



Kelly Campbell's artwork appears in the University of North Carolina '49er Times and is reprinted through the National Student News Service.

Editorial

Passive Activism

War is on everyone's mind. It interrupts our studying, permeates the classrooms as planned lectures subordinate to concerns about the daily activities in the Middle East. Students on campuses throughout the United States are responding in myriad ways: protests denouncing President Bush's action, rallies to show support for the troops, pleas for peace, shouts to "kick some ass." The White House is carefully watching you for your response: will another anti-war movement re-play the student activism of the 1960s? On Meredith's campus, that's not likely to happen.

Some Meredith students subscribe to the misinformed notion that the United States is fighting for democracy. Whose democracy? Kuwait is far from a democratic nation as we know the word. Other students have said that we are fighting to protect Americans. When asked, "Protecting Americans from what?", they respond, "From Saddam Hussein." Iraqi SCUD missiles admittedly have a long range, but it's highly unlikely that Hussein would target his missile launchers across the Atlantic. The point being, many Meredith students seemingly haven't

bothered to try to learn what the purpose of the war really is.

For women in general, war is something in which only men participate. Our involvement is attached to fathers, brothers, uncles, husbands, and boyfriends who are serving or who may be called to serve. However great the impact, it is only peripheral to us.

We cannot begin understand the Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome that Vietnam vets suffer and will surely be suffered by returning American soldiers and POWs of the current war.

Some of our students still believe they attend a "girl's school" and comply with its complementary attitude that girls do not question authority: If President Bush says it's OK, then we must be doing the right thing because he says so. Whatever the right thing is. The girls' school mentality says, "I'll just go on to class, now, thank you very much. Mr. Bush doesn't need me to attend a rally (or, for heaven's sake, organize one) to show my support of his decisions."

Conversely, those who protest the war haven't been very vocal, either. They seem resigned to the fact that voicing a dissenting

opinion can't make any difference. While it seems unlikely that Bush would hold a press conference along the lines of "Well, lot's of you don't seem to like what's going on over there, so we're pulling the troops out of the Gulf and sending them home," one only has to go back a micro-distance in the course of history to see that public opinion about the Vietnam War made a very big difference to one president's political career.

In times of crisis, we women of this campus seem to turn inward rather than outward. Our signs of activism are passive at best. We wear ribbons, we pray, we watch television, we talk to our roommates.

In the olden days, women were supposed to stay home and be wives and mothers, not bothering their simple minds with politics and such. The first students who filled Meredith's campus were rather forward-thinking activists for their day. They wanted to be doctors and lawyers, run for political office and publish their opinions. They wanted to make a difference in their own lives and in the lives of others. We can do the same today. Can't we?

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