

American perception in Europe not what some think

Jessica Patchett

Columnist

Editors Note: This column will appear weekly while Jessica is studying in London.

This week, I found trash cans. I found garbage and dirt and human waste. Leaving behind the tourist sites of Westminster, the glitzy neighborhoods of Little Venice, and the upscale consumer havens of Oxford and Piccadilly, I spent Sunday afternoon in East London. The sixth annual Brick Lane/International Curry Festival brought to life a densely populated Bangladeshi neighborhood, otherwise unseen by the majority of Londoners.

Aside from the attractive middle-eastern restaurants festival-goers patronized in record numbers, graffiti, worn signs and rickety doors told of a struggling population of relocated people, trying to make a life and living in the second most expensive city in the world.

Community outreach groups sponsored booths at the festival, indicating some public interest in helping the Bangladeshi people and developing commerce in

their neighborhood. But, cheap food and free entertainment were probably the only reasons Gucci shoes made one stroll down the dingy East London streets. Unable to read the many signs translated from English, those of us from outside the cultural pocket were equally unable to identify, let alone understand, the issues and problems local residents face on a day-to-day basis.

As I walked further into East London and outside the blockades containing the festival, I kicked around piles of trash with my strappy Nine West shoes. In equally as expensive dress shoes, my friends walked past homeless men sleeping in piles of rubbish. None of us, or any of the other hundreds walking with us, offered even a pair of off-brand shoes to the man with none.

With so many nameless faces and helpless people desperately in need of a pair of shoes, a place to live, a high school education ... how can busy, working people be expected to seek out strangers and lift them out of the endless garbage pile in which they live?

Taking time away from life to approach complete strangers with



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unknown personal problems and a lack of material comfort is out of the question for most working class citizens. In fact, an opportunity to do so rarely presents itself, as the middle and upper classes rarely catch a glimpse of other people's garbage. Isn't it a social taboo to allow one's problems to overflow into the streets and into public view? Aren't we all responsible for quietly and effectively getting ourselves out of our own messes?

This past Saturday night, I came home with a couple of my flatmates around midnight to find another Elon student sitting on our stoop alone, too sick to move

inside. The student had gone out with 20 others from Elon earlier that night ... where were they as this student sat in waste?

After my friends and I took the student inside, other people started trickling home. A couple hours earlier, they had stopped by the flats on their way to a party, without bothering to walk the sick student home, into our building and up one flight of stairs. They claimed to have left the student in someone else's care ... but why would friends leave someone to the care of even the most well intended outsider? When I came home, the student was sitting alone, in a mess, at the mercy of anyone who might have wandered by that night.

While the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 two years ago were horrendous and absolutely wrong, they should have opened people's eyes to a global perception of America and its citizens.

Even in Britain, factions of people display a strong distaste for the selfish, incompassionate attitude that they sense Americans hold. Living in the UK, media coverage and political conversation make it glaringly obvious to

me that the world has serious doubts and questions about Americans.

The world asks: Have Americans learned anything in the two years since the terror attack that consumed the attention of the American citizens, American media and the American government? Americans do not bother to take care of their fellow citizens because they cannot stand the stench of waste. What help then can Americans be to a world covered in dirt and trash?

Until we stop leaving our friends on the doorsteps of the world to be washed and cleaned by others, how can we gain the respect of other nations? Until we make a genuine effort to go out of our way to help our neighbors, how can we convince our "fellow Americans" and ourselves that we are worthy of care and concern? Until we gain the trust of the people of the world, how can we live without some fear that tomorrow may be the day we are attacked again?

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Thumbs Up

1. It is finally cooling down outside
2. Parents weekend is just a week away, which means lots of goodies are on the way
3. Home-cooked food
4. End-of-season sales at all your favorite stores
5. Intramurals have started

Thumbs Down



1. There are no parking spaces by 10:30 a.m.
2. All of your text books still have not arrived in the campus shop
3. The over-active air conditioners in all of the campus buildings
4. Aerobics classes fill up fast
5. The e-mail from Chris Fulkerson about downloading music

What's the worry over downloads?

Eric Hydrick

Columnist

The record industry has launched a massive campaign against music downloaders. Record labels are sending subpoenas to colleges for the names of users who are downloading music. Elon, to some extent, supports this. Chris Fulkerson, Director of Instructional & Campus Technologies, sent out an e-mail with a memo attached discussing this policy. The memo states that,

"...the University will be forced to provide the names and addresses of persons using the University's internet connection when presented a legal subpoena, ...taken out by the RIAA...in their search for illegal file sharing ...this would include students,

faculty or staff."

This is a fair policy, but we shouldn't have to deal with the record industry coming after us for downloading some music.

The record industry claims that it's losing money because people download songs and don't buy CD's. First off, downloading music isn't the only reason why people don't buy CD's. We also don't buy them because they're expensive and they often don't have more than a few good songs on them.

It's not like students making a huge profit from downloading either. Most people don't make CD's and sell them.

However, now most all computers come with CD burners so everyone can make their own CD. Thus the only person who has a CD I burn is me, and I'm the only

person who listens to it.

However, if the record industry really wants money for downloads, why don't they lobby for a law requiring a fee be charged for songs uploaded to the music sharing sites like Kazaa? That way, they're still making money, and the sites themselves can cover the fee from their advertising profits. Thus, music is free for us and the record industry gets money.

Of course, if the record industry was really smart, they would start their own download sites or they'd move into the blank CD business and quietly start taking in money hand over fist. And then we wouldn't have to deal with threats of them possibly coming to knock on our doors and ordering us to pay their fines.

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