

Real Life Superheroes: World without a Superman

In November of 1992, *Superman #75* was released, depicting the death of America's greatest hero.

In the issues that followed, the writers told the story of a world, still brimming with evil, without the protection of the man of steel.

Ten years later, looking back at the death of Superman, it becomes clear that to the fictional people who depended on him, the character represented a symbol of hope, strength and security.

Flipping through the pages of any newspaper, one can see that in a world filled with real-life supervillains, it is this hope and security that is deceased in today's society.

As the overwhelming patriotism of the post Sept. 11 era has petered out, the security that people trusted with the police and fire department seems to have come to an end with it. People began reverting back to their opinions of police as "narcs" who break up our parties and give us parking tickets.

In a sense, we took our faith away from our superheroes and allowed them to die.

In the months that followed the World Trade Center attack, America bonded together with a voice that seemed to say, "Now that we're together, nothing can stop us." President Bush dispatched our forces into Afghanistan and we began our hunt for evil. However, what followed was the worst thing that could possibly have happened to this country—we failed.

Osama bin Laden was not

apprehended, and what started as patriotism, turned to fear that we were dealing with an evil that could not be stopped.

Since then, widely publicized cases such as the Elizabeth Smart abduction and the tarot-card sniper have made people realize, all the more fearfully, that we live in a world where, unlike the fairy tale stories we read and watch everyday, the bad guys can win.

However, it is important, especially now as we prepare for a possible war, to realize that our faith in the police, fire department and military forces was not, at any time, misplaced.

Every day these real-life superheroes risk their lives to uphold "truth, justice and the American way." And while occasionally it may seem like their efforts hit dead-ends, these people work tirelessly, usually for little compensation, to see to it that the world is a safer place to live, for without them it would truly be a place desolate of hope...

A world without a Superman.



Vincent Civitillo

Faculty Column: Refuting criticism

By Dr. Blair C. Saxman

For the record, I am no fan of Amiri Baraka (a.k.a. Leroi Jones) or of New Jersey's decision to make him the state's poet laureate. I personally find his talent questionable and his thinking flawed. No more so, however, than the same of any teacher at an institution of higher learning who can't grasp the importance of free speech and its relation to the Democratic process.

Over the past weeks, two Rider faculty members, Dr. Ralph Gally and Dr. Howard Schwartz, have written to this paper advocating, in the strongest possible terms, that our university withdraw the invitation made to Baraka to come on campus and speak about his controversial ideas. Their reasons are far ranging. Gally claims that Baraka's work is "anti-Israeli," "anti-Semitic," and "anti-American," with the man himself being an "intellectual terrorist" whom the "bleeding-heart Liberal" community of this school is foolishly supporting. Schwartz more moderately asserts that Baraka, in addition to being a "minor poet," should not have been invited because his comments are not well researched by the standards of academia. Further, he contends that his ideas are on par with the twisted racial theories of David Duke of the KKK, who would never be allowed to come here and espouse his hateful speech.

All of these are bad things, and some are even probably true. Yet history continually shows that the best way to expose wrong-headed ideas is to engage them publicly. Sadly, that runs a foul of the best example of anti-Americanism in Gally's letter; his own call for the suppression of Baraka's right to discourse. I know of no greater act of intellectual terrorism than silencing one you disagree with. At least Schwartz would allow for Baraka's free speech rights, under

certain circumstances, if not for his lack of proper research standards. However, academic standards are not the issue here, political freedoms are. Baraka does not work for any university or think tank. He is not responsible for teaching proper methods of research, or even for practicing them. He's a poet; and poets (minor or otherwise) put their thoughts (good or bad) out in a creative way to be critiqued. It is then the job of the media and academia to address their veracity and/or creativity and make their judgements public. Both sides are equal players in this, up to the point that one or the other's talent or ideas are accepted or discredited by the people—THAT is what free speech is all about.

Finally, casting the whole situation as a Liberal vs. Conservative issue, or using the race card is nothing less than intellectual laziness. According to the definitions of the terms, the prototypical Conservative advocates adherence to time-tested ideals, such as free political discourse. Gally calls for a departure from that ideal, which in the short-term 'feels good' but has no long-term benefit - the worst of all possible Liberal postures. And, no matter what Baraka's opinions about Jews, since when was being Jewish a racial status? I'm aware of only one race on Earth, the human race. But putting that aside, Judaism isn't even a true ethnic classification. It's a religion—one that contains many ethnicities. So any false comparisons of a person who directly incites violence with his 'race-baiting' to one who doesn't, are not only baseless, they shed no light at all on what's actually right or wrong here. Any champion of high academic standards should be embarrassed for making them.

The Western tradition of tolerating any

See "Criticism," p. 10

Letter To The Editor: Hypocrisy running rampant

Why the hypocrisy? If the Student Government Association hired a white supremacist to speak at the university, there would be a riot. I guarantee you that the Black Student Union, the faculty and the administration would not sit back and remind us of the importance of the first amendment. They would simply say, "No, not here."

But the University is saying, "Come, there is room for all views. Let him speak. Why are we in school if not to discuss controversial ideas?" What hogwash! The reason Baraka has been allowed to keep his speaking engagement is because his

Letter To The Editor: Answering criticism

As the object of criticism by two students for my views on Baraka (*The Rider News*, Nov. 15 '02), I would like to reply. To Juan Nunez, a political science student, I say:

My opinion, although different than yours, does not make me closed-minded. Freedom of speech has nothing to do with being a "bleeding-heart liberal."

My point is that one has to earn such freedoms and not abuse them. Baraka has done neither.

His appearance as a distinguished, paid guest of the University should not be equated with my right to express an opinion in the paper. They are not the same. Yes, I would like to see Baraka

stripped of the state title of poet laureate. People are already working on that. No, we cannot suppress unpopular opinions as you point out, but neither should we be giving them false credibility. I did not demand that Baraka's freedom of speech be suppressed. I did advocate that people stay away. I agree Rider offers excellent courses in Political Science. Your strong stand against my civil rights has me wondering what you have learned from them.

As for Joe Rotkowitz who offered a "political perspective." I say:

Referring to the Black Panthers as a peace group is almost as ridiculous as calling Hamas, or Al-Qaida charitable, since

views are anti-Semitic and, therefore, acceptable. Let us not sit back and allow this mediocre, hate-mongering poet to continue spreading his lies. I am asking all those of courage and character to stand up and say "no." We are going to have a brief strategy session in the Yvonne Theatre in the Fine Arts Building on Monday, Nov. 25 at 4:30 p.m. All are invited. Jew, Gentile, black, white, woman, man, faculty and student. Please come. Join the voices that will say "no, not here."

-Miriam Mills

Professor of Drama

not all their money goes to terrorism. The Black Panthers were a radical Marxist-Communist organization that engaged in violent revolution and shoot-outs with the police to bring about changes in society. Years later their tactics mellowed, but their beliefs had not. It is you, Joe, who needs a history lesson.

Read Baraka's poem as many times as you want. That does not change the fact that it is based on lies, anti-American, anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic views.

To refer to Baraka in the same breath as Thomas Jefferson is even sillier than Senator Dan Quayle comparing himself to President John Kennedy in his debate with Senator Lloyd Bentsen.

You assume that because Baraka lives in America, he loves it here. Why not? He uses the system and wouldn't get away with his behavior, or have as good a life elsewhere.

If you truly feel Baraka is a "disgusted patriot" and if you are also so unhappy with what our government is doing, then perhaps you both should take up residence in another country as expatriates!

To both my critics, I say this is your country to protect, or ruin. I have had my time.

-Ralph Gally, Ph.D.
Professor of Marketing