

## EDITORIAL

## Weekend MSU riots are a cautionary tale

## At issue:

Direct conflict between students and authorities can be avoided by softening dialogue and actions.

**The Daily Illini Editorial Board:**

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Sometimes words aren't enough to describe a big story. We're used to seeing footage of police in riot gear march in far off places trying to disperse crowds.

But this weekend we saw images of a riot at Michigan State University that resulted in more than 50 arrests and the use of tear gas against college students.

The estimated crowd of 3,000 to 4,000 weren't protesting or fighting for anything (their right to party notwithstanding). It seems that the chaotic scene stemmed from a block party called Cedar Fest that spiraled out of control. After one officer was hit by fireworks and revelers starting hurling beer bottles, police were

forced to act.

Authorities say that Cedar Fest was actually banned in the 1980s after the event got too out of control. Apparently, the event was revived thanks to Facebook (what else?) and included messages that may have incited the chaos. More disturbing was that some reports say people in the crowd started shouting at the police to use tear gas.

Does any of this sound familiar?

What happened at MSU shows just how delicate the relationship between students and authorities really is. Judging from reports, our own annual campus event, Unofficial St. Patrick's Day, is nowhere near as troublesome as

some of the events in MSU's past.

But an event that was supposed to have been dead for 20 years resurfacing should give administrators and local governments pause when they use wildly inappropriate rhetoric to describe Unofficial. After all, we saw what real chaos looks like at MSU.

In fact, this year's Unofficial was incredibly docile with few arrests, tickets and no major injuries. But there's no guarantee that will be the case next year, especially as more efforts are made to kill Unofficial.

We are concerned that escalation between students and authorities may lead to incidents like the unfortunate events of this weekend, but on our own cam-

pus. Instead of engaging in the annual cat and mouse game every spring, both sides need to find ways to work together to maintain the delicate balance of fun and safety that was shown this year.

Attempts to kill Unofficial may be successful in the short term, but they will do nothing to prevent the next big act of rebellion someone on this campus comes up with.

In fact, it may just provoke them.

That would be a shame, especially for a campus that has shown it can handle a big celebration, whether on Unofficial or after an incredible upset of a conference rival such as Ohio State.

## Rev. Wright's good outweighs the bad

Barack Obama has faced many attacks; from the nonsensical comments about not wearing a flag pin to the allegations of secretly being Muslim, the junior senator from Illinois has been forced to defend himself on more nonpolitical issues than any other candidate. After adequately defending himself from every other accusation, critics now are harassing him for his membership in Chicago's Trinity United Church of Christ.

The church's former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, has been called every name except the one his mother and father gave him. He has been called insanely stupid, unpatriotic and a black supremacist, just to name a few. All these ad hominem attacks stem from a few sound bites of him accusing the government of manufacturing AIDS or how 9/11 was a hoax.

Anyone who knows the Rev. Jeremiah Wright or has taken the time to research him will learn he is far from "un-American" or "unpatriotic." During the 1960s, Wright left college to voluntarily enter the Marine Corps to fight in Vietnam. After his tour ended, he stayed in the service as a naval medical technician, and during that time he received numerous White House commendations.

In addition, Jeremiah Wright is far from being "insanely stupid" because after his service in the military, he went to the University of Chicago where received a master's degree in theology and ministry.

Rev. Wright has dedicated his priestly career to his community. His church has more than 50 humanitarian ministries, including a technology center dedicated to teaching community members job-related computer skills. In addition, Trinity sponsors more than 30 college scholarships, including one personally funded by Rev. Wright himself.

Admittedly, he does focus on the plights of black people because the majority of his former congregation is black but that doesn't make him a "black supremacist" or "Africentric." To summarize a point made by Martin Marty, a professor of religious history at the University of Chicago, Trinity is no more "africentric" than synagogues are "Judeocentric" or Chicago Irish parishes are "Celticentric." They work to help their members.

