

Opinion

If She Is Unable to Say Yes, Then She is Saying No

ERIN JAMES

The college party scene is a battleground, with a sharp line dividing the sexes. Going back to school is one of the year's greatest excuses for getting hammered, but while men are planning how to best revel in the re-found abundance of opportunities for getting drunk and getting laid, women are being told to arm themselves against a "new" threat. Drug-related rapes are on the rise in Santa Barbara and women are shouldering the burden of responsibility and prevention.

The Facts

GHB (gamma hydroxybutyric acid) is a colorless substance that depresses the central nervous system and has been alleged in several sexual-assault cases in Santa Barbara this summer. It has been prevalent as a recreational drug, but more recently it has been dubbed a date rape drug due to its ability to induce unconsciousness and memory loss, especially

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when combined with alcohol. In the bar scene on State Street, the aggressive Party Smart campaign has been launched to educate women about the dangers of "drink-drugging."

The Old Town Restaurant and Bar Committee, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Dept. and Fighting Back, a division of the Santa Barbara Council on Alcoholism, were very active during Fiesta this year, handing out "awareness cards," putting posters in women's restrooms in bars and making lids available for protecting drinks. The return of college students will result in a re-intensification of this campaign.

"Club drugs dubbed 'date rape' drugs have become popular substances to slip into drinks and have potentially lethal consequences," reads a framed Party Smart poster hanging over the toilet in the women's bathroom at The Wildcat. The poster gives tips on risk reduction: Don't leave your drink unattended, don't accept drinks from strangers and stay in groups. Bob Stout, owner of The Wildcat and chair of the Old Town Restaurant and Bar Committee, believes that bars have a responsibility to their patrons.

"As club owners, we have a great opportunity to get the word out," Stout said in a recent *Los Angeles Times* article, "I can't be worried about our club being labeled or anything like that. We'd rather be part of the solution."

The Party Smart effort was triggered by a sexual-assault case at The Wildcat in January. A 24-year-old woman was allegedly raped in the backseat of a car after two men slipped drugs into her tequila drink at the popular downtown bar. Investigators said one assailant photographed his smiling roommate sexually assaulting the incapacitated woman. Despite these images, a judge threw out the case in July due to lack of evidence.

Sexual assaults involving date rape drugs are hard to prosecute because the drug dissipates quickly in the body — GHB may leave the system in as little as eight to 12 hours after ingestion. The characteristic qualities of these drugs are confusion and loss of memory. Often the woman is very unsure of what has occurred, and by the time she does report the incident it may be too late to trace the drug.

Soon after this first incident, reports of a serial GHB rapist hit the news. In July, Andrew Stuart Luster, a Ventura County resident, and heir to the multimillion dollar Max Factor cosmetic fortune, was arrested and held on \$10 million bail. He faces 50 charges involving multiple rapes, weapon possession, drugs, kidnapping and illegal videotaping. Investigators said they seized an estimated 200 videotapes and photographs from Luster's residence. Many of these tapes allegedly show Luster engaging in sexual acts with sedated or unconscious women. If convicted, Luster could face life in prison, plus 150 years.

The first rape accusation against Luster was filed by a 21-year-old Santa Barbara woman. Two other women are named in the case, and four women have come forward to be interviewed since the initial rape charges were filed. Isla Vista Foot Patrol Lt. Butch Arnoldi confirmed that very recently two more women have contacted

the police who believe Luster may have also sexually assaulted them. With four of the women living in I.V. and one in Santa Barbara, the media has claimed this is a wake-up call for a town with an unjustified perception of safety.

The Problem

These cases are both shocking and terrifying; however, in the broader context of sexual assault in the college community, drug-related rapes represent a small percentage of overall attacks. During the 1999-2000 academic year only one drug-related rape was reported. Although Arnoldi believes the actual figure may be higher than is reported, it is alcohol, not drugs, that is the overwhelming factor in most I.V. rapes.

"In the majority of sexual assaults in this community at least one party has been drinking," he said.

Santa Barbara Rape Crisis Center (SBRCC) is concerned that the campaign to educate women about "drink-drugging" is drawing attention away from alcohol intoxication as a key component in rape statistics among college-age women.

"The consequences of [consuming] too much alcohol are very similar to these drugs," said Gracie Huerta, Community Education coordinator for SBRCC. "Alcohol is [still] the drug of choice in rape."

