

## Opinions

## Bearing witness to truth

Images of war reveal unexplored wounds trapped in American psyche, raises questions about taste and censorship



Camille Demere  
Guest Columnist

Operation Iraqi Freedom is over — or at least, the first official steps have been taken to bring our troops home and withdraw from the country for good. As American citizens analyze our nation's almost decade-long presence in the Middle East, we're going to see some things we don't like. But we can't turn away.

War isn't as clear-cut as we would like it to be. It's dangerous, messy and heartbreaking. Bystanders lose everything, including their lives, and sometimes it's impossible to know exactly who the "bad guys" are until it's too late. Last week, The New York Times attempted to recap what President Obama called "the war to disarm a state (that) became a fight against insurgency" overseas through an online photo essay called "Drawing Down and Moving Ahead."

Black and white images transitioned into ones filled with the crimson blood of a tiny crying girl in northwestern Iraq, the bullet-ridden body of a young Iraqi man and the destruction and chaos of war.

These are images we need to see as college-

age global citizens. And these are the images our media should not shy away from, as long as they act responsibly — as the Times did — and warn viewers of what they are about to see.

The photos are not gratuitous. And some students might not even think they are that jarring. The blood pooling around a soldier in Falluja may seem less real than the violence seen in 2009's Oscar winner, "The Hurt Locker."

Most of the images that were shockin showed a different kind of injury — the social and economic implications of our time in Iraq. One photo shows babies napping on the outskirts of Baghdad in their temporary home: a tent with no floor. Others are of buildings destroyed by insurgents' bombs and 20 Iraqi men laying face down in the dirt with their hands tied behind their backs.

Most Elon students probably count themselves among the billions of young people Obama referenced in his Aug. 31 address to the nation. He urges our demographic to "move beyond the shackles of poverty and conflict." That doesn't mean we should turn a blind eye to those terrible things that have already occurred overseas.

As we ready ourselves to be one of the next generations to take over positions of power in this country, we need to see things like this for ourselves. That way, we cannot hide behind our ignorance when tough decisions need to be made. We should make a promise to our global community that we will work to learn from our nation's trials, and bear in mind the consequences of our actions.

## Where is our Elon?



Liv Dubendorf  
Columnist

Our perfectly lined, brick pathways have been rerouted with yellow construction tape and heaping mounds of dirt. Random bulldozers scatter the grounds — you can hear their engines chugging from Alumni Gym to the fenced-off construction site near the Colonnades.

Look around. Any student, visitor, faculty or staff member can see that Elon university is changing — fast. But what does that mean for us?

Besides the obvious inconveniences of the noise that starts at sunrise and ends at dusk, we are around for just the beginning of the renovations.

We have to suffer through the improvements so that the next generation of Elon students can enjoy the new facilities being built. If not us, then who?

I'm a junior this year, which means I'll barely be able to enjoy the new Colonnades buildings. I won't see the buildings to replace Story Center, and I will have to live through the construction of various other buildings on campus. It seems that, for the rest of my Elon career, I will be listening to the sound of drilling and the beeping of large trucks in reverse.

I sat in on a meeting with President Leo Lambert and Provost Steven House last week. Most memorably, the two discussed what the massive plans for construction meant for us as current Elon students.

Lambert talked of improving the value of our diplomas, which is something I can appreciate. But as Elon's reputation increases, so too will the tuition bill. I'm happy that is something I won't have to pay for. Presumably, with the Ever Elon campaign, student scholarships will increase, making the school more affordable, and scholarships are never a bad thing.

And when I'm looking for a job far in the future, I'm going to be glad for these expanding buildings, for the famed reputation. With Elon on the rise, we will be among the first to reap the benefits. The money spent improving our campus and improving our academic programs will eventually help us out.

While sitting in on this meeting, I got excited. I thought about how wonderful it will be when I tell someone that I went to Elon and have him or her actually know where it is.

