

Ahmadinejad gains attention, little power

By Landry Haarmann
STAFF WRITER

Unsurprisingly, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's American visit the last week of September was nothing short of controversial. Why, though? Perhaps it was his desire to visit the World Trade Center, or the statement he made about the lack of homosexuals in Iran. It may be that he fervently called the case on Iran's nuclear power program closed when he visited the UN.

Whatever the reason, President Ahmadinejad certainly does not censor himself. He has made inflammatory comments as long as he's made been on the international stage. An especially agitating comment Ahmadinejad has made is about the Holocaust, saying, "they have invented a myth that Jews were massacred and place this above God, religions, and the prophets."

There's no lack of news covering Ahmadinejad, his actions and statements, but many Iranian political analysts have stated that too much emphasis is being put on how powerful Ahmadinejad is. The truth, they say, is he isn't that powerful in Iran.

"He is not that consequential," an anonymous political scientist said to the New York Times.

It seems that people forget (or aren't even aware) that just because he is president, he is not the head of state. Ahmadinejad has the power to appoint parliament nominees, sign bills. He is presently the highest Iranian official elected into office, and serves the people and their public opinions. The true head of state is the Supreme Leader, presently Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i.

Many people wonder the threat Ahmadinejad poses. President Bush has alluded to ties between Ahmadinejad and Iraq. Ahmadinejad has made threatening remarks about Israel, but the final call

regarding foreign policy does not lie with Ahmadinejad, but with the supreme leader.

Within Iran, Ahmadinejad's popularity is falling, leading Iranian political scientists to further question the American energy put towards Ahmadinejad.

His economic policies have done little; many of his advisors have quit because they do not agree with how he has handled the country, and he has been insulted by other members of the government for his mismanagement of the nation.

Ahmadinejad seems to no longer garner respect in his own country. So why do so many people get riled up by a man whose only influence seems to come from newspaper headlines (as many Iranian political scientists will argue)?

Ahmadinejad is a politician, and if anyone saw his interview with 60 Minutes' Mike Wallace, they know he can evade answering questions as well as any other political leader. His country is sandwiched between two countries where America has military presence, Iraq and Afghanistan. He is also a politician in one of the most destabilized areas on the map.

Then how should America react to this man? There are no clear ties between Iraq and Ahmadinejad, his popularity seems to be waning in his own country, and yet the West is completely infuriated by him.

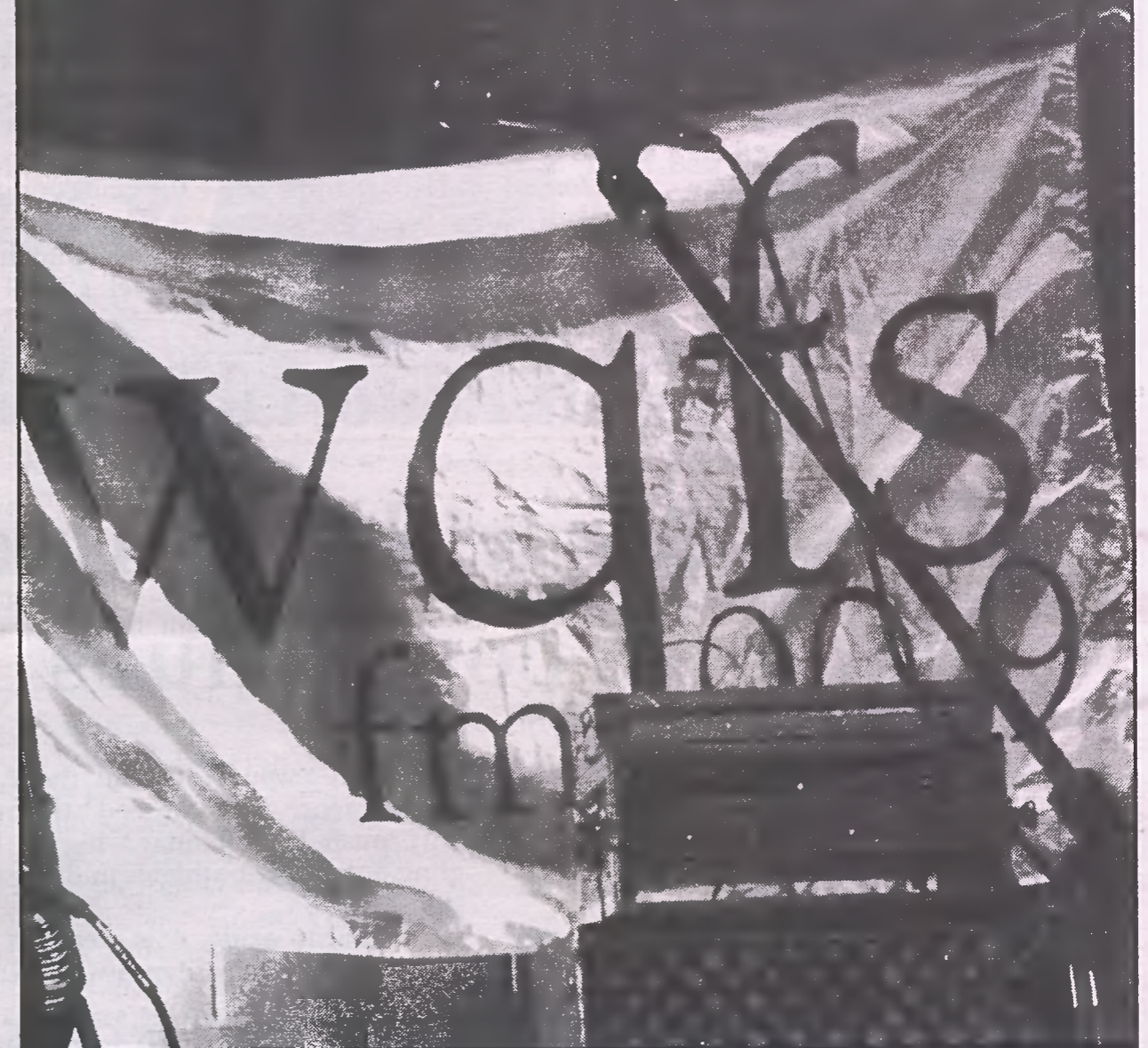
It is, of course, reprehensible to deny the existence of a genocide as horrific as the Holocaust, but the fact that Ahmadinejad has made such statements shows how blinded people can become due to complexities of politics and religion intertwined.