One could even argue that Rev. Wright is the clerical embodiment of conservative ideology. He is a war veteran who has worked for his community and doesn't ask for "government handouts." Most conservative critics blame the black community for not being more independent and self-



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reliant. Here's a man who has done that, and these same critics demonize him. Doesn't that sound a little hypocritical?

Furthermore, some people are surprised by the racially toned and politically charged statements made in his church sermons. My question to them is, why? The African-American church has always been a place where blacks discussed race and politics. The African-American Second Baptist Church was created in response to racism. In Michigan in 1836, 13 black activists were given permission to create Michigan's first black church. The church became a "station" in Underground Railroad.

The black church was also the focal point during the civil rights movement. Let's not forget that Martin Luther King Jr. was a reverend. Jeremiah Wright's sermons would seem like a whimper when compared to the roaring speeches given by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. (like when he brutally attacked America for being involved in Vietnam in his lesser-known "Beyond Vietnam" speech).

Rev. Wright has done a lot of great things throughout his life, but I will admit that there are a few things I don't agree with; honoring Louis Farrakhan with a lifetime achievement award is one of them. I agree with Barack Obama and don't condone awarding Farrakhan, who has made so many anti-Semitic comments, but you can't judge Wright just off that one action. Nor is it possible to say that Barack Obama is somehow tainted by the actions taken by Rev. Wright.

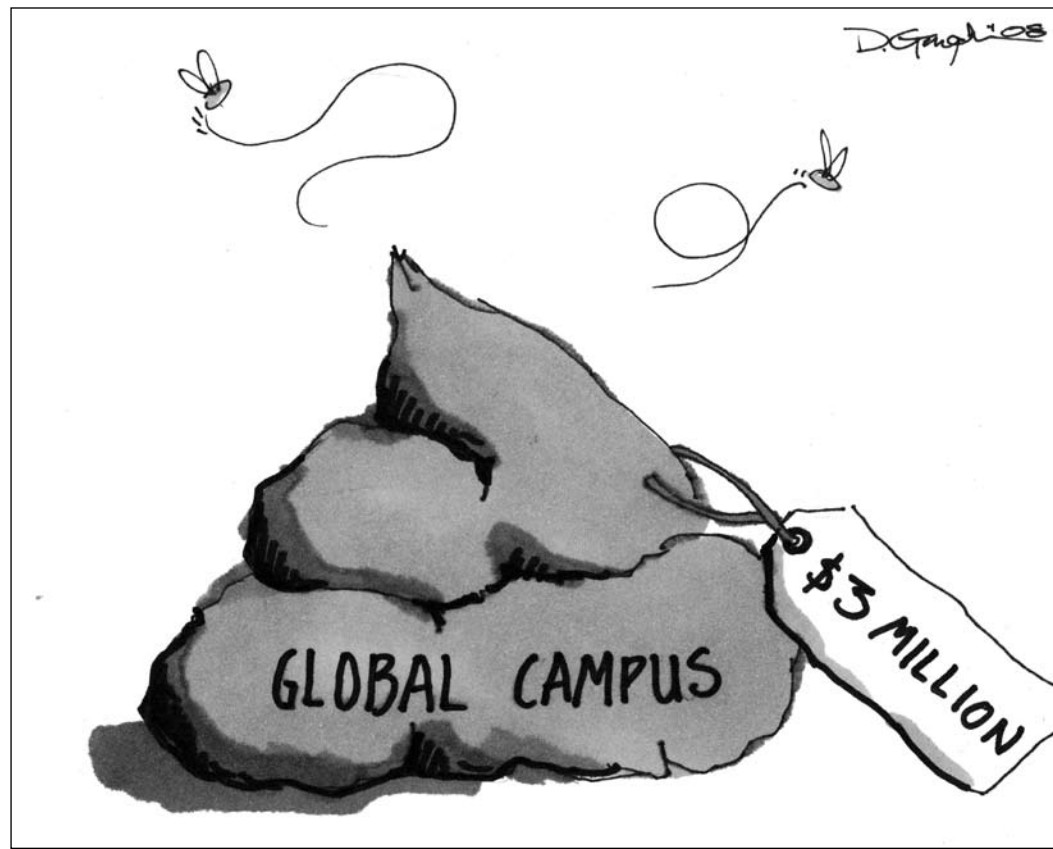
Just because Wright was his pastor and his personal friend doesn't mean he agrees with everything he has to say. You probably have a friend who believes or has said or done something you don't agree with, but I bet that action or belief has not altered your friendship. I would also wager that you're not tainted by your friend's action, so then why would Sen. Obama be?

