

# Obama fails to demonstrate leadership qualities



Zach Vicars

When presidential candidate Barack Obama stepped off the stage at Invesco Field on Aug. 28, the crowd roared with applause, fireworks lit up the sky, and somewhere, you could have sworn, the bell of destiny tolled. It seemed that nothing — no power of heaven or hell — could stop this man from reaching the White House.

But since that historic moment, very little has gone the senator's way. Just hours later, McCain's VP pick erased every word of Obama's speech from America's memory. And the "Palin Factor" soon controlled conversation here on campus, as well. Obama quickly found himself taking a backseat to a pit bull with lipstick.

And just recently, Obama received the worst news of all: a shift in the polls. The wheels of change that once drove this unstoppable campaign seem to be in grave danger of flying off.

But what amazes me most about this campaign is that Obama has stayed in the race until now. I mean, really, you've got to hand it to the guy: For being the least experienced, least active, most cowardly candidate in U.S. history, Obama has done rather well for himself.

I won't devote much time to my first point: Obama's inexperience. Most Americans already are familiar and, sadly, comfortable with this part of his record. Obama has never led a government, never led in the military, never led a business. He's simply the least experienced presidential candidate for a major party in the last 100 years. That is a fact.

Indeed, Obama's only real leadership experience comes from raising money — he garnered a record \$66 million in August. That fact alone should make liberals sick. Obama raised more

than \$2 million per day and not a cent of it went to the homeless, displaced or unemployed. Instead, those funds went to campaign buttons, promotion signs and jet fuel — disposable novelties that, after Nov. 4, will only fill up our landfills and increase our greenhouse gases.

Another aspect of Obama's past that should trouble reform-minded voters is his unprecedented inaction in office. While promising "change we can believe in," Obama has failed to produce any change in Washington. He's been a senator for Illinois for more than two years and hasn't written a single bill. Instead, Barack Obama has written two books about someone he considers to be very important: Barack Obama. While Obama should have been developing this nation, he's been developing his own cult of personality, calling himself "a symbol of the possibility of America returning to our best traditions." The Democrats of old — Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt and our own Harry Truman — would be ashamed of such egotistical hypocrisy.

And as for Obama's cowardice, I

speak directly to his uncanny ability to duck a punch and his unwillingness to speak out on the issues. Barack Obama, the man who many consider the great orator of our day, has 10 times — that's right, 10 — denied John McCain's invitation for a town-hall debate. If Obama can't stand up to McCain, how is he going to stand up to evildoers like Putin, Ahmadinejad and Bin Laden?

And what's worse is that Obama already has proved his impotence as a foreign policy diplomat. On the rock star's world tour, he told the Israeli president that he hoped to see an undivided Jerusalem, only to recant that statement just a few days later when speaking to members of the Palestinian party. The next President of the United States can ill-afford such indecision when dealing with a region as explosive as Israel.

But when Obama does speak out on the issues, he usually hides behind a far-left media corps that has a Messianic fixation with the senator. Even then, Obama utilizes sleazy tactics by dodging questions and refusing to

give straight answers. When addressing issues as clear-cut as abortion, he makes the excuse, "That's above my pay grade." If Obama himself doesn't think he's qualified to weigh in on such issues, how can the nation trust him to make clutch decisions as president?

As you read this, many of you are fuming, a few of you are cheering and hopefully some of you are reconsidering your position on Obama. But none of you can deny that the life and political history of Sen. Obama raise questions about his worthiness to be president. Can a man with no experience, no record of progressive action and absolutely no backbone really be all that he claims to be? Can he really be the catalyst of change in this nation? And, if he is, will he be the change we need, or the change that we fear most?

These are questions that each of us will have to answer for ourselves because Barack Obama simply will choose not to answer them at all.

Zach Vicars is a freshman English and history major from St. Charles, Mo.

## AROUND THE QUAD

What type of business do you think Pickler's Famous will be?



"A smoothie place or something."

Christina Russell  
junior



"An archery shop."

