Tolerance & Healing in the Aftermath

September 11th hit like an avalanche of bricks, destroying many lives, dreams and our sense of an unsailable national security. It has left a collective pit in our stomachs, shock in our minds, grief in our hearts and unrest in our souls.

Plastered everywhere, it seems, is the concern "Where Do We Stand", yet the second half of that statement is disturbingly absent. Therefore, the series of Forums planned for the upcoming year was entitled "...Divided We Fall" in hopes that we'll truly remember national unity as we all reach different plateaus & stumbling blocks through our grief.

The first forum of the series "Tolerance & Healing in the Aftermath" took place on September 24th in the SAC auditorium considering whether it was put together, we managed to get an incredibly distinguished group of speakers that will be difficult to match in future forums - but that is exactly our intent.

After a large part of our University community met the afternoon of the 11th to collectively mourn and try to grasp what happened that morning, Lawrence Martin, Dean of the Graduate School, had the foresight before the incident contributed to its development of the attacks, yet should be included in the healing of its victims.

Echoing his sentiment was Sister Sanaa, Islamic Chaplain of Stony Brook's Interfaith Center. She reminded us that she and many other Muslims of Arabic descent are native New Yorkers and Americans who have not changed alliances nor personalities since the attacks of the 11th, and are deserving of trust and support at this time. She also educated the audience about Islam and the true standards and interpretations of the religion. She was quite eloquent in addressing the terrorists' misconceptions of a Jihad.

We were quite fortunate to have a Graduate Student here at Stony Brook, Jasmina Sinanovic, who is a Bosnian survivor from Sarajevo. She addressed the immediate importance of speaking and acting against discrimination since, in her experience, keeping silent can kill innocent people.

Overall, we feel that the first forum was a good start to a worthwhile series. Hence, the "...Divided We Fall" Series will continue as an open forum designed to discuss human rights issues that have erupted in the aftermath of September 11th. The Department of International Services supports the continuing series with the assistance of the Graduate School, Undergraduate Polity, Provost's office and GSO. This series will be resuming in the near future.

Current forums and workshops we have been organizing encompass the following topics:

- Human Rights
- Protecting Civil Liberties
- Distinguishing Islam from Extremist Activities.
- Peaceful Resolutions Average Americans Can Participate In.

Our forum is open to all and we encourage and appreciate suggestions for future speakers, topics and workshops. If you have a suggestion or idea, please email Elizabeth Barnum at ebarum@notes.cc.sunysb.edu.

Looking forward to seeing you at future forums.

Pegine Walrad (GSO President)

International Lawyer who has worked for the UN, provided a more complete historical picture of the US's role in international politics and the development of the Taliban's support for Osama bin Laden. Ambassador Bhaski, a visiting professor here at Stony Brook specifically discussed how to strategically and effectively battle terrorism and how the lack of diplomacy before the incident contributed to its occurrence.

Rabbi Topek, Director of Stony Brook's Hillel Foundation and Jewish Chaplain, spoke to the fact that religion was not involved in the development of the attacks, yet should be included in the healing of its victims.

From the Editor

What has not been said about September 11, 2001? It was a day compared in historical significance to the events at the naval base of the U.S. Pacific fleet in Oahu, Hawaii on December 7th, 1941. It was a day compared in emotional weight to the loss of a President on November 2nd, 1963 in Dallas, Texas.

Video tapes showed an event so horrendous that you had to believe that what you were seeing was some CGI for another disaster film. Flipping through the channels and seeing the same images on each network was what convinced me that this was all too real. These two towers, each almost a quarter mile tall, stood until the heat from the burning jet fuel weakened the buildings' steel skeletons and forced them to collapse.

Somewhere in the remains of these towers were thousands of civilians and hundreds of those charged with helping them: firefighters, police officers, emergency response personnel. Here I was, only an hour's car-drive away - and yet I could do nothing directly to help those thousands of people. Some could offer skills and expertise needed at ground zero: doctors, nurses, firefighters, heavy-machinery operators. The rest of us could not. It was the most helpless I have ever felt.