The statistics are daunting — one national survey of college students reported 1 in 4 women

are victims of rape or attempted rape. And these are not attacks involving strangers: 80 percent of rapes are committed by acquaintances. I'm sure these figures come as no great surprise. Women have been taught from a young age that they are walking targets. They are taught to protect themselves — learn self-defense, don't go out alone, don't walk in darkened

areas. And now, women also have to protect their drinks?

There is an arms race between the sexes. Rapists keep finding new tools of the trade, and women are continually informed of ways to combat these threats. But are we achieving any real substantive change without discussing sexual assault in a broader social context?

Carol Mosely, Rape Prevention Education Program coordinator at UCSB's Women's Center, is infuriated that so much attention is being focused on women taking responsibility for protecting themselves against rape.

"I am not opposed to talking about reducing risks," she said. "The problem is if you stop there and think that is the answer, because it is not the answer."

The Solution

The problem is not women's inability to protect themselves from rape, but rather men's inability to recognize what consent is and prevent rapes from occurring. As well-intentioned as the Party Smart campaign may be, the responsibility has been placed on women to prevent rape. This feeds into the prevailing attitude that if a woman doesn't take every precaution then she is somehow responsible for what happens to her. It is this mentality that accounts for the extremely low reporting rate for sexual assault; SBRCC had 321 calls to their hotline last year and only 25 were reported to the police.

Whether we are discussing the sick bastard who commits serial rapes by incapacitating women with drugs, the buzzed college guy who takes advantage of a woman too drunk to be able to consent, or the stranger lurking in the shadows, the attitude is the same. Rape is not a crime of passion and lust, but rather power and control. Women are disempowered as an entire class within our society, not only by the act of rape, but also by its threat. Rape infringes upon women's First Amendment rights by eroding the very meaning of "yes" and "no." What is the point of free speech if the words no longer carry any power?

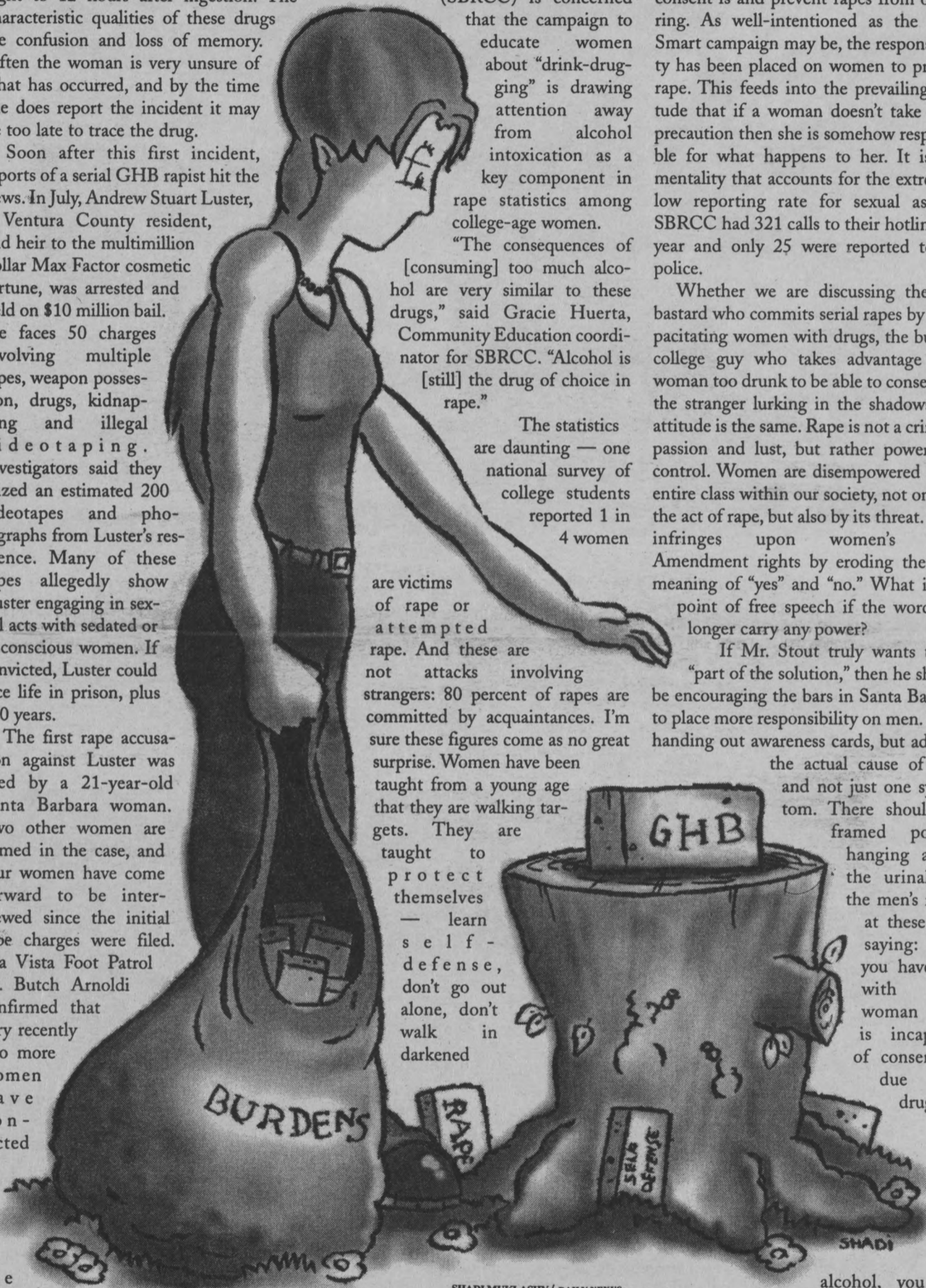
If Mr. Stout truly wants to be "part of the solution," then he should be encouraging the bars in Santa Barbara to place more responsibility on men. Keep handing out awareness cards, but address the actual cause of rape and not just one symptom. There should be framed posters hanging above the urinals in the men's room at these bars saying: "If you have sex with a woman who is incapable of consenting due to drugs or

