

EDITORIAL

World leaders have Olympic opportunity

At issue:

Continuing unrest in Tibet needs response for the good of the games.

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Few events receive the level of hype that the Olympic Games generate. The attention paid to the selection process and the host city's preparations are followed as closely as a horse race election. And for good reason.

The games bring hundreds of millions of dollars to the host and act as a showcase for the country's culture. The other side of that coin is that they also bring with them increased scrutiny. This year is no different as China prepares to host the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing.

However, the pomp and circumstance that the Chinese government has been preparing is being marred by unrest in Tibet where monks and other eth-

nic Tibetans have been protesting Chinese rule since March 10, the 50th anniversary of the uprising that resulted in the Dalai Lama's exile.

Claims about the violence differ. Notably, Tibetan authorities emphasize deaths they claim are a result of Chinese aggression, and official media in Beijing highlight violence against ethnic Chinese peoples perpetuated by protesters in the inflamed regions.

As the conflict rages, Chinese authorities find themselves in the uncomfortable position of quelling domestic violence while simultaneously trying to persuade the world that progress is being made on the human rights front. Adding to the pressure are poli-

ticians, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who are becoming increasingly vocal in their calls for change.

And so they should.

In October 2007, a U.N. resolution called upon "all Member States to cooperate with the International Olympic Committee in its efforts to use sport as an instrument to promote peace, dialogue and reconciliation in areas of conflict during and beyond the Olympic Games period."

Even though the Olympics are an opportunity for the peoples of the world to come together in the spirit of athletic competition, the leaders of the world have a responsibility to continue to push

China to adopt reforms, beginning with allowing independent observers and journalists to assess the violence in Tibet for themselves.

It is obvious that the status quo is acceptable to no one. Not the Tibetan protesters who want freedom, not Chinese authorities who want the Olympic Games to proceed unblemished, not world leaders pushing for reform, not journalists and certainly not Chinese citizens whose access to information about the conflict is filtered.

When the world's athletes gather in Beijing, their performances should be matched by those of their leaders in calling for peace, openness and freedom.

Keep affirmative action about race

There is no perfect policy or law. Affirmative action is no different when it comes to things like college admissions. Professors Michael Eric Dyson and William B. Allen acknowledged that idea in their opening statements at last Tuesday's scholarly affirmative action debate. In addition, they both acknowledged that affirmative action doesn't affect most people.

Professor Allen said, "affirmative action only affects the top 50 or so colleges and universities and, in the case of black folk, hardly more than 5 percent of all (blacks) who go to a university. Every other college or university accepts just about everybody that applies, if they meet very minimal qualifications."

His idea is supported by a Pew Research Center study that found more than 80 percent of applying students were not affected by this controversial policy. But even understanding that affirmative action isn't perfect and doesn't affect everyone, it still needs to be in place, and it still needs to be about race.

To quote professor Dyson, "to understand affirmative action one must look at the historical context... since race was used as a demerit in the past, it is only just and logical to use it as a merit in the present." The purpose of affirmative action is to level the playing field. Since blacks were historically discriminated against because of the color of their skin, they should be given a preference today to make things equal.

One example is that many schools give credit for legacies. If your mother or father attended a university in the past, you are given preference. Blacks, who have historically been unable to go to college, are at a disadvantage. Affirmative action helps correct that scenario as well.

People often suggest that affirmative action should be about socioeconomic level, but there are already policies in place that address that issue. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA, helps students in need pay for college. In addition, many application processes look at a student's economic affluence in their determination of who gets accepted. If affirmative action was changed in such a way, it would negate its purpose. After all, both poor and "rich" blacks faced discrimination.

Though Allen believes that the race-based preferences practiced in affirmative action policies are flawed, he cannot



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deny that blacks' educational progress was greatly hindered due to Jim Crow laws. He states, "no minority group has taken to education like the post-slavery blacks. Up until the 1920s, blacks' pursuit of education was explosive; evidence of this can be seen in the over 120 historically black colleges that were constructed in the 40 years after the Civil War."

In order for blacks to "make up for lost ground," policies are needed to counteract actions of the past. But when blacks use historical references in support of affirmative action, we are often called whiners and are told to "just let it go." But these same critics also use past references for their counter arguments. They quote the Constitution and the words of our "forefathers" as legitimizing claims to why affirmative action is unjust.

Why is that when it is black history that is being used as support, it is deemed unworthy or illegitimate, but when it is the history that critics choose it is seen as the perfect counter claim?

One of the quotes most frequently used by affirmative action critics are the words of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.: "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Professor Dyson counters, saying, "As eloquent and inspiring as those words are, they are the words of an ideal future, not the words of the realistic present. Affirmative action is only the starting steps to a color-blind future. It is the basement, not the ceiling. Yes, one day Dr. King's words will come true, one day affirmative action will not be needed, but that day isn't today."

Affirmative action is needed to counteract discriminatory acts of our past. We cannot ignore these problems and expect them to fix themselves. Gandhi once said "... if you do nothing, there will be no result"; that rule applies here.

Paul is a junior in political and computer science and is one of the very few blacks who benefit from legacy preference.

EDITORIAL CARTOON DANE GAYDOS, THE DAILY ILLINI



Time for Hillary Clinton to step aside

Rumor has it that there's a primary election under way. This is odd given that the calendar says April and those elections are usually over just after Super Bowl Sunday. However, the 2008 election, as every conscious American is well aware, is not an average election.

