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Community Covenant Taskforce Enters Final Semester

By Ryan Ledebur

The Presidential taskforce formed for the purpose of evaluating Houghton's Community Responsibilities is currently in its final semester of review. The taskforce, which has been meeting every other week since September 2007, has been making a careful study of the document, often starting meetings as early as 7:30 a.m. to ensure that enough time is dedicated to the task. This two-year process is slated to finish by the end of the spring semester. This semester the taskforce will be examining issues like hospitality, the alcohol restriction, and global justice, as well as looking at the structure of the document as a whole.

The taskforce has been actively modifying the document, as evidenced by the recent Jazz dance hosted by the Flats and Townhouses, which was made possible by the taskforce's decision to reconsider the dancing policy, allowing for social dancing with certain limitations. Some of the issues, like hospitality, that are included peripherally in the current document will be given more emphasis in the new revision.

According to taskforce members, input from affected parties has been

and will continue to be solicited. Presently, the student members of the committee are proposing issues for further discussion and gathering input from the student body through the Student Government Association.

The final document is scheduled to be complete by the end of the semester, in time for the college trustees to approve it in May. It is the hope of the taskforce that the statement will then be ready to send to students coming to Houghton in Fall 2009. In the past, the document has been revised roughly every ten years to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Each time, a committee of community members, including students, convenes to improve the document and ensure that it reflects the college's purpose and mission.

Professor Gary Stith, chairman of the taskforce, does not believe that the revision is the result of a change in the college's purpose. Instead, he says, "when prospective students, faculty, and staff consider joining our unique 'family,' this document has historically attempted to spell out just exactly who we are."

In addition to Stith, members of the faculty on the taskforce include: Dean of the Chapel John

Brittain; Professors Ndunge Kiiti, Mike Walters and Connie Finney; and Academic Dean Ron Mahurin and Vice President for Student Life, Sharra Hynes. The staff is represented by Coach Matthew Webb and Lori Smith, a PC Support Technician at Houghton, and the students are represented by Student Government President Michael Danylak and Amy Labzentis.

Labzentis, who has been on the committee since the beginning of the process, believes the taskforce has made significant progress. She stressed that the new document will "take on the Houghton vision more directly," adding that, "many of the issues have been previously addressed in the document but we have been attempting to be more explicit."

Additionally, Labzentis emphasized that the taskforce is attempting to make the document something that students will not ignore or discard, but something they will read and acknowledge as a true statement of our community covenant. The taskforce has the daunting task of countering the casual attitude of many students toward the document.

Labzentis lamented that many

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Black Delivers Lecture on Economic Crisis

By Jordan Donald Zaner

America once again finds itself enduring economic hard times, severe enough that some have even implied we might be entering a "New Great Depression." While comparisons of current unemployment, which is around 7.2% nationally, with the Depression of the 1930's rate of nearly 25%, show that the situation is not dire, we are nonetheless facing a severe financial crisis. In order to help provide some clarity and answers to questions about the current economic situation, Houghton economics Professor Bob Black gave a lecture on Thursday, January 15 entitled "The Causes and Consequences of the Financial Crisis of 2008."

In his talk, Black isolated a number of factors as potential causes, which can be traced back to the 1990s. The Community Reinvest Act encouraged "subprime lending," offering high-risk (but high-return) loans to people who did not meet the traditional requirements for a mortgage in an effort to boost home ownership among lower-income groups. The effects of this act became particularly visible after 1995. Easier loans led to an increased demand for houses, which in turn resulted in a rise in housing prices.

Next, the collapse of the dot-com bubble left many investors looking for the next investment opportunity with above-average returns, which they found in the artificially-boasted housing market. The dot-com bust, combined with the economic difficulties that followed the September 11th terrorist attacks, led the Federal Reserve to lower interest rates in an effort to encourage spending and get the economy moving forward again. However, these lower rates made mortgages even more affordable, causing even more people to start buying houses, and driving up house prices even further.

These market trends continued in the early 2000s, as the skyrocketing value of real estate lead many to begin a speculative game of

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Praxis Speaker Focuses on "Differently Abled"

By Shane Marcus

This past Tuesday, Marva Dawn delivered a lecture titled "Hospitality toward the Differently Abled." Dawn was visiting Houghton both as a part of Praxis week and Houghton's lecture series. As a Praxis speaker, she spoke Tuesday morning in chapel on Christian hospitality in the New Testament, using Luke's description of the criminals on the cross as her text. Michael Walters, chair of the Religion and Philosophy department, introduced Dawn, explaining how she had impacted his own thoughts on hospitality through her writings and lectures at the Calvin Institute of worship. He described her as a woman who had more "joy per square inch" than anyone he had ever met.

Every time Dawn speaks, she does three distinctive things: she has her audience take a moment of silence to prepare their own hearts

for whatever God might speak to them. Next she greets her audience with the traditional greeting "The Lord be with you," and is quite upset if she doesn't receive a lively response "And also with you!" Then she prays for her audience, for her own words, and that the glory of Christ will be revealed "into the ages of the ages."