alcohol, you are committing rape and you face eight years in jail."

Opening dialogue between the sexes is an important first step. People's varying definitions of consent will surprise you. But without this discussion, the division between the sexes will continue to widen, and the "solution" to rape will drift further from our grasp.

Erin James is a Daily Nexus opinion editor and is starting the Rape Crisis Center's Advocacy Training in October.

For more information on this program, contact SBRCC at 963-6832. For confidential counseling and advice, contact the UCSB Women's Center at 893-3778; or the 24-hour Rape Crisis Hotline at 564-3696.



SHADI MUKLASHY / DAILY NEXUS

Opinion

Staff Editorials:

Editorials are the consensus opinion of the Nexus editorial board. All editors are invited to sit on the board by the editor in chief.

Columns and Letters

We welcome all submissions. The length is three pages, unless otherwise specified.

Staff Editorial



MIWA MATREYEK / DAILY NEXUS

Veteran Advice

Isla Vista Do's and Don'ts From the People Who Have Been There

Every week the *Nexus* sorts through recent reports of "public intoxication" in Isla Vista, which amount to more stories than we have room to print. I.V. is not what we would call a safe town, but it is not what we would call dangerous either. Violent crime and rape continue to decline, but they still exist. In addition, burglary and alcohol-related crimes (minor in possession, open container, drunk driving, etc.) are way up. Arrests for public intoxication increased almost 300 percent from the 1998/1999 school year to the 1999/2000 school year.

But try looking at it another way. In 1992 the I.V. Foot Patrol instituted the five-year plan in an effort to curb the mayhem of I.V.'s infamous Halloween celebrations. We are now in year eight of this plan. The road to responsibility has proved long, and IVFP still scrutinizes the hordes of revelers who transform DP into an exotic bazaar on weekend nights.

This year the police will continue to augment their presence in I.V. and for the first time will be enforcing the law against distributing alcohol to minors at a party. According to Lt. Butch Arnoldi of the IVFP, "The community is becoming less tolerant of the party atmosphere." The fact of the matter is there are people in this town who do not control themselves and may inflict unprovoked harm upon others. This applies to both men and women. Understand the cops are here for a reason and that they also view drunk revelers as victims. A night of drinking cut short by an officer is preferable to filling out an assault or rape report in the morning.

This is not to suggest that abstinence is the only answer.

Groups in which there is at least one sober friend can do wonders. IVFP officers will usually allow this sober friend to play escort, which is much better than a night in the drunk tank. Cruising with a responsible friend greatly reduces chances of being raped, beaten up or talked into fighting.

Watch out for out-of-towners. I.V. has a reputation, and it gets more than its fair share of visitors who think they can loot and pillage without repercussions. And believe it or not, I.V. does have a gang known as the Goleta 13, or G-13. They have been known to walk into parties to steal the keg and seriously (and we mean seriously) gang beat anyone in their way.

But most of all, know your own limits. Don't jump over burning couches, you'll get burned. Don't pee in public, you'll get rolled. If it's not your bike, walk.