Months ago, around the time the Bush administration made its 500th serious miscalculation, pundits decided the president from 2009-2013 would be a Democrat. As I have long argued, these "experts" know nothing, and right now, the Republicans hold a significant advantage over the Democrats: They have a candidate who can fundraise and rally his power base while the Democrats



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are still campaigning to be the presumptive nominee. This situation is extremely unfortunate not merely for the Democrats but for the American population because John McCain, despite being a generally decent person and politician, still draws support from the party that managed to undermine the greatest accomplishments of the executive branch of the last 20-odd years. To let said party continue in power follows the adage of insanity: doing the same thing repeatedly yet expecting different results.

The media cast the contest between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama as a battle between experience and hope, pragmatism and idealism. Those characterizations, though, understate the critical juncture of history in which we live. Very rarely, very rarely can people recognize that they live in a historic moment. Those of us who were old enough to understand Sept. 11 already had such an experience. Now, we are on the cusp of another, and I do not mean because one year from now we may have a black man or a white woman as our commander in chief.

Instead, this primary is actu-

ally a referendum on us, on America and what our place shall be in the 21st century. Sen. Clinton is an extraordinarily well-qualified candidate. While she most certainly exaggerates her "experience" from her time as first lady, her policy proposals appear to benefit the most people at the least cost. She is certainly more of a "Big Government" person than McCain, but she hardly qualifies as anything approaching a socialist, despite conservative protests to the contrary. Every story from those close to her or her campaign suggests that she actually cares about people, though her media facade demonstrates that she struggles with appearing "too feminine" or "too tough," as if those are opposites (really, are our mothers not tough enough after putting up with us?).

Obama, on the other hand, has "it." His charm and charisma is unmatched in recent politics by any, even the great schmoozer, former President Bill Clinton. His policies, while populist in nature and more or less well formulated, lack the precision of Sen. Clinton's. In contrast to her detailed explanations, Sen. Obama talks in grandiosity and paints vivid pictures of a post-modern America. He manages to subjugate details to a second tier of conversation, describing instead his vision of a 21st century United States such that individual policies seem insignificant. Historically, many candidates have promised change

QUOTES OF THE DAY

"Delivery so far has fallen well short of expectation."

-British Aviation Minister JIM FITZPATRICK on the estimated 19,000 bags still waiting to be returned to their owners and hundreds of flights that have been cancelled due to problems with the brand new Terminal 5, a state-of-the-art system that was built to relieve congestion at Heathrow Airport.

"We are receiving lots of offers from people right now, saying I can get this person here, this person there."

-FRANK RIEGER, spokesman for The Chaos Computer Club, a German hacker group, on news that it has acquired the fingerprints of Chancellor Angela Merkel from a drinking glass and may auction them off to protest government use of biometrics in identification. Other people are offering prints of other leaders.



OTHER CAMPUS JESSICA THURSTON, THE TARTAN (CARNEGIE MELLON U.)

Can you save the world by driving a green composite car?

I want to save the world. And so, I really want an Aptera.

I want to be a sort of opinion-writing, pink-moccasins-wearing, buggy-driving rock star who travels around the world and designs uber-green and self-sustaining cities. To do all that, I'm going to need a getaway car that's as manageable and efficient as the work I'm trying to create.

And so, I really want an Aptera.

Created by Steve Fambro and Chris Anthony, the Aptera is a car that is super light, super

environmentally friendly and super awesome-looking.

Imagine a sleek, rounded, beam-like shape that rests on two front wheels and one rear wheel, all three of which are covered by smooth fairings that continue the shape of the vehicle. At first only available in California, the Aptera is classified by that state as a motorcycle (although you don't need a motorcycle license to drive it).

It has three large windows for increased visibility, two of which are mounted within its wick-ed DeLorean-esque gull-wing

doors. It's "Back to the Future" meets buggy.

I won't lie. The Aptera is to me, an over-the-top buggy aficionado, kind of like a grown-up version of my own tiny composite vehicle (composites being products made of two materials that, once bonded, have a high strength-to-weight ratio), one that could take me past the limits of Tech and Frew streets and out into the growing world of green practices and sustainable design.

The Aptera began as a concept to unite aerodynamics, automotive engineering and composite

technology into a fuel-efficient, safe car that could have practical, daily use. It's definitely small, designed to hold only two passengers (but with ample storage space in the rear).

But the fact that this highly designed, highly publicized car is so small and lightweight is incredibly important to the future of personal travel vehicles.

Smaller cars, in being lightweight, use less gas and thus reduce carbon emissions. Several small, energy-efficient vehicles such as the Mitsubishi iMi-EV and the Toyota IQ Car are

gaining popularity among the general public.

Their popularity is limited due to the overwhelming size of SUVs that dominate our nation's roadways which makes lightweight cars seem smaller and potentially dangerous by comparison. If more people lean toward purchasing smaller cars, SUVs will retain less dominance.

This is where the Aptera shines. This mega-solid composite vehicle, which can get more than 300 miles per gallon, is going to be available to Californians later this year, and for less

than \$30,000. In fact, you can even reserve your own at www.aptera.com. It is really laudable that such a high-performing system is finally going to breach the boundary between the conceptual world of automotive engineering and the physical world of the public market.

With the Aptera, we're getting somewhere — and though I may have to move to California to get one, maybe it will act as my second buggy, my next step to get me from city to city and place to place, wearing my pink moccasins the whole way.