For Barack Obama to be criticized and harassed because of his association with Rev. Wright is ludicrous. The great things Rev. Wright has done drastically outweigh the bad. You can't sum up a man's 36-year humanitarian career in a 30-second sound bite.

Paul is a junior in political and computer science and regularly attends a black church at home.

Most conservative critics blame the black community for not being more independent and self-reliant. Here's a man who has done that, and these same critics demonize him.

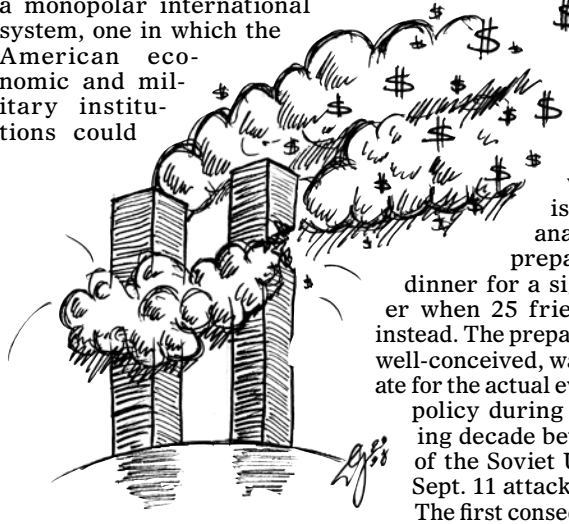
## EDITORIAL CARTOON DANE GAYDOS, THE DAILY ILLINI



## 9/11 changed American perception, little else

Common knowledge holds that the world radically changed Sept. 11, 2001. The hype around this "cataclysmic event" theory had enough momentum to dupe smart and well-educated people into believing terrorism was a new threat, when the reality was quite different. Despite the temptation to declare that 9/11 forever changed the foreign relations paradigm and gave birth to new international threats, its most significant result was the readjustment of perception.

For the 10 or so years before 9/11, Americans, and particularly international relations scholars, were on an emotional high. Due to the fall of the U.S.S.R., the U.S. was the victor of a four-decade-long militarized chess match. The collapse of the "evil empire" allowed foreign policy theorists to rhapsodize about a monopolar international system, one in which the American economic and military institutions could



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dictate policy to the world. The EU, China, India, Brazil, Africa and the Middle East constituted only second-tier players in the global game, and America's dominance of global business and military power logically determined that everyone else would have to kowtow to our whims. Sept. 11, 2001, merely knocked sense into the power theorists, albeit too late.

Between 1991 and 2001, the U.S. experienced a cultural, financial and technological shift that, because we thought we were unchallenged in global power,

allowed us to build an economic and political structure maladjusted to the way the world really is. To make an analogy, imagine preparing a fancy dinner for a significant other when 25 friends show up instead. The preparation, though well-conceived, was inappropriate for the actual event. Such was policy during the intervening decade between the fall of the Soviet Union and the Sept. 11 attacks.

The first consequences of our miscalculation, obviously, were the terrorist attacks themselves and the growth of Islamic fundamentalism. Ten years of semi-isolationist policy combined with an inattentive administration allowed a radical ideology to rise and become a legitimate threat. The second result was the initial mini-recession of 2001 and the associated corporate scandals. Both companies and consumers had profited from the technological developments of the computer and Internet, but because there was no chief international rival, people and businesses spent the money liberally. After all, with no looming threat — like a Soviet-American nuclear holocaust — people can celebrate and shower their families with the spoils of victory (iPods, TVs, nicer cars, larger houses, etc.), and the government failed to revise regulations accordingly.