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bong rips in front of open windows, it's a legal invitation for the cops to walk right in. If it's after 10 p.m. on a weekday or midnight on the weekend, turn the music down. Not only is after-hours music another invitation for an IVFP officer to visit, but it usually results in a \$110 ticket (plus there's also the chance they'll spot the ganja on the table).

We know students want to party. So party, but do it responsibly. The more belligerent you get, the tougher the cops get, and that just makes it harder on everybody. You have too much going for you to carelessly create a criminal record. So please, be kind to yourself and others, because as much as we love journalism, writing stories about alcohol abuse, rape, overdose and assault isn't any fun.

Common Sense and

CURTIS BRAINARD

I would say that I'm fairly impressed by mankind's ability to effectively organize and run the modern world. If you step back and take a good look at the inner workings of political, economic and social organizations, you'll find a terrifically complex set of rules. Society is a puzzle that requires very serious thinking about very minute details to make sure the pieces fit right. For this reason I am all the more astounded when simple common sense escapes our more far-reaching and basic decisions.

My little brother and five of his friends were busted recently for being drunk at their high school dance. The kids were fairly buzzed when they arrived, but probably would have made it inside, had it not been for the fact that two of the six were holding stolen tickets. When the school administrators pulled the group aside to ask about the tickets they noticed the mild intoxication. Now this is an obvious lapse in the common sense department — as a general rule you only break one law a night. The first transgression is usually not too difficult to pull off, but the odds of getting popped increase exponentially after that.

However, though the actions of my brother and his friends were reckless, my quarrel is not with them — high school students are not, after all, reputed for common sense. My beef is with the school system and the punishment it handed down to three of my brother's friends who were members of the football team. I say *were* because they are members no longer. You see, in the Acalanes School District, athletes are forced to sign a contract, pledging they will not use alcohol or tobacco during

the season. Now under 18 and forbids the use of contract is fuck with, not to m fact that one child under 18 t But the kids got

Here's the k the other two fri not football play suspension. Th received a three- aforementioned unequal punish crime, but my br beforehand, m team without Furthermore, a not have been b play and a ban have missed the

Enough With the

MATT HURST

While I was in Hawai'i on vacation over the summer, I got to thinking about how much it sucks to be 20 years old. Although I was looking forward to turning 21, which would happen in a little over a month, I could not help thinking about the restrictions the U.S. government and lawmakers have placed upon certain age groups.

When you are 17, you can be tried as an adult in a court of law (if you are 12 these days, you can be tried as an adult, pretty crappy, something I'll save for another column), but you can't vote new lawmakers into office to try to reverse things. Once you turn 18, you become, officially, an adult. You can vote, you can die for your country, you can stop being a dependent on your parent's tax returns — all these cool things, but wait, there's more.

You can go to war as an 18-year-old and die for the stars and stripes, yet you can't go into a bar and order a beer after a long, hard day of shooting machine guns. If you are enlisted in the military, you can drink so long as you are with them or on base, but once you step off base and into the rest of the world, you are just some teenage punk again. You want respect, but you can't get any.

You probably already have a job by 18, and if not, then you will be getting one soon. This means, most

Have you ever found yourself comparing politicians to your favorite garden vegetable?

Does Isla Vista strike you as a walking, talking comic reel?

Feel like putting those hours of classroom doodling to good use and make a few bucks on the side?

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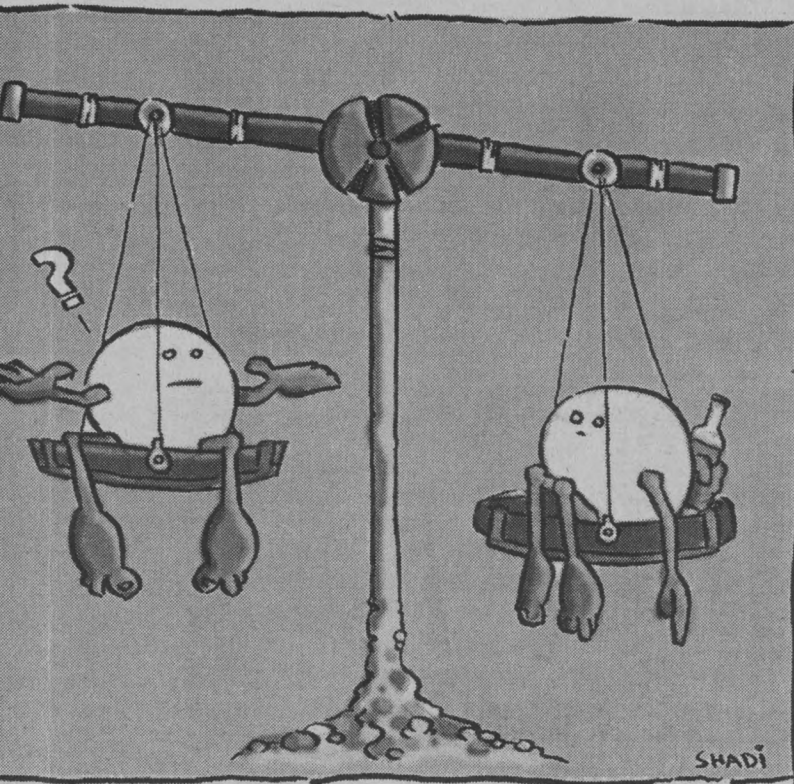
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submissions, but please include your name and phone number. For columns, maximum three pages, typed and double-spaced; for letters, one page. All submissions become the property of the *Daily Nexus* upon being turned in and are edited for length and clarity.

