

## Political Perspective: The forgotten war

When the average American hears the word Colombia, cocaine is usually what first comes to mind. Few of us think of the beautiful Latin American country which has been torn apart by 40 years of civil war. For almost four decades, the Colombian government has been at war with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Colombia's largest Marxist paramilitary group. Since 1985, over 60,000 people have been killed in the conflict, and it is estimated that everyday 20 Colombians are killed, 10 of those simply because of their political affiliation. Because the media has chosen to ignore it, most Americans know little or nothing about the war in Colombia, a war our tax dollars are fueling.

In the 1960's the United States launched its "war on drugs," an effort that hoped to stop the illegal trafficking of drugs from Latin America into the country. The United States spent billions of dollars destroying coca and poppy crops in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, but little changed. Coca production moved to Colombia, and the whole process started all over again.

In an effort to stop the production of cocaine in Colombia, the United States has given the Colombian government billions of dollars in foreign aid. The U.S. claims that it is providing Colombia with the tools

it needs to stop the drug trade; however 85 percent of our aid is going to the Colombian military, which leads many to believe that the United States is only interested in protecting its oil interests in Colombia, and that U.S. aid is only being used to help the Colombian government fight FARC. Our tax dollars put guns in the hands of the Colombia military, one that has one of the worst human rights records in the world. The U. S. Government, at its Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, formerly The School of the Americas, has also trained some of Colombia's worst torturers, and corrupt military leaders.

Although they continue to deny it, Amnesty International, Human Right Watch, and The U.S. State Department have all linked the Colombian military to far right-wing paramilitary death squads who are responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians including woman and children. Right-wing paramilitaries tied to the Colombian government are also responsible for the Segovia Massacre of 1988 which claimed the live of 43 civilians, three of them children. America's war on drugs has turned into a war on the people of Colombia. Because of our continued support for the Colombian military, and the death squads they are linked to, civilians have been

pushed into the conflict. Over 1.5 million people have been displaced by the civil war and almost all Colombians live in fear of being kidnapped, killed or "disappeared."

We must also remember that almost all of the drugs produced in Colombia are shipped for use by American addicts. Until the demand for drugs in America ceases, the drug trade will continue and more innocent Colombians will die. Currently only 30 percent of America's drug budget is used for prevention and treatment. This must change. Instead of investing in weapons the United States needs to focus on rebuilding Colombia's devastated economy and funding crop substitution programs. As citizens, it is our patriotic duty to question our governments funding to Colombia. We must write President Bush and demand all foreign aid to Colombia cease, until their human rights record changes. If our policy towards Colombia doesn't change, we may well be dragging ourselves into another Vietnam.



Joe  
Rotkowitz

## Letter To The Editor:

### Baraka, intellectual terrorist

It was a sad day when Rider University announced that Amiri Baraka, the so-called "poet laureate" of New Jersey, a.k.a. Leroi Jones, formerly of the Black Panther hate group, was invited by the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) to speak. . . some opportunity! Seemingly, an anti-American, a documented anti-Israeli and apparently an anti-Semite as well, Baraka should be shunned as an intellectual terrorist, not given another venue from which to espouse his doctrine!

responsible for bringing him to Rider, the EOP for wasting student funds on this event, the Intercollegiate Greek Council, the Black Student Union for providing security, and Dean Anthony Campbell for lack of judgment in advising students, as well as those esteemed, but misguided professors who apparently facilitated this invitation, namely Professors John Hulsman and Gary Barricklow (*Rider News* 11.01.02, *Trenton Times* 11.02.02).

Some others might support the freedom of speech issue and

democratic process this action represents. They certainly don't speak for me. It is not always necessary, or even wise, to be a bleeding-heart Liberal providing for everyone's civil rights or to not when they behave like enemies of our country, or our allies and trample on the sensitivities of others and worse. . . do so under the guise of an official title (poet laureate, indeed) as is the case with Baraka. He has shown by his words that he does not deserve our respect, Rider's forum, or the students' money

(estimated cost \$3,000). Yet, a few in charge have decided for all that he does. Well, you have put many, both at Rider and within the wider community, to shame and caused us considerable embarrassment by your decision.

There are those who might suggest confronting Baraka with questions. I don't favor that since it legitimizes his presence. Others, the normally sane and sensible silent majority, might go to this event, raise hell, shout the bastard down and let the community know

they do not support this travesty, but that might get ugly.

Perhaps the best approach, and one that I would advocate, is that people stay away, simply boycott his appearance, allowing this Baraka-Jones misfit, to spew out his vitriol to an empty room! In our absence, we would be sending a very clear message.

Dr. Ralph Gally  
Associate Professor of  
Marketing  
Rider University

## Letter To The Editor:

### No love for Lovejoy

This is a letter in response to Steven Lovejoy's ignorant, naive, and excruciatingly tacky "Joy of Love" column. Where to begin? First of all, Mr. Lovejoy's disclaimer that the column is for "heterosexual men with girlfriends" is disturbing on a number of levels.

Firstly, it implies that only heterosexual men are capable of

feeling love. Are gay men and women beneath such things, Mr. Lovejoy? Can they not feel love as well?

Also, that statement implies you are speaking for all heterosexual men. I can only assume that you are the world's foremost expert on love and therefore you can speak for the experiences of

all heterosexual men regarding love. Because they all must feel the exact things you do. Right, Mr. Lovejoy? What qualifies you to make such definitive claims about such an abstract emotion?

Mr. Lovejoy's sanctimonious, not to mention irrelevant and pointless, column represents, for this reader, the

absolute nadir of *The Rider News'* history. As a former award winning columnist of "The Confessions of a Political Junkie" for *The Rider News*, it pains me to see such drivel sharing the same hallowed pages in which I once appeared.

The one good thing about Mr. Lovejoy's column is the unintentional humor it pro-

vides. As a comedian, I can use some of his sap for material in the future.

Sincerely,  
Bryan Yurcan  
English, Class of 2002

## R U From The Left: Should we go to war?

If we listen to what we are told in the media everyday and by President Bush and the "Republicrats", this is going to be a necessary and good war.

This war must be carried out because Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. We never know when Saddam Hussein will use these weapons. Be afraid, be very afraid. However, when we take a look at the truths and hard realities of the subject we see quite

a different story.

Scott Ritter is the former head of the United Nations weapons inspectors in Iraq and officer of the U.S. Marine Corps participating in combat operations during the Gulf War as well as the author of the book, "Endgame: Solving the Iraq Problem Once and for All." He believes that, "[Our] country is on the verge of making a historical mistake that will forever change the political

dynamic which has governed the world since the end of World War II; namely, the foundation of international law as set forth in the United Nations Charter, which calls for the peaceful resolution of problems between nations. [The U.S.] government has set forth a policy of unilateral intervention that runs contrary to the letter and intent of the United Nations Charter."

This is particularly important as

we are supposed to be the leaders of the free world and must be an example to how the world is supposed to



Bill  
Farrington

See "Bill" on page 7