Her text for her Tuesday night lecture was John 13, the beginning of Jesus' discussion with his disciples at the last supper. She described the last supper as a private and intimate dinner, and a perfect example of how Jesus exemplifies hospitality. She called this time before his death his "last best wishes" for his friends and his church. Jesus' wishes were



Marva Dawn gives a lecture for Praxis.

that his church could have oneness with each other and model His hospitality to each other and to the world, modeling the love of the

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W out there

By Monica Sandreczki

Obama's First Days in Office

On his first day in office, President Obama contacted Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, King Abdullah of Jordan, and Mahmoud Abbas of Palestine in a show of willingness to commit to the struggle of Arab-Israeli peace and has also ordered the withdrawal of combat troops from Iraq within the next 16 months. He has ordered the suspension of trials in Guantanamo cases, five of which involved proceedings against possible suspects involved in the Sept 11 attacks. Expected to pass in Congress within the next month is the stimulus package amounting to \$825 billion. This is the dawning of what Obama calls "a new era of openness."

German Economy Struggles

Predictions for Germany's economy project a 2.25% decline in the nation's economy in 2009. In October, the estimation was a 0.2% increase. The German economy attributes about a third of the outputs from the countries under the euro. 2009 will be the worst year for Germany since WWII. There is also an expected 8.9% downturn in Germany's exports in addition to an anticipated unemployment rate of 8.4%, up from 7.8% in 2008. "The German economy is facing this year the greatest challenges since unification. Germany is integrated into the global economy like hardly any other industrialized country," said economy minister Michael Glos.

Hamas and Israel

The leader of Hamas, Khaled Meshaal, has demanded on Arab satellite television that Hamas be contacted by Western leaders because Hamas is a "legitimate force," according to Meshaal. The United States, European Union, Russia, and the United Nations who have stated that they will not deal with Hamas until Israel is recognized, accepts terms of peace deals set out by the Palestine Liberation Organization, and commits to give up violence. Meshaal calls the Gaza withstanding of Israeli attacks a victory due to Israel's military superiority over Hamas.

Melamine Victims Seek Appeals

Over 200 families of melamine poisoning victims, reported in late 2008, are seeking compensation from the highest courts in China. They have appealed to the lower courts, but to no avail, while the Supreme Court has not yet

agreed to hear their petitions. The government has already forced 22 firms to pay 1.1 billion yuan, but the 200 families are asking for a shared 36 million yuan. Melamine was put into milk to make it appear higher in protein, but caused the death of at least six infants and has caused kidney damage in thousands of people.

Kennedy Out of Senate Run

Caroline Kennedy told New York governor David Paterson that she will no longer be competing for Hillary Clinton's vacated senate seat in New York, according to an anonymous source. Her reasoning is linked to her uncle, Edward Kennedy, and his diminishing health, especially since his seizure during the inaugural lunch on Tuesday. Paterson said that he is considering Attorney General Andrew Cuomo among others for the position. Caroline Kennedy, daughter of the late John F. Kennedy, has never served in public office.

Bird Flu in Nepal

A recent bird flu outbreak in Jhapa, Nepal has led to the slaughter of approximately 12,000 chickens and ducks. The virus has not been found in Nepal's western regions, but is being watched closely in Jhapa, as well as in India. Poultry has almost disappeared from meat shops and sales have fallen 35%. There has been a standstill in the cross-border chicken trade, but no people have been reported with bird flu symptoms, though awareness campaigns have been launched.

Congolese Troops Ban U.N.

Congolese troops have established a blockade against United Nations peacekeepers at checkpoints in the capitol city of Goma. The blockade follows an agreement between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda to take joint action against the Hutu rebels of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the group blamed for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The two countries are long time arrivals and have been accused of fighting proxy wars through different rebel organizations and militias. Congolese authorities have indicated that U.N. troops would be kept out of the area for the entire operation against FDLR, which is estimated to last between 10-15 days. The agreement between DR Congo and Rwanda appears to have come without the consent of the Congolese parliament. Recent fighting between different rebel groups and the Congolese government has displaced over 1 million people.

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"house-flipping," buying houses simply to hold onto until prices rose, than selling them again for a profit. The market trends also encouraged people to purchase far more expensive houses than they could reasonably afford, enabled by the easy money available, convinced that they could sell the house later for far more than they paid and make up the difference. Black noted that these tendencies in this speculative market were further exploited by a number of morally questionable loan corporations, who took advantage of the shortsighted government policies of easy credit and low regulation.

This halt came last year, but its first screeches were heard in March of 2007, when news reports began appearing about the increasing number of failed subprime mortgages. The crisis spread throughout the rest of the year, as the inevitable confrontation with reality caused artificially high property values to plummet, and many people were forced into bankruptcy. The companies who had offered so many high-risk loans were now unable to collect; thus the crisis began to severely impact the financial sector, resulting in the failure of Bear Stearns investment bank last March.


Worried about a mass bank failure, the Federal Reserve took action to secure the financial industry by extending credit to investment banks and offering a new channel for loans to member banks. The government-sponsored loan companies Fannie Mae and Freddy Mac were effectively nationalized in order to prevent their collapse. The banks' financial difficulties caused them to tighten their lending, which led to a recession in the economy as a whole. This put particular strain on companies that sell goods usually purchased on credit, such as automobiles. Record-high fuel costs during the summer of 2008 added to economic

woes, especially by weakening the demand for automobiles. With the domestic automobile industry facing particularly hard times, the government extended special loans to some of the major automobile manufacturers in December. 2008 ended with the American economy battered, but due to action taken to secure the financial sector, far from "depressed."