But people all over the country felt compelled to do something, anything to assist in this national crisis. Americans waited hours on line to give blood. Americans donated
Upcoming Vote on Student Activity Fees

by Sherrye Glaser (GSO Secretary)

Every several years, the SUNY administration requires the GSO to hold a vote on whether or not the student activity fee should remain a mandatory fee added onto each semester’s bill. This vote is a very important event that, in essence, determines the fate of the GSO. Students are given a choice of choosing that the fee of $20.50 a semester (for full-time students) remains a mandatory payment of the Student Activity Fee. In order to avoid the fate of the GSO, students are given a choice of choosing that the fee of $20.50 a semester (for full-time students) remains a mandatory fee paid to the GSO or if all GSO money should be made as voluntary contributions.

The GSO is financed by the Student Activity Fee. Without it, all of the services our organization provides for graduate students will disappear. In the month of September, the GSO welcomed new students by contributing towards the fall graduate orientation, updating and distributing the annual Survival Guide (a guide book for living on and off campus), and holding a Welcome Fall Bash party at the Spot (complete with food, drinks, and entertainment). The GSO also regularly funds events organized by graduate clubs. Many cultural events, shows, and parties that are open to all graduate students have either partial or complete sponsorship from the GSO.

The GSO addressed the recent tragic events by donating $1000 to the Red Cross, and organizing an open forum titled ‘Tolerance and Healing in the Aftermath’ (to help our campus community heal and prevent ethnic bias). In addition, we are currently setting up ‘Peace Partners’, a program similar to the campus walk service, but for off-campus activities. Individuals concerned about being faced with possible bias incidents after the recent events, can call upon volunteers to accompany them off-campus while they food shop or run off-campus errands.

The GSO functions as the link between the graduate community and the administration. We send representatives to many administrative committees and voice the concerns of graduate students to the administration. We have internal committees that address major concerns and quality of life issues such as housing, a graduate lounge, and the GSEU/CWA union. Without these dedicated students representing graduate students, many of our concerns would not be addressed.

As you can see, the GSO serves to improve the quality of life of graduate students, and without these activities and services, the quality of life of our community would be greatly diminished. Unfortunately, it is possible that the GSO could shut down. All it would take is our graduate community choosing to end the mandatory payment of the Student Activity Fee. In order to ensure the survival of the GSO, please vote for a ‘mandatory’ fee.
Why Does Osama bin Laden Hate the U.S.?

by Marc Dempsey

The attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center were an affront to our society with a cost to human life almost beyond belief. Evil without reference even in the fiction and film of disaster destroyed our country's sense of security and brought us into a new world where isolation is no longer an option. The International landscape changed overnight and our status as a Super-Power, oddly, has never been more evident—we have started dictating policy to the world.

So far there has been a good effort by the Bush administration to unite other nations in the cause against terrorism, even countries that, like Pakistan, have powerful and dangerous fundamentalist populations sympathetic to the anti-American attacks and hostile to any American action in Afghanistan.

The thought and motivations of those behind the attacks show a pure and calculating hatred that is hard to comprehend. It would be a mistake, however, to dismiss bin Laden and the Islamic fundamentalists that seem to be responsible for the attacks as cartoon villains—men who attack without cause and who merely resent the freedom and good life in America. There are reasons why bin Laden and the Taliban hate the U.S.

Acting in its own national interest the U.S. has harmed and alienated countries, religious groups, and, obviously, terrorists. It would be impossible for a nation as influential as the U.S. not to alienate some people, some of the time. We made a mistake in Afghanistan that is part of the reason that the missile launchers we gave to the Afghan people in their fight against the Soviet Union are now turned against us. We had supported the Afghan rebels, covertly and not so covertly, in their fight to end Soviet control of Afghanistan. The withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989, however, created a power vacuum in the area which caused instability that continues to this day.

We did not continue our support of the Afghan people after the Soviets withdrew. It was no longer in our 'national interest' to be involved. The people of Afghanistan realized that the U.S. had no real interest in the welfare of their country and that the support given by the U.S. was self-serving. This was resented and is seen by some throughout the world to be a pattern in U.S. foreign policy.

Many sympathize with bin Laden's cause and with his charges against America. The complexities of American politics are not apparent to the whole world and the sweeping generalizations that our politicians make are made in turn about us. The image of America in the world is not the image we have of ourselves; the spread of capitalism and commercialism throughout countries and regions bound by religious and traditional values is seen from Westernization to Islamic values (more specifically—their particular interpretation of them) as a way of governance. The harshness and repression of their regime has been public knowledge for many years, especially their barbaric treatment of women.