Sam Straatmann  
sophomore



"Someplace where you can hang out with your friends and be active."

Jordan Lukatch  
freshman



"A brothel for the faculty."

Alex Seubert  
freshman

# International Film Festival deserves greater patronage



Tyler Retherford

Kirkville isn't usually a shining beacon of artistic culture, but we do have the occasional reprieve, like the International Film Festival running this fall at Downtown Cinema 8.

Unfortunately, I have a Wednesday night class that keeps me from going, but this week fortune was with me, and I was free to attend. However as I sought out movie-going company, it quickly became apparent that many people were running into the same problem I had encountered. Work, meetings, homework and the general slew of activities that keep college students busy make getting out for a weekday night film problematic. However, the fact that so many of my friends were complaining about how they couldn't go was heartening.

Clearly, there is a ready audience for other showings of similar films, which is great. Student support for events like the International Film Festival

could lead to more events like it, a growth in film-related campus organizations and a regular stream of student-produced films.

The film festival's showing time of 6:45 p.m. Wednesday evenings doesn't make supporting it easy, though. A weekend matinee re-showing would give many students who are too busy on weeknights a much better chance of seeing the films that currently are shown only once. Another alternative is simply taking time to support existing campus organizations promoting independent and foreign films. Regardless of how or when, supporting those taking the risk of bringing non-Hollywood films to Kirkville is important for increasing the range of entertainment options available to students.

The video rental stores always are going to carry Hollywood box office hits, but getting independent and foreign films to Kirkville takes the promise of a reliable audience. A good turnout for the International Film Festival hopefully should contribute to the growth of student-run organizations promoting non-Hollywood films. After a year full of sequels and remakes, it's refreshing to have an option like "Persepolis," an animated film about a girl growing up in

Iran about the time of the 1979 revolution. Of course, not all independent and foreign films tackle serious themes, but they do tend to portray stories from different viewpoints and unique angles, making for a nice break from market-conscious mainstream releases.

The most exciting prospect of a loyal independent film audience at the University is the possibility for a genuinely broad reception of student-produced films. In addition to being a unique opportunity to see a film that directly relates to students, a locally produced film allows for an excellent link between filmmakers and their audience. Even independent films can't rival that level of audience influence over the end product.

If you're anything like me, during the long, cold winters here in Kirkville you watch a considerable number of movies. Rather than renting the latest formulaic comedy boasting a popular leading actor, try to make it to a showing of something a little different. It could be even better, and it's a safe bet it isn't just a restyling of the same movie you've seen too many times already.

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

# Addressing drinking age issue requires changing attitudes



Jean Kaul

As I sat on my couch, computer on my lap, getting ready to write this column, I opened a Smirnoff Ice (Light — a wonderful new invention) to drink with my dinner (sissy, I know). I'm 21, so it's OK for me to be writing about this stuff, but I'm not going to insult your intelligence by telling you that I never drank a drop of alcohol until my 21st birthday. I did drink underage, and I came out relatively unscathed — no MIPs, no alcohol poisoning, no bad decisions (well, at least that I can remember). I know some could argue that breaking a law can never be done responsibly, but I disagree. Since I just turned 21 a month or so ago, I have enjoyed the benefits of legally drinking to the fullest, not really thinking about my previous life as an underage lawbreaker.

However, a few days ago, I started reading news articles about the Amethyst Initiative, a group advocating lowering the drinking age. The strange part is that the Initiative was started by a group of 130 presidents and chancellors of universities who agree. That's like Mom and Dad saying it's okay to crack open your Natty and drink it at the dinner table. My gut reaction was surprise and agreement with the Initiative. Then I decided I needed to think about it some more. In general, I think it's rather stupid that you can vote, get married and die for your country all before you can legally enjoy alcohol. So naturally, I should think that the drinking age should be lowered, right? But a nagging thought lingered: Can our drink-to-excess society handle a lower drinking age?