How to Reach Us:

Drop by the Nexus office under Storke Tower, call us at (805) 893-2691, fax us at (805) 893-3905 or e-mail us at <opinions@ucsbdailynews.com>.

and Punishment – Help, Don't Hurt



SHADI MUKLASHY / DAILY NEXUS

son. Now most of these kids are 18 and the state of California the use of these products, so the it is fucking pointless to begin not to mention the extra-bonus at one may not legally bind a under 18 to any form of contract. kids got the boot regardless.

es the kicker. My brother and er two friends of his whom were ball players received a three-day ion. That's it. The athletes a three-day suspension plus the mentioned boot. Not only is this l punishment for the same ut my brother, not being a play- eh-and, may now sign up for the without further delay. ore, a drama student would e been bumped from the next d a band member would not ssed the next concert, had either

one of them been in the same position. When a concerned mother brought this point up before the principal, he stated that "athletes, cheerleaders and student government are held to a higher standard." Hmm, did we forget line one of the school bylaws, which says all students must be treated equally? But screw it, let's forget the legal mumbo jumbo and talk common sense.

Let's use the typical scenario. Most sports programs tend to keep kids off the streets by offering them a positive outlet for their adolescent energies. So say some kid with decent grades but a fondness for the drink gets busted and is ousted from the team. Instead of spending that two hours after school at practice he's got two more hours to indulge his alcoholic passions (or worse) before his parents get home from work. Now, let's try the worst case

scenario. Some senior with shitty grades but a helluva 'n arm is playing varsity ball and UC Berkeley is scouting him. This guy makes a bad call one night (as most kids are bound to do) and goes to the dance drunk. Boom, he's off the team, loses his \$200,000 ride and ends up at the local community college and a blue-collar job. I ask you — how has the school helped this student to succeed?

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that the offender should get off scot-free. In fact, I believe that athletes *should* be held to a higher standard, but kicking them off the team can only lead to bad things. For God's sake, kids will be kids! I say, call that athlete down every Sunday for the next six weeks and run his ass until he drops. Give him after school detention or Saturday school. But, instead of holding the offender on school grounds under the watchful eye of the teachers and coaches, they give him more time to fuck around elsewhere. Who thought this was a good idea? It makes absolutely no sense and I fail to see how the school district can continue to maintain such an asinine policy.

You may be thinking that this has no relevance to you as a college student, but think about it. You are still part of an educational system that is by no means perfect (and some of you even continue to act like high school students). One day many of you will have children in the public school system or you might even take part in the administration of that system. Keep your guard up and think about the policies that affect you and the younger generations.

Curtis Brainard is the Daily Nexus opinion editor and can't even dance unless he's drunk.

The Legal Hypocrisy, We Are Not Kids

likely, you will start at an entry-level position because you are too young to be placed any higher. Yet, you are an adult.

After the thrill of turning 18 wears off, you become 19, the last year of teenage-hood. Yay! Then you enter your 20s. Yay again! You can't go to a bar legally and you can't drink legally, you can vote, but you're still too young to move up in the business world. When you turn 21 you think things are going to get better. They won't. I know this. At first, you will become an alcoholic because you will start buying beer next to the

You can go to war as an 18-year-old and die for the stars and stripes, yet you can't go into a bar and order a beer after a long, hard day of shooting machine guns.

milk and eggs when you go to the supermarket. Then, the novelty will wear off and you'll be sick of going downtown and dropping \$60 to get wasted.