Black noted that every crisis brings with it a flurry of finger pointing, and this financial crisis is no exception, insisting that a number of culprits share the blame for this economic mess. The first is government intervention in the economy, which was short-sighted and underestimated the threat of unintended consequences. The government encouraged banks to

Every crisis brings with it a flurry of finger pointing.

make high-risk home loans in an effort to raise home-ownership. However, these opened the door for predatory lending, and in the wake of the housing bust, many people are now worse off than they were before. The loose credit and de-regulation policies introduced after the 2001 financial crisis were adopted to rapidly bring us out of those hard times, but in the longer run fed into an artificial housing boom that ended in our current recession, which is much deeper than that of 2001.

Black pointed as well to unscrupulous opportunists exploited holes in these policy changes, preying on customers with adjustable-rate mortgages and further raising home prices through speculation. Mortgage brokers took advantage of loose regulation and the optimism of the boom atmosphere to falsify documents relating to home values and credit scores. Investment in the American housing boom extended far beyond American shores, and many over-eager foreign investors purchased mortgage debt (sometimes based on misleading information). The combined actions of all these parties set the stage for bank failures and a global financial crisis. 


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triune God who wants to be one with His people.

Dawn made the point that being finite is not a sin, and that each person needs to know their own limits. Sometimes, she reminded the audience, each person needs to excuse themselves from service on account of their own tiredness. She also made it a point to mention that Christians need to include their enemies in hospitality, even as Jesus served Judas communion at the last supper.

She made it a point to say that often the disabled become the enemy because of the way they slow others down. She urged everyone to take the time to put

themselves in the places of disabled people to understand how to extend hospitality to them. She gave a whole list of practical ideas, from taking the time to learn American Sign Language to sitting on one's haunches to speak to people in wheelchairs.

Dawn's own perspective on this is a special one, as a self-professed former "star athlete" who now has multiple disabilities, from braces on her feet to visual impairment. Shannon Tilley, December graduate and member of the Praxis planning committee, said "Instead of letting her physical limitations [burden her]...Dawn embraces, in her words, 'the parts of [herself] that do work'." 



Student Profile: Kerry Brogan

By Amy Buckingham

STAR: How did you become interested in pursuing video?

Brogan: As a freshman at Houghton, I planned on pursuing a career in the ministry, leading me to look for an internship at a church to get some experience. The summer that I worked for the church was spent learning my way around the technical components of the church, learning how to work the sound board and the basics of video and graphic work. With this work, I became more interested in the things one can do with technology, more specifically, video. About this time, the communications major at Houghton was undergoing a transition, being split into three departments: rhetorical communications, integrated marketing and media arts and visual communications. At this point, I switched my major to Communications with a concentration in Media Studies.

STAR: What kinds of opportunities has this interest in video opened for you?

Brogan: Through my video endeavors, I have been to every continent except for Asia, shooting mostly promotional videos. I've done many videos for Houghton, either on my own or in collaboration with Prof. Dave Huth. I recently traveled to London to shoot a promotion for the First Year Honors Program: The Meaning of the West. Outside of Houghton, I also shot a

video for World Hope International in South Africa, after speaking with their representative at World AIDS Day. I also spent much of last semester in Antarctica, shooting for the company Switchvert. I got involved with Switchvert when I filmed the co-owner's wedding, and met up with him again in South Africa.

STAR: What exactly did you do in Antarctica?

Brogan: I was the Audio Engineer for the production company, Switchvert. This means that I held the boom mics, gave out and placed wireless mics, kept the equipment in running shape, and made sure we had all of the supplies that we needed each day. I also ran a third camera if necessary. The production company was filming a group of eight Irish students on their journey

"We went swimming in the Arctic water (1.9 degrees Celsius.)"

to Antarctica and the science that they were learning during that trip. The trip was a month long, and 21 days of it were spent on a boat traveling from Argentina to South Georgia, to Elephant Island to the

Antarctic Peninsula. Most days we would take one to three trips off the boat onto land to observe wildlife, etc. Of the 150 people on the boat, there were two Americans and three South Africans, while the rest were Irishmen.

It was an intense experience because of the sheer amount of work that we did.

STAR: What did you learn while you were there?



Photo from Brogan's website

Brogan shooting with King Penguins in Antarctica.

Brogan: We often worked all day and most of the night, depending on what was going on. This was my first shoot with a real production company so I was the newbie. I had to learn to film in extreme conditions, on a boat in high seas where it's hard to get footing, in the tight spaces of the ship and in the close quarters with so many other people. I learned a lot about production and secondarily about animals and wildlife. No one can tell you how to hold a boom or get good audio in the conditions we were filming in. I had to learn by doing. I learned a lot about many different types of penguins and seals as well, although I did not see any Emperor penguins. One highlight of the trip was when we went swimming in the Arctic water (1.9 degrees Celsius). We convinced the

captain to let the production team jump off the boat. Because of the risk of instant heart failure they had a retrieval boat ready as well as a doctor on deck. Also, we made a four hour hike following the end of Ernest Shackleton's journey across South Georgia to the Stromness whaling station. It's not something many people get to experience, and it was beautiful and unique to film. We also spent a night in tents on the continent, falling asleep to the sounds of the penguin colony nearby. Through this opportunity, I learned a lot about video and am hoping to work again with Switchvert in the future.