Osama bin Laden has other complaints that echo throughout the Middle East. U.S. troops occupying Saudi Arabia, the holiest of lands for Muslims, during and after the Persian Gulf War incensed bin Laden and focused his hatred on the U.S. He has condemned the sanctions against Iraq and the death and hardship that they have brought to the country, specifically to the children of Iraq. While the sanctions have caused hardship in Iraq, bin Laden does not blame Iraq's ruler, Saddam Hussein, who has caused immeasurably more grief for his people and perpetrated horrible atrocities.

by Denis Johnson

(excerpted from a longer article published in The New Yorker)

Travelling in the Third World, I've found that to be an American sometimes means to be wondrously celebrated, to excite a deep, instantaneous loyalty in complete strangers . . . . . . . In Afghanistan, I encountered men who, within minutes of meeting me, offered to leave their own worried families and stay by my side as long as I required it, men who found medicine somewhere in the ruins of Kabul for me when I needed it, and who never asked for anything back — all simply because I was American.

On the other hand, I think we sense — but don't care always to apprehend — the reality that some people hate America. To many suffering souls, we must seem incomprehensibly aloof and self-centered, or worse. For nearly a century, war has rolled lopsided over the world, crushing the innocent in their homes. For half that century, the United States has been seen, by some people, as keeping the destruction rolling without getting too much in the way of it — has been seen, by some people, to lurk behind it. And those people hate us. The acts of terror against this country — the hijackings, the kidnappings, the bombings of our airplanes and barracks and embassies overseas, and now these mass atrocities on our own soil — tell us how much they hate us. They hate us as people hate a bad God, and they'll kill themselves to hurt us.

On Thursday [9/13], as I write in New York City, which I happened to be visiting at the time of the attack, the wind has shifted, and a sour electrical smoke travels up the canyons between the tall buildings. I have now seen two days of war in the biggest city in America. But imagine a succession of such days stretching into years — years in which explosions bring down all the great buildings, until the last one goes, or until bothering to bring the last one down is just a waste of ammunition. Imagine the people who have already seen years like these turn into decades — imagine their brief lifetimes made up only of days like these we've just seen in New York.

The plight of the Palestinians in Israel and the escalation and continuation of the conflict there has turned many against the U.S. throughout the Muslim world. They see us, rightly, as Israel's best friend and greatest supporter. And though the complexities of the conflict in Israel are beyond the scope of this article, there is no doubt that Palestinians in Israel are being treated horribly, killed indiscriminately, and living in what amounts to refugee camps with a very poor standard of living. The Palestinians, peaceful or not, are treated, in parts of Israel, more like prisoners than citizens. Not that this is the only side of the story, but it is what bin Laden and his followers throughout the world see as the truth.

Does this justify the attacks in New York and Washington? Not to me. Not to any reasonable. But to people who see America as a threat to their way of life, to the very possibility of a good life, then yes, they do feel the attacks were justified. They feel that America has caused violence in pursuing its agenda and that America's repressive foreign policy and lack of accountability justify a violent response. Video of people cheering the attacks in various areas of the Middle East is proof of that.

I have been heartened by the efforts of the Bush administration to proceed multi-laterally: further polarization of the Western/Islamic divide is what bin Laden wants and could be disastrous. Gaining the understanding and support of countries around the world, especially those in the Middle East, is crucial if our response to the terrorist attacks is to be effective and ethical. We have started targeting Afghanistan — with missiles and bombs — but it is far too early to judge the effect of our military actions from either a strategic or ethical perspective.

I pray that justice will be done, that we follow through with what we've decided to accomplish, that we will have the flexibility to adapt to a confusing and rapidly evolving engagement. I pray that the lives of the innocent are in the thoughts of our leaders and that our cause brings countries together. If we want peace in the long run we'll have to listen, communicate and negotiate more than punish. At home we must not let the need for unity squelch the free exchange of ideas that underlies democracy.
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From the Editor

money they could hardly afford to give up so that
the financial losses of fellow Americans could be
reduced. Americans collected food, water, cloth-
ing, supplies — anything that might help rescue
workers continue their search through glass, con-
crete, and steel for survivors, victims. It was, as
many have said, the best of humanity responding
to the worst of humanity. It was a shining but all-
too-rare example of our capacity to be empathic
towards our fellow man — to recognize that what-
ever crosses our path, there are those out there
who are far worse off — to recognize that we have
the moral obligation to do something to help peo-
ple who are suffering, whether we know them or
not.