But, say you are an adventurous person and you want to drive across the country during winter break. You are 21, so you can have a beer in each state and you most likely have a line of credit (how good it is doesn't matter, we're talking logistics here), but you don't want to push your car to the max driving over

the Appalachians, so you want to rent a car. Now, we come full circle back to my Hawai'i trip. I wanted to rent a car for a day with my college-bound sister, so we could spend a day killing time together before we went to our respective universities. I asked my mom about getting one, and she told me you have to be 25 to rent one. Twenty-five! That's insane.

What? Hertz doesn't trust you driving their car when you are 20, old enough to vote, have an established line of credit and no traffic tickets, but they will have their spokesperson be a wife-beating (maybe killing) ex-football star? Logical, I know. So, this is where my ranting and raving comes to a close. Well, almost.

What in the name of O.J. Simpson are American lawmakers thinking? OK, we'll make the kids vote for us and die for us at 18, but we won't let them drink for three more years. Then, to be real asses, we won't let them into office for another 10 years, and in between, we won't let them rent a car. What a bunch of Oscar Mayer bologna.

I could go die for my country tomorrow, but on the way there, I can't drink a beer or rent a car to take me there. Super. God, I love America!

Matt Hurst is the former editor-in-chief of the Daily Nexus and thinks America, for the most part, is great except for the politicians.

The Endless Summer

Why Getting Back to the Books is Better

MARISA LAGOS

This summer did not go by quickly enough. Most people probably won't agree, but personally, I'm ready to hit the books. Why? Five years ago, summer meant endless days of lying on the beach under the sun; summer now means the "opportunity" to get a job that pays well, to work like crazy in an inane attempt to alleviate the debt that is accumulating as I type.

By the end of last Spring Quarter, I was desperate for a long, possibly endless summer vacation far away from lectures, books and any hint of a classroom. I was ready to embark upon a blessed few months far away from Storke Tower and the UCen, ready for a real job and ready to make some real money.

My summer didn't go exactly as planned — instead of paying off debt, I racked up more (the booze and laziness pervading I.V. certainly didn't help), almost went crazy in the 9-to-5 routine and am now officially running and screaming back to the warm bosom of UCSB. Back to the classes that don't start 'til noon, a campus with plenty of room for mistakes, a job that I enjoy and a small percentage of that odd breed who would actually go see George W. Bush as he passed through Santa Barbara.



SHADI MUKLASHY / DAILY NEXUS

It's not that the real world is scary. Most bosses are surprisingly thrilled with mediocrity and "spacing out," and other forms of wasting time are a quickly mastered art form. No, what has sent me running in the direction of graduate school (PhDs aren't that hard to get either, are they?), or at least back to a leisurely career as an undergrad, is that the real world is *depressing*. I don't think the majority of Americans can even stand their jobs, let alone like them. And even more upsetting, most don't expect to.

So why are we, as a society, so content to continue doing things we blatantly dislike? Because we've never been encouraged to do anything else. And we're scared of not being "successful," scared of rent and car payments and bills and all of the responsibilities that come with the real world. Some of these are valid fears, but none are worth compromising happiness for. Because the truth is, we're at a part of our lives when we really can (and do on a daily basis) choose what will become of our futures.

What's your major? Are you happy with it, with your classes, with the career path that you're embarking upon? This should be a time of trials and errors, ultimately ending with an experience that is both educational and enjoyable, and leading to a path in life that is also educational and enjoyable. If you don't like what you're doing now, where will you be in 20 years?

Meanwhile, I'm seriously considering becoming a professional student — I figure I have a few years before they start coming after me for the loans. If I can't handle sleeping to the serenades of breaking bottles and couches burning forever, I'm at least aiming to enjoy it all while I'm here. And next summer, it's all about Mexico.

Marisa Lagos is a Daily Nexus assistant county editor. We accept full responsibility for her cynicism.

Opinion

Pass the Ham, There is No Stuffing in This Turkey

BRENDAN BUHLER

So, which chimp howls the loudest and throws the most feces?

It is an election year, after all — we have to choose.

