

## Obama victory points to future racial equality



**Whitney Fay**

If you've been listening to presidential or political commentary lately, the phrase "post-racial America" probably sounds familiar. My question to readers is, are we really living in a new, post-racial America? With the election of President Obama, many pundits seem lost in giddy, celebratory exclamations of achievement and progress. Are we deluding ourselves?

For black citizens of our nation,

Obama's election undoubtedly was a magnificent statement that repudiated centuries of mistreatment at the hands of the majority, but I think that his election was a sort of triumph for white people as well. It was almost as if white Obama voters could hold up their vote and say, "Look at me, I voted for a black man! I'm so progressive!" As he is now their president too, even those who didn't vote for Obama have an oblique claim to progressiveness.

I think it's pretty clear that no one can make a blanket claim that America suddenly is "post-racial." No one is ever going to look at someone of another race and not notice color. I think that the real race-related benefit in the election of Obama is symbolic: it might help someone of a different race be less discrimi-

nated-against, but I think that it does point to the advent of more opportunity and, perhaps, a new attitude and a new confidence in the system.

It also is interesting to think about this "post-racial" America from a personal perspective. As I was writing this, I asked myself, "How am I relating to the ideal of a post-racial America?" I think that it is a really relevant question to ask ourselves if we want to truly overcome our racial bias — and I'm not just speaking to white people. I think a lack of racial bias and true acceptance only can be achieved through everyone's participation, whether they are white, black, Asian or any other race. Achieving an ingrained lack of bias depends on the American collage of people willingly putting aside our differences and actively reaching out to each other. It

requires that we extend our friendship to everyone. It demands that we put ourselves in potentially awkward situations in order to get to know people. Even with the possible discomfort of these situations, the benefits can far outweigh the irritations.

For example, take the social atmosphere at Truman: It's true, everyone seems to get along pretty well, but how much do the different racial groups here actually mix? Sure, sure, there are some anomalies, but overall, most of the different groups don't really mingle with each other. I've observed Asian students hanging out with Asian students, black students hanging out with black students, and white students hanging out with white students. None of these groups of people were told to hang out exclusively with others,

but they somehow do it naturally and unconsciously.

Obama's campaign slogan — "Yes, we can" — reminds us that we have the opportunity to do anything we set our minds to in this day and age. So in this era of newfound hope, I think we all can take a minute and think about how diverse our lives really are. Everyone, no matter their race, should take opportunities to expand their racial boundaries — make a new friend, try a new club and, most of all, branch out! America truly never will become "post-racial" if we all remain safely inside our usual racial boundaries, and maybe we never will anyway. But yes, we can at least give it a try.

*Whitney Fay is a senior communication major from Shaw, Mo.*

## Official language debate deserves further reflection



**Molly Skyles**

Go to France and you will hear French being spoken. In Spain, say "hola." Most countries have a national language. In the United States, the case isn't so simple. We don't have a national language, although some people call English our mother tongue.

Recently a vote was cast in Nashville, Tenn. to make English the official language of all government businesses. According to a Jan. 23 article in The New York Times, the proposition did not pass. Despite the proposal's failure, I began to question the reasoning behind the argument for a national language in general. While the issue is complex, upon closer reflection I realized the benefits of having an official common language.

I've always been against making English the official language of the U.S. This country was founded as a melting pot where people of all races and ethnicities could come and, in the best scenario, be accepted on their own terms. When immigrants come to this country, they bring their own cultures, traditions and languages with them. All of these things have helped to create the diverse culture we know. The concept of a national language seems to be a futile attempt to create unity.

But after doing a little research and thinking about it, I have changed my outlook. I discovered that 30 states in the U.S., including Missouri, have passed laws making English the state's official language.

If more than half the country officially is English speaking, then why not the whole country? Outside of making the U.S. richer

in a cultural context, having many languages just creates unnecessary complexity.

There would be many benefits to making English the national language. First of all, it levels the playing field. If everyone is speaking the same language, then communication of all forms becomes much simpler. For example, I work in a grocery store, and although I try to be respectful of everyone, it's hard to stay calm when someone cannot understand that his or her soda costs \$1.67, not just \$1. It's incredibly frustrating for both the customer and me when we cannot comprehend one another. I usually end up just selling it for a dollar because I lose patience. When you think about it, most, if not all, schools and media are conducted in English. Knowing the language is an indispensable skill for living in the U.S.

Even though I see the advantages of making English the official language, I do think it is important for those of different ethnic backgrounds to keep their native language.

Therefore, the proposed bill in Nashville seemed like a happy medium. It required that all government communication and publications be printed in English but excluded public health and safety. Thus, knowing English would be basically a necessity, but one would not have to give up his or her own language entirely.

Language is extremely vital in a society. Everything involves some type of communication, which is conducted in a particular language. Language is the filter through which a culture flows — rendering language a necessary component of understanding diverse peoples. We need to decide what the U.S. is: an assembly rich in culture or a body uniform in understanding.

*Molly Skyles is a freshman communication major from St. Louis, Mo.*

### AROUND THE QUAD

Where do you think the University can cut costs?



"The campus vehicles could be used less."

*Megan Ruth sophomore*



"Truman is so cheap already — I don't know where to eliminate costs."

*Marianne Richter junior*



"Maybe teachers could use more e-books to cut down on paper."

*Sarina Aryal senior*



"I would cut down the number of newspapers offered for free."

*Brittany Wade junior*

## Simple fixes relieve budget crisis



**Jackie Gonzalez**

For today only, I've decided to hypothetically assume the role of University President. As a result, I've made some imaginary executive proposals in response to the budget crisis.