The arguments by those who both support and oppose the ban make sense. Yes, people in nations all over the world seem to get along without their society imploding, and those countries have lower drinking ages. Yes, there is scientific

evidence that the human brain doesn't finish developing until after the teenage years, making a ban on teenage drinking a logical choice. The argument can, and has, gone on forever.

After some serious thinking on the issue, I still haven't come to a decision. I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing either. This is an issue that would benefit from less knee-jerk reaction and more careful thought. I don't think the problem is whether you should be 18 or 21 when you drink for the first time. The real problem in America (and on college campuses) is the drink-to-get-drunk mentality. How many Truman drinkers are binge drinkers? Once I reviewed the standards — consuming five or more drinks in a row for men and four or more in a row for women, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Web site — I found out I was. You probably are too. That's bad.

According to statements by some of the signers of the Amethyst Initiative, the movement was started to raise awareness about the problem-drinking happening on campuses across the country. Even here in Kirkville, where I think most

**Arbitrarily lowering or raising the drinking age isn't going to solve the American drinking problem.**

would agree that our drinking culture is relatively tame, minors get served all the time (I think we all know the places where they do — probably because we've gone there trying to get served underage), and we have our fair share of problems associated with drinking too much: MIPs, trips to the emergency room, your friend puking all over your car.

I think it's time we started to get to the root of our American drinking problem, and arbitrarily lowering and raising the drinking age every generation isn't going to solve it. Instead, maybe we should all investigate our drinking histories with a closer eye. Do our peers in other cultures drink more responsibly? The answer is probably yes. And that's worrying. As I said to my friend the other day, "You're drinking tonight, but you're not going to get drunk? That's un-American."

Jean Kaul is a junior English major from Marengo, Ill.

# Virginity-selling Nevada student lacks strong morals, work ethic



Molly Skyles

Some of us work two jobs, and some have student loans out the wazoo. Others sell their virginity to pay for an education. Sell their virginity? Yeah, you read it correctly.

When I first heard about this, I didn't believe it either. I was outraged at how desperate some people are for money. I immediately searched CNN.com to see for myself, and there it was. Twenty-two year old Natalie Dylan (her online alias) is selling her virginity at The Bunny Ranch, a legal brothel in Nevada, to pay for her master's degree. Currently, the bid is at \$250,000.

After reading this story, I thought it was a joke. Selling virginity for college tuition? Really? There are so many ways to obtain the funds for an education other than selling yourself away. However, according to a Sacramento, Calif., news

station, Dylan's excuse was that her stepfather used her status as a college student to apply for student loans. He then escaped with the money. What else to do but sell your virginity?

It is the most logical answer to this complex situation, right? When in doubt, become a prostitute — or not. There are many reasons selling your virginity online is wrong. "Selling virginity online" — it feels dirty just saying it. Besides the "eww" factor, selling yourself for sex is demeaning to women and shows that our society has hit an all-time low.

Dylan's supporters argue that the only reason she is doing this is to obtain money for an education, and she isn't harming anyone, so who cares? Some bloggers went as far as to say she is admirable for saving her virginity for so long and finally is getting a reward for it.

However, Dylan's get-rich-quick scheme speaks volumes about how ridiculous and pathetic our society can be. What kind of people are we when we think the only possible way to pay for school is by selling ourselves for sex? Not only are we hungry for money, we also don't value ourselves all that much. I

recognize the importance of a good education just as much as the next person, but that doesn't mean I'm going to sell myself just to go to school.

I personally detest Natalie Dylan. She is devaluing everything about the female gender that so many powerful women have worked to prove was worth more than reproduction and keeping up the household. People like her are the reason some men think they can walk all over women. She may be in this to get a degree, but then what? She will forever be known as the virgin prostitute.

If you ask me, she is just a lazy woman who wants to find the easy way out. Why not get a little media attention at the same time? Yeah, school is expensive, but she isn't the only one who struggles with it, and all those people, myself included, have found other ways to pay the bills. Do what everyone else does. Get a job — or two — even if that means adding the phrase, "Would you like fries with that?" to your vocabulary.

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