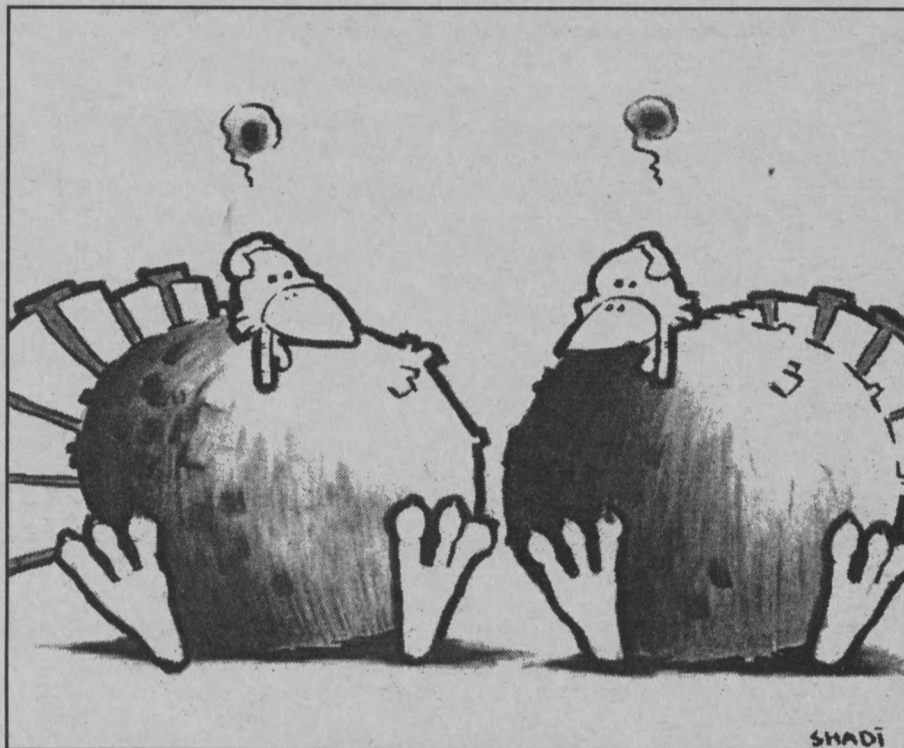
Once upon a time, we chose our leaders for their ability to inspire us, to ennoble us, to, dare I say it, lead us. After Nixon, we gave the fuck up. Now we just want to be left alone. And the powers that be in the Republican National Committee and the Democratic National Committee are not stupid. They can see that people who want to be left alone don't vote because they're inspired. They vote, when they vote, because the other candidate annoyed them. So, when it comes to the presidential turkey shoot every four years, they nominate the most bland, inoffensive, fat and happy bird they can find.

After all, if we wanted a rooster to stand up and crow the time of day we would have demanded Mario Cuomo, Ann Richards or John McCain. But no, every time we sat down we asked for a little more white meat and cranberry sauce.

This year it's no surprise that we ended up with a pair of mediocrities coughed whole out of the stinking, cheese-doodle-encrusted mouth of government.

Both are native sons of Washington. Bush is trying to inherit the presidency from his father, and Gore is out to one-up his senator dad. Neither one of these lick-spittles has ever had to live without the guardian angel of power hovering over his shoulder.

When we sent the poor and unlucky off to die in the rice paddies of Vietnam, both of these wastrels were able to sneak out and let some unconnected chump grab a rifle and die without knowing why. Bush got into the National Guard with the minimum score (an orangutan with a



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SHADI MUKLASHY / DAILY NEXUS

pencil might have been more qualified). Gore at least joined the Army, but chick-enshitted his way into being a journalist for Stars and Stripes. A journalist, for chrissakes. In the army, for chrissakes.

"Sorry, I can't dodge Charlie's bullets right now, I'm busy writing about the winning hearts and minds with toothbrushes and pictures of Ann Margaret."

And now these two puzzle-wits, who couldn't even follow correctly, are asking to lead 250 million Americans and the world's largest nuclear arsenal. These two honkies, who have failed progressively upward in life, want to succeed to the highest office in the land. Two men, who represent more of the same and less of what's needed, want to be president.

Come November, you should vote.

If you're utterly cynical, you ought to vote because one of them is more evil than the other, depending on your point of view. For instance, if you're a Democrat,

you might realize that Bush is a dimwitted shit weasel who has sold Texas' environment to the highest bidder and left thousands of immigrant families living in dirt-floored shacks without running water. If you're a Republican, you might realize that Gore couldn't wipe his own ass without taking a poll to see if mothers aged 30-40 prefer front-to-back or back-to-front.

Either way, you gotta hate the other guy and worry who he would appoint to the Supreme Court.

The best reason to vote is not because of what these guys will do (hint: little to nothing), but because of what government can do when it wants to.

Government has, in the past, preserved some (but not all) of this country's natural splendors, shortened the workweek, held a safety net for the poor and the elderly, fought fascism and brought electricity to rural and impoverished areas. It

has also (in no particular order) enslaved blacks, ignored women, killed its own citizens and fought bloody wars in far-off places for no clear reason.