For me, this was the faint silver that lined the
darkest of clouds. This was proof to the world,
and more importantly to ourselves, that Ameri-
cans were not defined by the complacency
and self-absorption that often characterizes the
stereotype. It was truly inspiring to see so many
offer themselves to assist those in need. But a part
of me is worried. I wonder what will happen
when the urgency of September 11th fades, and
more of our energies are devoted to rebuilding
America and abroad, of those who suffer poverty,
illness, and injustice that we may never experi-
ence, or will we respond to the call of human
duty?

We might not have much money to donate (we
are graduate students after all), but we can offer
so much more. We can offer our time, intelli-
gence, creativity, and whatever else might be our
unique skill to organizations that seek to improve
the lives of people in need: children, teens, single
parents, the elderly, the terminally ill, etc. Does
the idea of building a house for an underprivi-
leged family suit you? Ever consider devoting
some time to the local SPCA? What about cook-
ing and serving dinner for the homeless in a soup
kitchen? The heroic-minded can even become
volunteer firefighters in their towns (no experi-
nce necessary!). The list goes on and on.

If we cannot devote any time to volunteer,
there is still plenty we can do. We just need to
keep our eyes open for the right opportunities.
Are you having a big bash at your place this fall
or winter? Consider asking your guests to each
bring some canned goods around Thanksgiving
or children’s gifts around Christmas. I guarantee
all your guests will be more than happy to do
their part.

We can’t all be Mother Theresa. But each of us
can help one person, work for one cause, correct
one injustice. If you can or do step outside of
your comfortable life to help the less fortunate
for one of many noble reasons, I tip my hat and offer
a hearty thank-you. But you know what? Maybe
nobility is not a necessary criterion for improving
the world’s karma. Maybe, just maybe, it’s okay
if the most powerful motivation to do good is
selfish: the satisfaction of hearing a word of grat-
itude, seeing a child’s smile, sharing in someone
else’s joy, and ultimately the realization that for
one moment in time, you helped make some per-
son’s life a little bit better. Sounds like something
worth getting into.

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News & Blues - Page 5
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Freedom - Can It Endure?

by Pegine Walrad

I pledge allegiance . . . to our Republic, for which it stands; one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty & justice for all.

I've been reciting these lines literally since I could speak, but the importance of their content has been something worth contemplating as of late. For instance, I used to think "Indivisible" was "Invisible" - all, God usually is.

But the echoing drone of these words had left my ears with my high school yearbook, & since then I've had little reason for such contemplation - until now.

So, exactly do these words, our daily childhood pledge, our oath to our country MEAN?

Should it read "all - unless you're of Muslim faith or of Arabic descent - then we can deny your right to travel as others do?" Or how about, "all - unless you're of Japanese descent - then we can stuff you into dehumanizing camps" as it might well have during World War II. For far too long it meant "all - unless you're of African descent, and then we will violate your rights openly.

Perhaps an appropriate revamp would read "for all - except when we don't feel like it or can collectively justifiably ostracize a group based upon their religious or cultural background."

After all, when people have specific physical traits or religious garb they must wear according to their beliefs, it saves the step of forcing markings such as the Nazis' pervasive use of the star of David, and makes them easy scapegoats for our national identity.

What is it that we, collectively, as United States citizens, stand for again? Aren't we the bastion, the supposed, self-proclaimed champions of human rights?

"Land of the Free - Home of the Brave." That's our song, and it always, without fail, stirs my soul to the depth of my idealism. It is my strong belief in such freedom that founds my national pride, and it is worth fighting for.

I say this realizing many will think I am a nationalistic, patriotic zealot who's simply jumping aboard a rather overcrowded bandwagon. The irony here is - the ones I find myself disputing with lately are other Americans in order to defend good friends of mine against persecution for the audacity of being themselves.

It seems that many in their overwhelming fog of grief are forgetting the very basis of what it is that we, as a nation, have had to fight for. What the words "Liberty for ALL" truly mean.