The third consequence of proclaiming U.S. power unchallenged lies in global warming. Even if the theorists were correct in stating that no other international actor could challenge American hegemony, our country faced the mounting threat of climate change. The 1990s featured the perfect circumstances to combat this threat: relative peace, unprecedented economic and technological growth and development, and the absence of an intense militarized conflict (for example Iraq or Desert Storm).

Finally, we are just now experiencing the ultimate price of our complacency. With all the economic thunder generated

over the past 15 years, and with the supposed absence of a threat, people and corporations "forgot" about saving for the proverbial rainy day. The 2001 recession was merely a perfect storm of the terrorist attacks, corporate scandals and the realization that money does not in fact grow on Web site trees. What we face now is a much deeper threat, one aggravated by irresponsible government spending, an unwillingness to fix smaller problems when possible (such as paying down the national debt, regulating big business, balancing a trade deficit and adapting the work force to the new economy), war and foreign oil dependence.

The decade between the U.S.S.R.'s collapse and the U.S.'s awakening to the threats of radicalism, financial inequity, a strengthening (and better-governed) EU, and cheap South Asian labor could have been used to prepare us to better fight these threats. Making the economy more environmentally friendly, less oil-dependent and more fiscally sound, as well as reorganizing the industrial-military-intelligence complex to better fight the looming ideological non-state threats would have been a better use of the time. As the cliché says, however, hindsight is 20/20. The lesson Sept. 11 demonstrates, though, is that there is always work to be done.

Lee is a senior in mechanical engineering and he enthusiastically embraces the coming of spring (two weeks late).

## QUOTES OF THE DAY

"At this time, and in light of recent events, I believe President Bush should not plan on attending the opening ceremonies in Beijing, absent major changes by the Chinese government."

—Democratic presidential candidate HILLARY CLINTON on Monday.

"I always thought if you put your name on a bill, you should be ready to take the blame if you're willing to accept the credit."

—Arkansas state legislator WILL BOND on a law he accidentally passed that would have allowed anyone in Arkansas, even toddlers, to get married. In a special session this week, the Arkansas legislator and the governor repealed the law. Now, as before, males 17 and older and girls 16 and older may get married.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Semantics play big role in covering Israeli-Palestinian conflict

In an article underscoring the important role that semantics play in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (namely, with respect to the word "intifada"), I was struck by the irony of Marie Wilson's careless characterization of Israel's West Bank barrier as an "apartheid wall" in her April 4 piece on "Cafe Intifada."

This may well be the term that Students for Justice in Palestine utilizes to portray the structure, but Ms. Wilson's choice to use such a partisan

description without quotation marks smacks of irresponsible journalism.

Indeed, it would be no more appropriate to describe the barrier as a Fence for Life, as it has been depicted by the eponymous Israeli movement and other pro-Israel constituencies.

The diligent use of putatively neutral language in characterizing aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict not only avoids implicit bias but further incentivizes readers to familiarize themselves with the intricacies of this complex and costly dispute.

JEFF BROWN  
Graduate student

### Global Campus: Global disaster

President White's expedition into the turbulent waters of cyber learning has proved to be foolish at best. After \$3 million, lots of hot air and a long battle with the University Faculty-Student Senate, President White has gathered 10 (yes, 10) students into the "global" campus. Neighborhood Campus might be more fitting of a name. Why is the University of Illinois, a prestigious world-renowned university, competing with the University of Phoenix, which does not even deserve the title of "University"? Cornell and New York University failed miserably when they attempted quality

cyber learning. Why do we think we can do much better?

The reality of the situation is that President White wanted to make a quick buck from cyber learning. The original intention of the program was a low-standards, high enrollment system to maximize profit. Then the University Faculty-Student Senate rightly stepped in to enforce academic standards and prevent a system with TAs grading thousands of Online students in a sweat-shop-like setting. The end result: a program with no purpose.

President White, please tell the University, why is Global Campus worth the time and energy?

FRANK CALABRESE  
University Faculty-Student Senate