First thing first, I would get rid of the USA Today. It's the McDonald's of newspapers. When a university offers something special like The New York Times or the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (I happen to prefer the Post-Dispatch, but I'm a sucker for aesthetics), there is no need to subscribe to that sub-par publication. Enough said.

I'd reduce the Student Activities Board budget. The SAB has way too much money in its possession. Yes, I'll admit that I occasionally take advantage of the opportunities to win an unnecessary amount of freebies and giveaways but only because I'm aware that I paid for some of that with the Student Activities Fee. During these tough economic times, the SAB should be more cautious with its spending, but it's not. Instead, organizations were treated to glossy, multi-colored, photo greeting cards in their mailboxes, reminding them that SAB has money and loves blowing it. Tonight, three organizations (SAB included) are putting together

funds (who knows how much) for a weekend of ice skating, prizes and other shenanigans. To me, this isn't fun. This is insulting.

If I were an SAB member, I'd feel pretty guilty right now. SAB, when you're out there skating, imagine all the families that are dealing with job losses and are forced to stay in and watch television to save a buck so that they can afford meals for the next week. Believe me, all that students seem to get really excited about are the major concerts, speakers, a movie now and then and some trivia. Do us all a favor and eliminate the excess.

Special events planning and publicity is something every organization can cut back on. Campus organizations need to work together to stop wasting paper and ink and utilize the campus Web site, Facebook or classroom chalkboards.

We also need to eliminate that extra sheet of paper that identifies your printout. It is almost always useless. If we eliminated the ID cover sheet, not only will it save some ink, but the people working at the computer desk will actually be able to do something useful.

Speaking of campus jobs, I'd eliminate all the jobs that involve sitting by a printer and receiving an institutional wage. People do not deserve \$7 per hour to sit at a printer (with another worker, most likely) while Facebooking their lives away. Institutional jobs should be jobs that

actually contribute to the University, not jobs that you can laugh about for which you get paid to do nothing. Perhaps we should hire someone to turn some or all of the lights off in certain buildings during the summer. Yes, it is treading the line of potential security woes, but with a little research, the University could find ways to reduce their electric bill by thousands over time without putting students at risk.

If I could move around some money, I already know where I'd start: The Career Center deserves more funding and more credit for their endeavors. The Funds Allotment Council should provide smaller amounts of funding to more organizations hoping for a break.

Being a residence hall resident for three years, I'm extremely aware that residence hall employees work way too hard for what they get paid and deserve some kind of financial appreciation beyond their current benefits.

Lastly, I'd do everything in my power to keep Truman the way it is. Retain class sizes. Maintain the student-to-faculty ratio. Keep the tuition low. These are the things that make Truman great, and we mustn't forget it. If Truman loses its selling points, then we'll be in for greater problems ahead.

*Jackie Gonzalez is a senior communication and history major from San Diego, Calif.*

**People of different backgrounds need to keep their native language.**

**I've made some imaginary executive proposals in response to the budget crisis.**

## Curriculum needs review, debate



**Tyler Retherford**

As usual in western society, a pre-occupation with money is distracting us from another important concern here at the University: what we're actually learning. University funding is without a doubt incredibly important, and I'm glad to see the active discussion of what we should do about it. But it is overshadowing what should be an equally integral discussion of the proposed curriculum changes from the Commission on Undergraduate Curriculum. I only know about these proposed changes because I took the time to answer a survey in my e-mail, and it took me a quarter of an hour to find the report itself on the University's Web site. Maybe it was because I already was displeased about being surprised by the report's mere existence, but as I read through it I was none too happy with what I was seeing. The report as a whole seems to have been built on

a few poor assumptions about the role of an organized curriculum. In particular, the approach to portfolios and interdisciplinary classes have serious problems in each model.

The concept of creating a portfolio to represent what students have learned and produced throughout the course of their education theoretically is great. Being able to leave the University with something tangible to show graduate schools and potential employers is a big help. However, several models within the report turn the portfolio into an ineffective way to force students to spend more time and effort, as well as tuition, to look back and reflect on their recent work. I'm in college to learn, not to spend credit hours reflecting over and assembling a project where I'm merely restructuring what I've already accomplished. There is very little to gain from the creation of a portfolio compared to how much I could be getting out of those credit hours should they be put to use by taking actual courses.

Similarly, the approach to interdisciplinary courses is trying to accomplish something admirable, but going about it the wrong way. The purpose of interdisciplinary courses is to get students to think about matters

from outside the perspective of their own particular field, which is important. However, the approach the JINS courses and any of the modified LSP models simply is to get students to take courses in different fields. There's nothing wrong with this, but it isn't really interdisciplinary, just multidisciplinary. A better approach would be to offer courses within each major looking at its specific subject matter and approaching it from the perspectives of other fields. Rather than having students take arbitrary courses outside their major, it makes sense to make sure that these classes are still contributing to their emphasis.

The debate over funding problems here at the University bodes well for a constructive, collaborative effort to really improve the curriculum. While the models in the report have some significant flaws, the process of discussing changes could have a real, positive influence on the quality of education provided here at the University. Students should be as involved in the discussion on curriculum changes as they are about funding issues.

*Tyler Retherford is a sophomore anthropology major from Springfield, Mo.*

## What was going on in the INDEX?

30 years ago – January 25, 1979

**Metal shavings from defective can openers were found in food served in Ryle Hall Cafeteria. No students were injured.**

19 years ago – January 25, 1990

**The Index ran an article about the incidents of alcohol parties taking place in Truman's residence halls.**

10 years ago – January 28, 1999

**The 75th anniversary of the Old Baldwin Hall fire was celebrated.**