Real Life Superheroes: World without a Superman

In November of 1992, Superman #73 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 place in their police and fire department seems to have come to an end with it. People began reverting back to their opinions of police as “narcos” who break up 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, our country—we failed. What followed was the worst thing 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 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

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 views are anti-Semitic and, therefore, acceptable. Let us not sit back and allow this meddlesome, 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

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 freedom. We cannot allow Baraka to speak.

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 and give my 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 closed-minded. I say:

To refer to Baraka in the same breath as Thomas Jefferson is even sillier than Senator Dan Quayle comparing himself to a “minor poet.”

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 “disgust- ing 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 Gallay, Ph.D
Professor of Political Science

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.

In the past weeks, two Rider faculty members, Dr. Ralph Gallay 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. Gallay 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 to campus. They 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 expose his hateful message.

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 Gallay’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) have the right to 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 discounted 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. Gallay 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 pos- tures. And, no matter what Baraka’s opinions about Jews, since when was being Jewish a racist status? I am aware of only one race on this planet, the human race. But putting that aside, Judaism isn’t even a true ethnic clas- sification. It’s a religion—one that contains many ethnicities. So any false comparisons of a person who directly incites violence with his ‘race-hating’ 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