I would ask, no BEG those who are proudly toting & displaying American flags as a symbol of their pride & unity during this time of crisis to maintain enough perspective to ask themselves what is worth fighting for, who they're fighting against and why.

Now that we've actually launched attacks versus the Taliban regime & Bin Laden - I hope it will lend direction to some misguided aggression which I have personally witnessed.

Everywhere we hear words & see symbols of unity, but backing such words with meaningful, appropriate actions is necessary. As the saying goes "United We Stand, Divided We Fall." The latter half of that statement has been forgotten by far too many. In the statement that was released earlier this week, it is quite obvious that Bin Laden's intent is to divide us as a nation & from the rest of the world by starting a religion-based, race war.

Why? Because a people divided flag easily conquered & it is his only hope.

I refuse to feed into such a transparent scheme by such an evil misogynist, nor will I tolerate those who would do his bidding and contribute to his cause. Some people as of late have been misdirecting their hostility, anger & outrage, and inadvertently (or intentionally) are dividing our national strength & compromising our foundation.

Truth: unless you're of Native American descent - you're a descendent of immigrants. Moreover, depending upon when your ancestors arrived - the deeper your roots lie in this country - the more likely you are an ethnic "Mutt" of sorts.

New York is known as the "great melting pot" nationally & worldwide so bear in mind that to disrespect recent immigrants is no different from any disrespect you own father or mother may have endured.

So please, for the sake of all those who truly believe in the beauty of our country's Constitution, idealism & unity - don't throw that flag around unless you respect the principles and stand behind the soldiers and people who have sacrificed everything to uphold it.

Sincerely,

An American Mutt

Military Action – No Other Option?

by Greg Caputo

(I'd like to say that I'm deeply saddened and angered by the events that occurred on 9-11. It was a tragedy of immense proportions and my heart goes out to all the families and loved ones of those who died or are still missing.)

First off, I'd like to give a little background before I get into this. I grew up right outside of Manhattan. I saw the skyline everyday from my house. I went to college in Hoboken, NJ, and my campus was voted in the top five of campuses in the country with "the best view"; ours was of the NY skyline. I grew up with the twin towers in my backyard and never really appreciated how truly amazing they were until they were gone. Pretty sad.

Only a few days after the actual attack, a large candlelight vigil was held in Union Square Park in NYC, about as close to ground zero as the police would let you go. This wasn't a mob scene or a pro-war demonstration. It was simply a bunch of broken-hearted people mourning and praying for their lost friends, loved ones, coworkers and neighbors. However, a group of thoughtless and misled anti-war demonstrators decided to protest and start chanting about war not solving things and violence begetting violence.

It's the same bleeding-heart liberal sentiment that made. Vietnam much worse than it had to be. I can understand those protests back then, though I wouldn't have condoned them. If you don't like something, protest. Making your voice heard is the American way. But many back then took it too far.

They ostracized and demeaned this nation's soldiers when they got back from the war. Half of our soldiers fighting in Vietnam could not have cared less what the war was about. It was their JOB to go and fight and kill. It's what soldiers do. It's like any other job or profession. They take orders from someone in a superior position and they do what they're told. So does that make them bad? I certainly don't think so. It would be like blaming the bus-boy if a restaurant served Pepsi instead of Coke.

We are at a watershed moment in American and World history. I applauded President Bush for doing the right thing in response to the attacks: first building a case, collecting evidence and rounding up possible conspirators and collaborators. We should continue to support the generally well thought-out and prudent actions that our leaders have taken so far. Just because some back the notion that military action is appropriate and necessary to respond to this current threat does not in any way imply that they are also warmongers. Sometimes, there is no other option.

War is not pretty by its very nature: People die. Soldiers kill other soldiers. Innocent people are caught in the middle sometimes. It's what happens...par for the course. We are in a new world now. The rules of the game have changed. Innocent, law-abiding people are now targets.

We're obviously not out of range of the people who want to hurt us, so the only option is to take out those who make us a target. I don't want to see any more American lives lost to terrorism. And unless you're a terrorist, you feel the same way.

Will rallies and marches on Washington achieve this goal? Is your anti-war policy going to provide peace of mind to parents who want to raise their children free from fear of terrorist attack? If you cannot promise this, I suggest you anti-war demonstrators go to the front lines and resolve this threat to American lives in your own way. Maybe you can reason and share feelings with some brainwashed religious zealot while a gun is pointed at you. Or better yet, maybe a gift of love beads and hemp ponchos will soothe the terrorists.