Visit Kbrogan.com to see more of Kerry's work.

They perform. You vote.

Houghton's
got

SERIES PREMIERE JANUARY 24 8-10pm
SERIES FINALE JANUARY 31 8-10pm
Wesley Chapel

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students see provisions in the document regarding such activities as drinking or dancing as mandates against the activities themselves. "Not everything in the document is concerned with saying what are and are not Biblical ways to lead a Christian life," Labzantis says, "It is a covenant that we, as voluntary members of the Houghton community, agree to adhere to for the sake of the broader mission which we continue to seek - something which demands attention, dialogue, and commitment."

Stith stated that the document is "intended to serve as a reminder to those of us who the Lord has brought to Houghton of everything that we aspire to as believers and members of this community."

Student response to the document has varied in the past. Many current students have positive opinions about the document. Senior Jill Stewart thinks the covenant has

a positive effect on the Houghton community. "The rules provide a boundary that helps to create a stronger focus on study and building relationships rather than allowing participation in activities that could hinder academics."

"We're surrounded by people who want to live by the rules."

Junior Krista Gould is generally pleased with the document but looks forward to the revision of certain portions. "The old statement wasn't totally clear on drinking but otherwise the document seemed pretty appropriate."

Others, such as senior Nicholette Sample, agree that the rules in the covenant are not "forced down our throats." Sample believes that, "Rules are there to guide us and live in a community where we don't have to worry about drugs or alcohol. That's the reason Houghton is an easy place to live; because we're around people who want to live by the rules."



Houghton Highlander Erik Lefebvre Leaves Legacy as Goalkeeper

By Luke Sanford

Senior goalkeeper Erik Lefebvre has been named second team All-American for the NAIA for the second time (also earned this honor in 2006) by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America. The honor puts Erik among the elite in the country and Houghton's second best at his position.

Lefebvre has excelled as a four-year starter in the net and co-captain for the Highlanders in their 2008 campaign. He earned first team All-American Mideast Conference (AMC) this season, beating out last year's second team All-American goalie before moving on to earn national recognition. Lefebvre has been highly touted his entire career, and the accolades have not come without merit.

This season the 6'4" goalie from Ottawa, Ontario allowed only 17 goals—seven from penalty kicks—in 18 games giving him a .93 goals against average per game. On the season he amassed just over 100 saves leading the team to eight shutouts.

In 2005, Lefebvre earned Freshman of the Year for the AMC and first team All-AMC. The following year he was named first team All-AMC, first team All-Region, and second team All-American. As a junior, he was

first team All-AMC, first team All-Region, and honorable mention All-American.

Lefebvre joins Jamie Wellington as the only multiple All-American recipient in Highlander Soccer history. He remarked on the privilege of being placed among the elite of Highlander Soccer, "I feel honored to have worn the goalkeeper jersey in the wake of a long list of outstanding goalkeepers. People like Dave Dixon, Kevin Austin, Brian Davidson, Tim Mayhle and Steve Cox (to name a few) all paved the way for me and created a nationally renowned tradition for Houghton goalies." Lefebvre's comments are certainly modest, but don't let the big man fool you; he will be remembered as the best goalie to ever don a Highlander jersey. "Erik has had a fabulous four year career at Houghton. Not only has he been stellar on the field, but has excelled in the classroom and has been a joy to coach," says Matthew Webb, head coach of the Men's Soccer team. "I expect he will be playing at the next level professionally this summer."

While the book has been closed on his Houghton career, he hopes that it is only a launching point for a professional career. He has already had a tryout with the New England Revolution of Major League Soccer this winter and is



Photo by Joshua Gottman

Lefebvre hopes to go on to play professional soccer this summer.

headed to Charlotte, NC for a tryout with the Charlotte Eagles of the United Soccer League in February. Lefebvre has spent the last several summers playing for the Ottawa

Fury of the Premier Development League and running camps with Houghton alumnus Sanjeev Parmar in Ottawa.

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Faculty Art Exhibit Opening Tonight

By Megan Little

Five professional artists whose work and instruction shape many Houghton students will be exhibiting samplings of their current work in the Ortlip Gallery tonight. The reception for the show is from 6-8pm and will include brief comments from some of the artists along with snacks and hot drinks.

Ted Murphy ("Murph") has twenty-five watercolours on display, which represents around 10% of the four hundred-some paintings he did over the past year. He says of his works, "I consider them a kind of documentation of my life." They do indeed cover a wide swath of living, as some are of places close in and around his property, others of places far away: Europe and Asia. There are also paintings done while with his family in Maine and at ballgames.