But then I took a minute to think what all this construction means, besides the fact that we have to put up with loud noises and closing buildings.

After all the improvements are complete, when the campus has expanded, we'll probably need to continue renovations on some other building. When will Elon decide that enough is enough? How big is too big?

Our university is on the rise, which is hard to wrap our heads around at times. In the coming years, we will gain new facilities for the Department of Physical Therapy program along with the possibilities of adding a Physician Assistant program.

What will happen to our small, liberal arts school in the middle of North Carolina? The school that I chose to attend not because it was a Harvard University or a Yale University, but because I felt it was my perfect fit?

What will happen to our home? I hope the massive institution that is currently being constructed around us won't devour our Elon, the Elon I know and love.

And what about increasing class sizes? I specifically didn't go to a state institution because of their massive student populations. I like the idea of knowing professors within my school, even if I haven't had them in class. I like our 30-some person classes.

As these buildings are constructed around us, I experience a mixture of emotions. I'm happy that Elon is growing in popularity, but worried that it will lose its personality as it continues to extend its borders. As students, we are left at the crossroads, not knowing which way the university will turn. We can only hope that, with whatever improvements that are made to the university, it will retain the identity that we know and love.

## Plastic bag ban melts under heat

Attempts to reverse human impact on environment thwarted by boundaries created by California Senate



Christina Edwards  
Columnist

With landfills packed and overflowing with trash, plus an additional oil rig explosion last week that contributed to the environmental turmoil in the gulf, environmental issues have become priority legislation for many jurisdictions, despite economic hard times. In October 2009, North Carolina joined several other states in passing legislation to require the recycling of plastic

bottles.

California has been at the forefront of the growing trend of legislation and governmental encouragement and incentives for recycling efforts. The California Bottle Bill, which makes use of the state's existing private and public recycling resources, places a monetary value on recyclables, which has resulted in high rates of recycling. Local jurisdictions have varying levels of additional environmental laws: San Francisco has enacted a mandatory recycling and composting ordinance. And up until last week, California was very close to being the first state to pass a ban on single-use plastic bags. California Senate struck down the bill on Tuesday, Aug. 31.

The bill was passed by the California Assembly in June and drew praise from Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. The state has a history of enacting similar laws at a local level: San Francisco was the first city in the country to pass a ban on plastic bags in 2007. And the idea is starting to take off and gather support in other areas: North Carolina banned single-use plastic bags in the Outer Banks, and Washington, D.C. began requiring grocery stores to charge for plastic bag use. Similar legislation to the

proposed bill in California is under review in United States unincorporated territory American Samoa. Other countries, including Ireland, South Africa and Bangladesh, have similar laws.

The problem with the proposed legislation, and similar legislation in higher level jurisdictions, may not really have anything to do with plastic bags. Reactions and commentary over California's situation suggest the law has implications that go beyond the environment and reach into concern over what can and should be regulated by the government.

Fox News Channel contributor and conservative columnist Michelle Malkin wrote on her blog after the ban failed to pass Senate: "Finally, California shows some sense. Lawmakers trashed an onerous, ill-timed, empty-gesture plastic bag ban pushed by radical greens this week."

Readers commenting on a Huffington Post article about the ban who disagreed with the legislation expressed concern over the proposition of environmental laws over other governmental concerns. One commenter dismissed the bill as "just another special interest mandate."

Similarly, supporters of the ban have expressed concern for legislators being swayed by the monetary effects on plastic bag manufacturers.

Much of the contention over this issue isn't about plastic bags. I'm sure not everyone — or really, most people — opposing the ban are completely dismissive of all environmental issues. And perhaps not everyone in support of the ban remembers to place every plastic soda bottle in the recycling bin.

The controversy surrounding this legislation highlights a major problem in U.S. politics right now: there is a heavy us-versus-them divide, a need to align ourselves and distinguish what we aren't. Sometimes, this overshadows the actual issues.

And that's just one more thing this country can't afford.

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