Regardless of how many marches and protests you organize, George Bush and Colin Powell will not go to Afghanistan to HUG the Taliban and Bin Laden until they realize what they did was wrong and want to share their feelings. Non-violent conclusions to these types of conflicts only work if all involved are equally committed to maintaining peace. Is Al Qaida committed to this?

We are now at war. We have just begun the battle against those who would senselessly do us and our allies any harm. There is no discernible end in sight. But this tragedy and what should be our united response to it will reveal that 99% of Americans really are one family; if we stand together, and stand behind our country, we can't lose.

Ever.

God bless America.
DISTRACTIONS

Life Goes On
by Sue Denim

The first sentence is always the hardest.

Ok, now that it's out of the way, I can assure you that the following is not a meditation on the events of September 11th. Well, that’s not entirely true. As I find myself writing the third installment of “Distractions”, I have a new sense of the world in which we live. The joy of sharing my thoughts on what we deem to be “normality” has taken an unforeseen twist. How do I resolve the challenge of finding humor in the mundane, or as I would have it, that which “distracts” me from my routine, when quite obviously the grand “distraction” of all has become the “Main Event”?

A month has passed since the terrorist attacks and I still feel shocked and tremendously sad. Actually, I don’t feel as if I have the vocabulary to do my feelings justice. I’ve simply found myself reevaluating many elements of my life. I can almost muster a laugh when I look back at last month’s issue. My birthday was approaching, and the potent symbolism of the aging process dominated my thoughts, as did a series of isolated, but premature, celebrity deaths. Little did I know that just days later we would all be horrified by both the brevity and tremendous courage of individuals’ lives.

It is from tragedy that we have learned much about this nation’s resilience and character. From where I’m sitting, I can see three flags hanging in front of houses on my street that previously did not display the Stars and Stripes. All too often the predominant symbol of this country is worn as a mere fashion statement, or dutifully raised at sporting events, politely gesturing to a fictive rather than truly legitimate sense of national unity.

What has intrigued me immensely in recent weeks is the role that sports plays in American culture. At a time when sports should have been far removed from peoples’ minds, debates raged about whether Major League Baseball and the National Football League should cancel their schedules, or continue playing. Here sports became the potent symbol of America’s defiance in the face of tragedy.

“Playing ball” took on a heightened meaning where “winning” was more about showing the world that the United States would not suspend its daily existence, than putting points on the scoreboard. Although tuning into hours of sports on television is not a priority in my life, the absence of overpaid athletes from the primetime line-ups was noticeable. When games resumed, the act of gathering crowds into stadiums illustrated just how this nation’s psyche depends upon sports to survive. Tentatively at first, but then with more gusto, the throngs of fans returned, only this time draped in Stars and Stripes paraphernalia and patriotic signs hoping to catch the cameras’ roaming eye.

It is no accident that in the spirit of togetherness and celebration of anything inherently “American”, that Yankee Stadium was chosen as the venue for a multi-faith prayer service two weeks ago. Since the emphasis was on praising our own adherence to freedom and capitalism (the open air arena of the “Church of Jeter et al.”), for the proceedings to be ruled over by Queen Oprah Winfrey was equally revealing. Since the very notion of “heroism” has undergone revision in the past month, sports stars and celebrities have humbly announced their own significance pales in comparison with the firefighters and police officers who continue to labor in Manhattan. But there are three particular athletes whose very achievements and reputations have acted as both a spur to America’s pride and as a distraction from our own sadness.

Surely no American is more familiar around the globe than the former Chicago Bulls player. In recent weeks he announced his intention to end his retirement (again) and return to the court – this time to spur on the Washington Wizards. The timing could not be better. The script is primed for the superstar to reemerge, to lift the country’s spirits, and to act as much as a force for the economy’s rejuvenation (read: McDonald’s and his other product endorsements) as a boost to the nation’s collective psyche (celebrating one of America’s living legends). Sports may just be the forum for a cathartic outpouring of emotion, a reintroduction of excitement and humor, and ultimately the most public site for patriotic unity. While to many it may seem trivial, the simple playing of these games demonstrates to us all that life does, and should, go on.