Jillian Sokso uses a variety of materials to create mixed media prints. She has two series in the show, the larger of which explores the theme of ecology and our relationship with the environment. She makes use of handmade

Japanese paper, archival inkjet printers, and the techniques of silkscreen and collagraph. The smaller series is about decorative pattern and imagery and uses silkscreen and etching techniques.

Although he also works with videos, professor Dave Huth's work for this show is photographic. Huth is intrigued by "the feeling that all may not be as expected" and tries to "create that feeling of small surprise" in his images. "I take figures and landscapes" he says, "and I make small adjustments, small changes. I make them feel a little bit 'off.' Sometimes the result is creepy, or funny, or magical, or disturbing, or just weird."

John Rhett is displaying a number of paintings which were done onsite, during the art May term to Turkey and also on the beaches he visited.

Gary Baxter, who specializes in

ceramics, has a series of ceramics pieces in this show. They represent the various stages in his current artistic pursuit. Some of his early, three dimensional pieces show the influence of prehistoric Native American wall paintings. His recent works are on large ceramic tiles and

are done in his studio from the memories he has accumulated during the canoe trips and other excursions he enjoyed in the summer. He attempts in his artwork to capture not just

a visual representation of nature but also the sounds, scents and texture of his experience.


Whether you are an art connoisseur, someone who just enjoys looking great artwork, or, like me, someone who takes pleasure in the cheerful buzz of conversation and the strange dance of movement through the gallery, the Ortlip Gallery is the place for you to be this Friday night.





Legacy continued from page 4

More than his exceptional performance, however, will be missed as he moves on in his career. His size and enthusiasm can be intimidating at first, but those acquainted with him know he is a fun-loving, generous person who cares deeply for his friends and relationships. "Erik always put others first," Webb says. "For as talented as he is as a goalkeeper, and for as much as we will miss him on the field, the impact he has had on our community will be missed even more. Erik donated his time in numerous ways into this community, from volunteering in our Saturday morning gymnastics program to help with a special needs child, to running Saturday morning soccer sessions for children in the Fillmore community, to giving personal one on one goalkeeper training sessions for one of our loyal ball boys, to investing in the lives of my own children."

Truly, he has left his mark. "I feel like there could have been no better school for me than Houghton. I always wanted a big school and a high profile as a player but my experience here at Houghton has been far better than anything I could have imagined." Lefebvre's presence on the soccer field will be remembered for years, but the impact he has had on those who knew him these four years will last a lifetime. 

Andrew Bird Releases Latest: "Noble Beast"

By Jesse Stoddard

I only had to wait 19 seconds into the start of Andrew Bird's latest album "Noble Beast" for my ears to be satisfied with the sound that most fans recognize as Bird's most notorious and mysteriously alluring musical quality. Noble Beast introduced itself to me with an abating string preamble and of course, that infamous and ethereal whistle. The first track titled "Oh No" left me reminiscent of The Mysterious Production of Eggs with its steady, "Sovay"-like tempo and hand claps. The rest of the album, however, brought me into a world that explored different sides of Bird's rich and inventive musical span.

I'll admit that the rumors had me worried. Speculations that the new release would bring Bird to a

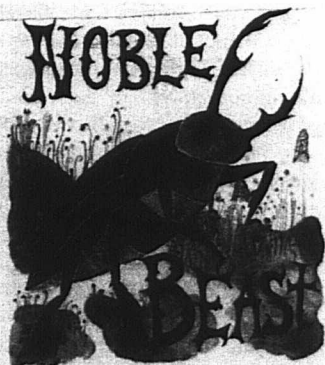
new height in pop-radio culture left me with a sense of unease. Would the new, stylistic changes also bring with them the characteristics that have come to define Bird's unique sound? This anxiety, however, was tempered after hearing "Fitz and Dizzyspells" and "Natural Disaster"—the two tracks on the album that I feel possess the most potential for radio projection. "Dizzyspells" bright and punchy guitar anthem had my foot tapping even before the surf-like and sprightly drumbeat had set in, and I was pleased with the lyrical exhortations Bird made to "Soldier On" during the song. "Natural Disaster's" pacifying guitar and violin plucks along with its notable choral arrangement brought out a personal side of Bird's song writing that will be appreciated by old and new fans alike. Most importantly, both of these songs, and a few of the other catchier songs on the album, remain lyrically above and beyond. There are few who can roll "I see a sea anemone" off the tongue quite like Andrew Bird.

A few of the other songs on the album left me with an unforeseen sense of surprise that Bird fans will appreciate, especially in the context of the album's more exploratory musical style. The track "Effigy" begins with a lengthy and melodious violin preface that went

thoroughly appreciated as I listened and contemplated Bird's innovative ability to take one instrument and with it create what feels like a hundred unique sounds. True, the more dramatic styling "Effigy" introduction with its "sea-chantey" like inclinations left me feeling, at times, a little like I was listening to Beirut rather than Andrew Bird, but the song's ensuing content held familiar harmonious and lyrical qualities that tied the ballad together in a mysterious but successful way.

The same could be said of "Not a Robot, But a Ghost," which I currently hail as my favorite track on the album. The high energy and Brazilian-like electronic beats of the song are combined with layers of metallic vocals and clangs of metal that truly personify Bird's expansive range of musical styles and made me want to dance with my headphones on.