Important shit, in other words. And if you don't vote, you're saying you don't care what the government does. In the near future, you're saying you don't care if the United States gets involved in a bloody narco-war in Columbia, that income for the wealthy has skyrocketed while the poor can only stare from a distance, what happens to Social Security and who, if anyone, controls the Internet.

You know who will still be voting while you're sitting at home watching sitcoms? People who think prayer, but not evolution, belongs in public schools. People who think the war on drugs is a good idea. These people vote. If you don't, they win by default. And if you think they'll win anyway, because the only tangible difference left between the Republican and Democratic parties are a few letters, vote for a third party.

They won't win, but if they get enough votes they can have federal matching funds and maybe a slot in the debates in an election or two. Maybe even elect a few people to congress.

If you want to be pragmatic, check the polls a week before the election. If whichever brand-name candidate you hate is well behind in the state, go ahead and vote for someone you believe in. The evil shit-head will still lose the state's electoral votes, and you'll have done your good deed for the year. And short of assassination (which, attention Secret Service agents, is illegal and wrong), what more could your country ask of you?

Brendan Buhler is a Daily Nexus assistant campus editor and columnist. And when it comes to elections, he thinks you can't always get what you want, but if you don't try sometimes, you might just get what you deserve.

Diversity at the DNC, Still Thinking About Tomorrow

JOHN BENNETT

be just, I say never give up and never, never sell out.

Many people criticize political conventions because they're supposedly phony and worthless. Many times they're right. But the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles this summer was an exception. It was full of protest, substance, thoughtfulness and idealism. Retired Sen. Bill Bradley, usually a mellow, scholarly type, gave one of the most intense speeches — a speech that might surprise people who aren't interested in politics. He said:

The whole point of the American ideal is that opportunity is always present for all of us. Yet ... nearly one-fifth of the children in this country are ill fed, ill housed and ill educated.

Most of us would never turn our backs on a starving child, yet everyday we ignore 13 million poor children in America. If all of them were gathered in one place, they would create a city bigger than New York, and we would then see child poverty as the slow-motion national disaster that it is. If we don't end child poverty in our lifetime, shame on me, shame on you, shame on all of us.

But our ability to end child poverty and provide health care for all depends on our will to defeat the special interests and return politics to the people. ... Every generation has to fight for democracy in its own way. Our fight is campaign-finance reform. ...

... To all these young people who believe that America can

After the cheers, the crowd was silent, sober and touched.

The delegates also proved the openness of the Democratic Party — 18 percent were black, 8 percent were Hispanic, half were male, half were female. At one point during the convention, all 38 Democratic congressional women came together on stage, a purely Democratic sight. In contrast, there are just 17 Republican congresswomen.

A simple New York Times/CBS News delegate poll reveals more about the face of the Republican Party. Ninety were white, one in five were millionaires, and one in five were in the NRA. Most were lawyers or business executives who opposed gun control, environmental safeguards and campaign-finance reform. Not surprisingly, workers were represented at the Democratic Convention.

AFL-CIO president John Sweeney spoke of his parents, who were Irish immigrants and Democrats. His mother was a domestic worker, while his father was a driver and a trade-union man. Sweeney said, "In our modest home in the Bronx, three things were central to our lives: our family, our faith and my father's union. We knew that without our family there would be no love, that without our faith there would be no redemption, and that without my father's union, there would be no food on the table."

At the convention, I had the pleasure of witnessing

Caroline Kennedy's grace, Jesse Jackson's spirit, Joseph Lieberman's vibrancy and President Clinton's last great hurrah. Clinton said with a grin: "We [Democrats] proposed a new economic strategy. ... We sent our plan to Congress. ... Not a single Republican supported it. ... The Republicans said they would not be held responsible for the results of our economic policies. I hope the American people will take them at their word."

When Vice President Al Gore took the stage on the last night, he gave Clinton the respect due to him for his brilliant leadership. Then, Gore spoke of himself and made it clear that he is now independent.

Gore proclaimed, "millions of Americans will live better lives for a long time to come because of the job that's been done by President Bill Clinton. Instead of the biggest deficits in history, we now have the biggest surpluses. The highest home ownership ever ... and instead of losing jobs, we have 22 million new jobs. ... Our progress in the economy is a good chapter in our history. But," he added, "for all of our good times, I am not satisfied. ... We're entering a new time. We're electing a new president. And I stand here tonight as my own man."

Gore went on to give a speech that won millions of hearts. As a result, Americans have lifted him above George W. Bush in the polls. His speech was a blend of high principles and clear policy — the natural Al Gore.

John Bennett is a junior English major and thinks the sun will come out tomorrow.