement that "the Collegian strives to cover and explain the relevance of issues that impact the Colorado State community." The editorial in question does not describe an event, a decision or any action to deserve a reaction. So what did Bush do to deserve such a taunting? Nothing. He didn't say anything stupid (shocking, I know), he didn't make a bad decision, he didn't hurt a fly. The piece defames the president without

reason. If a reason, any reason, had been provided as to why the editorial board felt that way, I would consider this editorial legitimate.

But there isn't any evidence, and "Taser This" should not be considered legitimate journalism. I would describe it more along the lines of something an 8-year-old would write. I can picture the author now, standing in the office of the Collegian, having a conniption because he or she hates Bush and stomping off to put in a cubicle and express his or her rage not in an intelligent, mature assertion but in a bellyaching, unreasonable rant that is detrimental to collegiate journalism everywhere.

The repercussions of this editorial will not end with the potential firing of McSwane. How will the country feel about college journalism after this piece? It will see it as a joke. An unethical, senseless, National Enquirer-esque joke.

But there is hope for university newspapers. Maintaining a level of expectation for journalists, reporters demanding professional integrity from themselves and reaching for excellence in every edition will distinguish grade-A papers from jokes, warranted opinions from nonsensical ranting, and ethical, dedicated journalists from the "F--- Bush"-ers of college journalism.

*Brenna McDermott is a freshman undeclared major*

# Iranian president deserved forum for his opinions



Nathan Atkinson

One of the most holy rights we maintain in the United States is unrestricted freedom of speech, regardless of whether the majority agrees with what is being said. So why have so many people denounced Columbia University's actions that fulfill this ideal to the utmost degree?

The simplest answer is that the person who was invited to Columbia's World Leaders Forum on Monday is none other than President Mahmoud "Axis of Evil" Ahmadinejad of Iran. He is not exactly one of the most beloved individuals in the United States, and the action of inviting one of our enemies to speak sparked uproar. My question, then, is why does giving Ahmadinejad a platform cause such a reaction?

Does the Bill of Rights not enshrine freedom of speech regardless of whether the opinion is in the majority? The answer is yes, and we do tout this freedom, but this particular issue is more complicated, as Ahmadinejad's opinions are not entirely clear.

Some of Ahmadinejad's opinions are indeed nearly as antagonistic as they can get. At the forum at Columbia, Ahmadinejad said, for instance, that the Holocaust is merely one of many competing theories as to what happened during World War II and that more research is needed to determine if six million Jews actually were murdered.

He also responded to a question about the treatment of homosexuals in Iran with, "In Iran, we don't have homosexuals like in your country." As Bollinger stated at the beginning of the debate, Ahmadinejad is "either brazenly provocative or astonishingly uneducated."

Despite my strong disagreement with what Ahmadinejad claims as fact and as opinion, I do agree with Bollinger's decision to invite Ahmadinejad to speak. Columbia University is a private institution, and it does have the freedom to invite whomever it wants.

What is the harm in listening to what other people have to say? Are we somehow worried that he will suddenly convince everyone that the Holocaust was a myth? As Bollinger stated, "It should never be thought that merely to listen to ideas we deplore in any way implies our endorsement of those ideas."

**Does the Bill of Rights not enshrine freedom of speech regardless of whether the opinion is in the majority?**

Freedom of speech should not be relative to who is speaking. Some might consider Iran our enemy, but what is the harm of letting its leader have a forum to speak his views? Ahmadinejad was already in the United States to address the United Nations on Tuesday, and he, personally, is not a major security threat. In fact, by international law, representatives to the U.N. are allowed to travel freely within a 25-mile radius around the U.N. headquarters in New York.

As an interesting side note, Ahmadinejad was denied a request to pay tribute to the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks by placing a wreath on Ground Zero. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice added that, had he been allowed to do so, "It would have been a travesty."

Despite much criticism there is something else that I thought was interesting about Ahmadinejad's visit: Tickets were gone within 90 minutes of becoming available. Although his visit was met with hostility, it is worth noting that there was indeed a high demand to see him speak. This demand certainly does not derive from the fact that people agree with him, and I would presume it stems primarily from simple curiosity and the novelty of the event.

It makes me happy, however, that so many people were at least open-minded about letting one of our so-called enemies speak freely. It tells me that many people in this country still want to support freedom of speech. He might in fact be a "petty and cruel dictator," as Bollinger put it, but it does not mean we should cover our ears. Many things are relative to individuals, such as what we view as moral as compared to others, but freedom of speech should not and cannot be relative.

Merely because leaders do not offer their own people freedom does not mean we should restrict those same freedoms here. We always must take the high road, and we must strive to be the better country.

*Nathan Atkinson is a senior philosophy and religion and political science major from Glasgow, Mo.*

**Sept. 27 Results**  
as of 9 p.m. Tuesday

## INDEX Web poll

**Should America have universal health care insurance coverage?**

No, the current system works fine.

**8%**  
(6 Votes)

Yes, it's the best way to ensure everyone has coverage.

**59%**  
(42 Votes)

Not really, we only need more support for the uninsured.

**33%**  
(23 Votes)

**This week's question:**  
**Should a college newspaper run an editorial that contains obscenity?**

Vote online at  
[www.trumanindex.com](http://www.trumanindex.com)