I feel Noble Beast will have interesting effects on listeners in the mainstream and indie-music world alike, but I believe that Bird fans will not be able to help but feel proud of the lengths he has come as an artist. This exciting new addition to the Bird saga is one of stimulating exploration, connected under the classic and signature Bird style that I'm sure will leave few unimpressed with the album's entirety. 



*Unexpected Lessons:
St. Francis' Impact on Culture*

*Three papers on urban spirituality,
renaissance art, and personal identity.*

*Katarina Kjeffer: Francis' Choice: Finding
Self-Awareness within Societal Roles*

*Joanna Vance: With My own Bodily Eyes':
Francis and Artistic Sight*

Daniel Giles: The Poverty of Francis

Tuesday 27 January
7:00 PM, LIB 323
Refreshments following

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Africa's Obama: The First Hope for the Third World

A personal take on how Obama's inauguration is creating worldwide waves of optimism and hope

by Wesley Dean

"One, two, three....Obama!" screamed an energetic bunch of 50 beaming Ugandan orphans as their picture was snapped. I arrived in Kampala, Uganda only two Sundays ago, but one thing has already become clear: Africans have fallen in love with America's 44th president. Local supermarkets are being re-named in his honor, paintings of him are along the road, signs with his name hang between crude cement buildings. His name is on the tip of everyone's tongue. Countless times my fellow students and I have been asked in broken English, "Do you know Obama?" by people on the street. As soon as Houghton senior Ryan

Musser learned the Lugandan phrase "Wangala Obama" (Long live Obama), he was greeted with smiles and shouts every time he used the phrase. In fact, even if you don't know any Lugandan, a local language in Uganda, you can just walk around and smile at people saying, "Obama!" and they will most likely respond with a bright smile and say something positive in Lugandan (though they very well could be making fun of the stupid *muzungu*, or white person).

The Obama t-shirts being sold by street vendors along dusty roads are just one expression of the excitement in Uganda about the new president. But one should wonder exactly how high are their expectations? According to a poll

conducted by the Steadman Group, "five out of every ten Ugandans expect the country to benefit from Barack Obama's tenure as president." There are approximately 32 million people in the country of Uganda, so 16 million people who live 7,000 miles away from Washington D.C. (and who aren't even American citizens) expect to benefit from Obama's presidency. And this is in Uganda alone!

Across the continent of Africa, Obama has become a quasi-messianic figure for millions of Africans. People hope he will bring peace to a region that has been battling rebel groups for over 20 years. How do people think Obama will help them? Well, no one really knows for sure, just as

most Americans don't really know if his policies will turn the economy around or solve our problems in Iraq and Afghanistan. What Ugandans do know is that after a century of being oppressed, being told their culture is worthless, having their land taken, and being robbed of their dignity by white Europeans, when they woke up on January 21, 2009, the most powerful man in the world actually looked like them. Not only that, his father was actually born in their back yard. Obama gives them a reason to hope. After decades of having to put up with dictators and presidents who refuse to give up power, Africa finally has a role model who is ready to prove to the world that a black man can win a democratically elected presidency and govern with integrity.

Analysts are predicting that people are in for a huge disappointment. While Obama will surely bring about change, expectations both in Uganda and the United States are so high they cannot possibly be met. I, on the other hand, don't think expectations will be completely dashed. People will gradually bring their expectations back down to reality. What Obama has done is given many Africans a glimmer of hope. For those who don't know where their next meal is coming from, a glimmer of hope may be enough to keep them trudging on for one more day. Will Obama really make a lasting difference in Uganda? As local Ugandan Mwesigye Charles put it, "For now, we are just waiting to see."

Wesley is a junior at Houghton College.

The Face of Change: A First-Hand Account of Obama's Inauguration

A student reports on the emotional and inspirational experience of witnessing the swearing-in of our nation's first African-American president

by Kaitlyn Berger

On Tuesday, the forty-fourth president of the United States of America was sworn into office on the U.S. Capitol steps. All around the world, millions of people watched this momentous event.

Braving temperatures with wind chills in the teens, driving before the sun even peaked over the horizon, hundreds of thousands joined my two Houghton friends and myself as we slowly but surely made our way to the National Mall in Washington, D.C.. The Metro subway lines were standing room only but that didn't dampen the mood; the people were simply happy to be there. Local radio broadcasts said that nearly two million people were out to experience this moment in history live on the Mall, where solid crowds spanned from the Capitol building to the Lincoln Memorial, a two mile long mass of people. Upon trying to reach the Mall itself, the number of incoming crowds was so great that one could not help

but be pulled along by the current of people toward the nearest open viewing area. After nearly six hours of hustle and bustle, my friends and I finally made onto the grass, and although we were still a mile from the Capitol building, this was an experience to take in and remember.

Obama's inauguration as the nation's first African-American president made history. But more than that, his election and the new presidential administration which that entails stirs up visions of a new era and hope for a better country and a brighter future, especially during this time of crisis. Songs of "Na, Na, Na, Na, Good-bye" rose over the crowds as former president G.W. Bush appeared on the megatron (a huge screen shot of the inauguration, which was all anyone really could see on the field)

followed by thundering cheers and chants of O-BA-MA! O-BA-MA! that rang throughout the day.