There is no need to respect what Ahmadinejad has to say; some of it just seems absurd. But there is benefit in listening to what a perceived enemy has to say.

By listening, perhaps Ahmadinejad will cease to evade questions, and American will gain insight into the mind of a man we find so contemptible. ♦

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Students appear un-enthused about 2007-08 Bryan Series speakers

By Joanna Bernstein
STAFF WRITER

Some of the players: Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman. Oklahoma's U.S. Representative from 1994-2002. The author of the New York Times best seller "All The President's Men."

They are better known as Jane Seymour, J.C. Watts, and Carl Bernstein.

The query: are these semi-significant, socio-political figures in contemporary culture going to spur enough interest or excitement among Guilford students to get them to attend their presentations? The answer: it's debatable.

This year's Bryan Series speakers, while all accomplished and dedicated to worthy causes - AIDS relief, exposing corrupt politicians, and protecting women's rights - haven't exactly triggered student enthusiasm.

Speakers from previous years have

included Desmond Tutu, Madeleine Albright, and Colin Powell. When they appeared, all of them had recently been in the limelight. In comparison to past speakers, this year's guests are less culturally relevant, and they don't motivate Guilford students to leave campus and hitch a ride to the War Memorial Greensboro Coliseum.

So, did Guilford decide all of a sudden to lower the bar for speakers that they bring in for their highly acclaimed Bryan Series? Probably not. The more appropriate question would be whether or not Guilford receives adequate student input about what speakers they choose to recruit for the Bryan Series.

There is already a great deal of student-administrative communication on campus, but there could be more. More efficient communication between students and the administration could integrate student input with administrative interests in

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regards to the selection of the speakers.

Now for some solutions and suggestions. Most importantly, those making the selection should survey students about the types of people that they would like have come in and speak to the campus community (within reason of course, no one is expecting Sean Penn to come in and talk about how empowering it is to go around New Orleans with a camera crew of 5 to capture his picking up a piece of debris from a roof near the bayou). Additionally, the survey should include the kinds of issues that students would like to see addressed during the speakers' presentations.

For future Bryan Series speakers, perhaps Keith Stroup, the founder of NORML

(National Organization for Reform of Marijuana Laws) could come talk about grassroots social action and community organizing. His presence would be appropriate since Guilford was ranked #13 for reefer madness in the Princeton Review.

Additionally, having someone along the lines of pop-culture essayist Chuck Klosterman come in and speak would be appropriate. Even though some students may not have heard of him, what 18-22 year old, (or anyone older who cares to reflect on their younger days) with raging hormones and an appetite for sugary cereal and cheap marijuana wouldn't want to hear the author of the book "Sex, Drugs, and Coca Puffs" speak? You tell me.

Or, better yet, tell the administration. ♦