Obama's inauguration address captured the heart of the people in D.C. from the start. The new president spoke of facing the challenges ahead with humility and returning to the principles that founded this country, such as hard work, imagination, honesty, and equality. He touched on foreign and domestic struggles, global care and hospitality to all peoples. Obama's vision of unity and moving forward seemed to breathe new life, hope, and

...although we were still a mile from the Capitol building, this was an experience to take in and remember.

vision into the American people, or at least the crowds gathered on the National Mall. Of course, standing amidst a million or so people can definitely heighten the emotion of any event, and this inauguration day was no different. But a sense of general satisfaction

would be the best way to sum up the atmosphere.

One woman I was standing by said she had been waiting for this moment for eight years, another said her whole lifetime, but for anyone who was alive to witness this great event, it was truly a moment to watch, listen, and remember. And I pray that God will give Barack Husein Obama the wisdom and courage to be the man so many hope he can and will be.

A final thought from A.W. Tozer:

"Well, the great men of the earth are still only men. Think what they would be willing to give for a supernatural gift of fortelling events of the future! The world leaders must be great men in some respects; otherwise, we would be there and they would be here!"

Kaitlyn is a senior Psychology and Educational Ministry double major at Houghton College.



From the Editors' Desk...

Thinly Veiled: Is Our Evangelism Clothed in Love or Condescension?

Last week's chapel not only managed to stereotype almost every major religion, but also overlooked the primary point of the gospel: love.

by Katarina Kieffer

We've been talking for a week now as a campus about the concept of hospitality, of welcoming the "other" with the same kindness we express to our friends and families. Praxis has given us an opportunity to explore a virtue that has been largely ignored in the contemporary world, and it's been a wonderful opportunity to not only reflect but be actively involved in modeling hospitality. Given this intentional focus, it is deeply ironic that the chapel service last Wednesday, meant as a sort of extended advertisement for a prayer and worship event, managed to unintentionally express everything that hospitality is not.

Chapel-goers that day were confronted with a request for their participation; ten volunteers were needed, and after the thirty second lag in which everyone looked around to see if anyone else would move, ten volunteers eagerly bounded up the chapel steps onto the stage. They were then split into groups, and the audience was told that one group, smaller than the rest, represented Christianity; the other the evangelized world; and the third, the unreached people groups of the world.

But the presentation didn't end there. The chapel audience was then told that one person in the Christian group represented the "committed Christian," characterized as faithfully witnessing, reading their Bible on a daily basis, and attended church regularly. The other two were labeled "so-called Christians," presumably because they failed to participate in these activities, and signs with that label were hung around their necks, lest we forget their sin.

The Christian religion, however, wasn't the only religion represented that day. Headscarves were placed on a female and male student in order to symbolize the Muslim faith; uproarious laughter

accompanied the wrapping of the headscarf around the male student's head, as it seemed some of the audience members knew enough about Islam to know that men don't generally wear the hijab. A dot was placed on the forehead of a male student, apparently meant to represent the Hindu religion; again, the placement of the tilaka or bindi, a mark used to represent sacred devotion, or beauty, was accompanied by even stronger laughter. A traditional Asian garment was pulled on over another student's head, presumably meant to represent the Buddhist tradition, and the woman helping acted as if she might shave the student's head, once again drawing laughs. Blindfolds were tied around the eyes of two students representing atheists

as the crowd was informed that this was meant to represent the way that atheists "chose not to see the truth of God in the world around them," and thus willingly blinding themselves. And, last of all, a student was handed a wooden shield and spear, and we were informed that this was meant to represent animistic religions, and the student shook the shield in mock anger while a final peal of laughter rang through the building.

As the final stage in the demonstration, ten more student volunteers were called up, and told to go stand by the group they thought most needed saving. We were then read off statistics about the number of Christian workers going to the respective parts of the world, with the majority apparently staying in the evangelized world. A video was then shown, in which the statistic "500,000 souls enter eternity each day without having heard the gospel" was flashed across the screen.

At every point, I kept hoping that someone would

suddenly announce, "And this is the way NOT to do evangelism." As the spectacle continued, however, it became obvious that this was not the goal. I don't want to rant about how offensive I, and many other students, found this display; I also don't want to launch into hypothetical speculations about how a person of one of those religious persuasions may have felt if they had been present that day. I would simply like to raise a few questions.

First, who determines what it means to be a committed Christian?

I don't want to rant about how offensive the display was; I would simply like to raise a few questions.

Is this something that we, as fellow fallible human beings, are really meant to judge? The criteria listed in the chapel service are really quite evangelical; do we simply relegate the Catholic and Anglican world to "so-called" Christianity, along with all the others who don't feel that speaking their faith is more effective than living it, or those who struggle with the way the church has capitulated to culture, or who don't necessarily hold the Bible as high as evangelicals do?

Also, what exactly does "unreached" mean? It might mean, as the statistic in the video told us, that 500,000 souls enter eternity without hearing the gospel, and therefore we bear the burden to present them with the Bible, which, apparently, is what committed Christians carry around with them. Are we to assume, then, that God has not manifested himself at all to these people, or just that they have yet to see a copy of the Bible as we know it? God does, after all, tell us that he reveals himself in the natural world, and since the Bible that we know now really came into existence sometime after 300 C.E., I don't think that the Bible is essential for salvation. And since I have yet to find a passage in which

it claims that for itself, I'll continue believing that God, and God alone, is powerful to save, with or without a book.

Quarrels about statistics and labels aside, there is certainly something to be said for urging Christians to be willing to serve others outside the faith bubble. Yet stereotyping members of other faiths, mocking their sacred symbols, and lampooning their beliefs cannot possibly be an effective method of outreach, and even more than that, of practicing the core Christian tenet: love. If we start by assuming willing unbelief, as in the description of the Atheist, we illegitimate true struggles with doubt and run the risk of implying that it is easy to see and accept God. If we see other faiths simply as wrong, we fail to perceive the common humanity and truth within that faith; after all, if we are all created by a good God, we can't possibly be utterly evil, can we? There must be vestiges of goodness, truth, and beauty in us all.

More than that, if we approach service with an attitude of superiority, as if people need us to bring them truth, we will simply alienate ourselves from their culture, and echo uncomfortably the doctrine of the "white man's burden," giving ourselves a false sense of importance. Quite simply, God does not need us to accomplish his purposes. So why does he involve us?

Simple: love. And it is with that knowledge that we ought to humbly approach others of different faiths, finding things in them and their cultures to love. This does not mean, of course, that we fall into a multicultural relativism; it simply means that we should be humble enough to recognize that we are not God, and we might just be able to learn something from "the others" if we have enough respect to see and accept them as they are.

Katarina is a senior Political Science major and serves as Editor in Chief.

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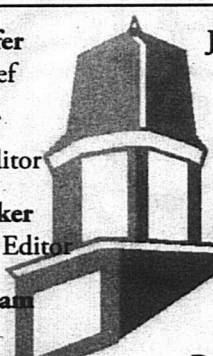
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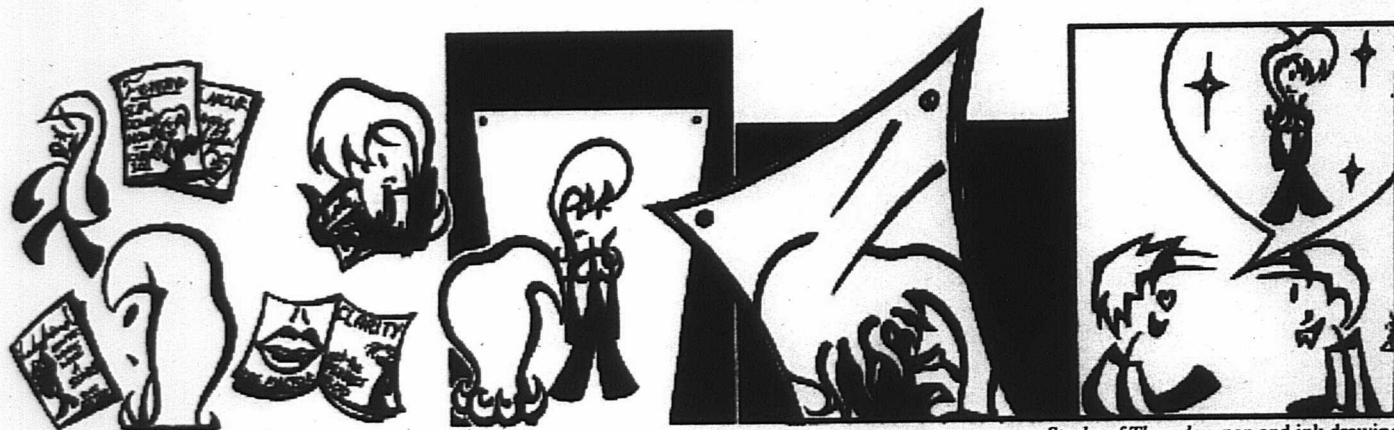
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artist: ANDREW OF THE WEEK: DAVIS

*Stroke of Thursday, pen and ink drawing*

Notes from the artist:

I've been drawing comics since I was very young, and by now I can't really help it. While I often work with an eye toward humor, I've become very interested in examining sadness as well. A lot of the sadness in this world is caused by the actions we perpetrate on each other, and these actions affect all of us differently, because we each have our own priorities, wants, and insecurities. This theme often bleeds into my Stroke of Thursday comic strips.

On the technical side, sometimes I try to execute good draftsmanship, but through my (until now) secret identity of Samantha Peartree, a fictional five-year-old, I've been trying to see just how much I'm still able to communicate while attempting to make bad drawings. I enjoy taking it the whole way and trying to think like a five-year-old as I write Samantha's comics, although sometimes I just use my alternate identity as an excuse to be cynical.

I have a lot of self-doubt about being a "real artist", because even as an Art/Writing major, I mostly draw in a "cartoony" style. On the other hand, even abstracted caricatures can express a lot about life, love, beauty, and of course, how our relationships with one another relate to all these things.

Andrew is a senior Art and Writing double major.

*All Your Dreams, brush and ink drawing*