

You're stupid. Prove you're not.

By J.J. Wylie
Staff Opinion Writer

Most of you are stupid. But we live in technological times, and most of you (even though stupid) will live out relatively normal lifespans. It is a credit to the engineers of the world that you have lived as long you have. Indeed, the very fact that you're reading this (despite your stupidity) proves you've already beaten the odds. In a fairer world, you would probably be dead by now.

Imagine a world without antibiotics, power, plumbing, and the internal-combustion engine. Imagine a world where what you did for a living was eke one out: to feed, clothe, and shelter yourself and your family with whatever you could fashion (or kill) by hand. What you're imagining is the state of human affairs for all but the last few generations; indeed, for much of the populace today (have you seen what it's like in North Korea lately, or in the shantytowns outside Mexico City?) For most of history, what you're imagining was reality.

But, all survivalist rhetoric aside, being a subsistence-hunter/gatherer in this culture is as stupid as being a C.P.A. in the Stone Age. Yet, for all the high-tech trinkets with which you decorate yourselves - for all your big-screens and pagers and cell-phones and car-alarms - most of you may as well be lobbing flint-tipped spears at woolly mammoths.

Some two-and-a-half millennia ago, at a time when the average life-

expectancy was about half what it is now, several sapiens lifted their heads from the grindstones of circumstance. They stopped scraping for their basic needs long enough to execute some sophisticated thought. They became thinkers, not just tool-using apes. Instead of merely existing, they began to examine their lives.

True, many of their ideas were hokey, and some were downright dangerous if translated into actions (ever read Plato's *Republic*?) But their worst ideas were no worse than any religion today, which is what I mean about most of you being stupid. Instead of trying to know, most of you are content to believe.

There's a wonderful line in the otherwise mediocre movie, *A Few Good Men*, in which Tom Cruise's character angrily says, "It doesn't matter what I believe. It only matters what I can prove." Stupid people believe without proof. What can you prove?

I know someone who believes that the *Bible* is the literal word of God. When I asked him which translation he believed in, he looked at me like I'd just pissed on his shoes. When I asked him if his belief included only the Old and New Testaments—or did it extend to the *Apocrypha* and the *Book of Mormon*?—he looked at me like he wanted to stop looking and start acting. When I asked him if he spoke to God Himself or if he was just taking someone else's word for it, he had to be restrained. Wisely, I left. There's no talking to some

people. Apparently the level of proof this True Believer needed ranked somewhere down near the evidence that "proves" the Holocaust never happened.

Who are you? Why do you act the way you act? Are your reasons the best reasons? Are your reasons your own, or were they handed to you by someone else? Do you even have reasons for what you do? (Economists say the answer to this question is always yes, but I remain unconvinced. After all, what possible reason could people have for piercing their tongues?) Do you actually use your brain or is it just something for your neck muscles to hold up? Are you doing something unique with your life, or are you content to be an anonymous part of the chain which stretches from the Missing Link to Whatever Happens Next? Do you even care?

Let's say someone walks up and demands that you sink your life's savings into a what you're assured is a sure-fire investment. When you ask for a little more information, he hands you some glossy sales-brochure, and, based on this, you hand your money over. Should you be surprised when your investment evaporates? What real assurance had you been given? Yet this is the level of assurance most people deem necessary on such important questions as the nature of existence and the purpose of life.

"Don't look for proof on your own," we are told. "Everything you need is in this one book. Trust me."

Whenever a True Believer tries to convince me that the Ten Commandments are more important than the laws of physics, I ask him to pray a plane into the air. When he or she tries to convince me that faith is a better answer than proof, I ask them if they look both ways before crossing the street.

I am not arguing for humorless pragmatism. Hell, I'm trying to be an artist. But what I'm advocating is a more rigorous level of thought and proof than that inspired by the testimony of trance-channellers and crackpots. In the arts, criticism that never goes beyond "I like/I don't like" is a waste of time. It makes for boring art, which is as inexcusable as astrology. It's all fun and games until someone starts believing in it.

The sick thing is that most of you don't care. You've got more important things to worry about than the meaning of your lives. You've got car

payments and mortgages. You've got wardrobes to update, people to screw. For all the technological trappings you possess, the level of thought which you put into your lives is roughly equivalent to that of an illiterate slave in ancient Greece. The difference here is that, unlike the slave, you have the luxury of choice.

Having a brain that is capable of sophisticated and imaginative thought but refusing to use it is like walking around not using your right arm even though it's stronger than your left. Accepting without proof someone else's ideas about life in this universe is like going to an expensive restaurant and letting the waiter eat your meal. But, hey, it's your life.

So you're stupid. You live your lives in a stupor. You don't seem to mind. If I were you, I'd be pissed. I guess I'm lucky I'm not—stupid, that is. I just can't seem to stop being pissed.

Random Musings

By Darryl Richardson
Editor-In-Chief

"I can be president of the United States or I can control Alice. I cannot possibly do both."—Teddy Roosevelt, talking about his daughter.

For the second time in two weeks, I have to write something that I didn't want to write. No, it's not about CSUN, although the temptation is always there. Rather, it is something shocking about Bill Clinton.

I must congratulate Bill and Hillary for the way that they have handled Chelsea. Phew, I said it.

Why am I bringing this up today? Well, the First Daughter is going through what each of us have gone through at some point in the past several years. The first week of college.

That's right. Trying to find your classes, locating the best places to eat and party, discovering who does what on the third floor of the library (ugh!), learning what shoddy journalism goes into the student newspaper, and all those other unforgettable events which college brings out.

Now, imagine trying to do this with the media following your every move and checking on every grade. Not to mention, those big, menacing Secret Service agents sticking close by. Hmmm, I wonder if she will use them to cut in line at the bookstore?

Fortunately, Stanford has some experience with celebrities. In fact, Chelsea is probably not the most famous person to go there in the past five years. Does the name Eldrick "Tiger" Woods ring a bell?

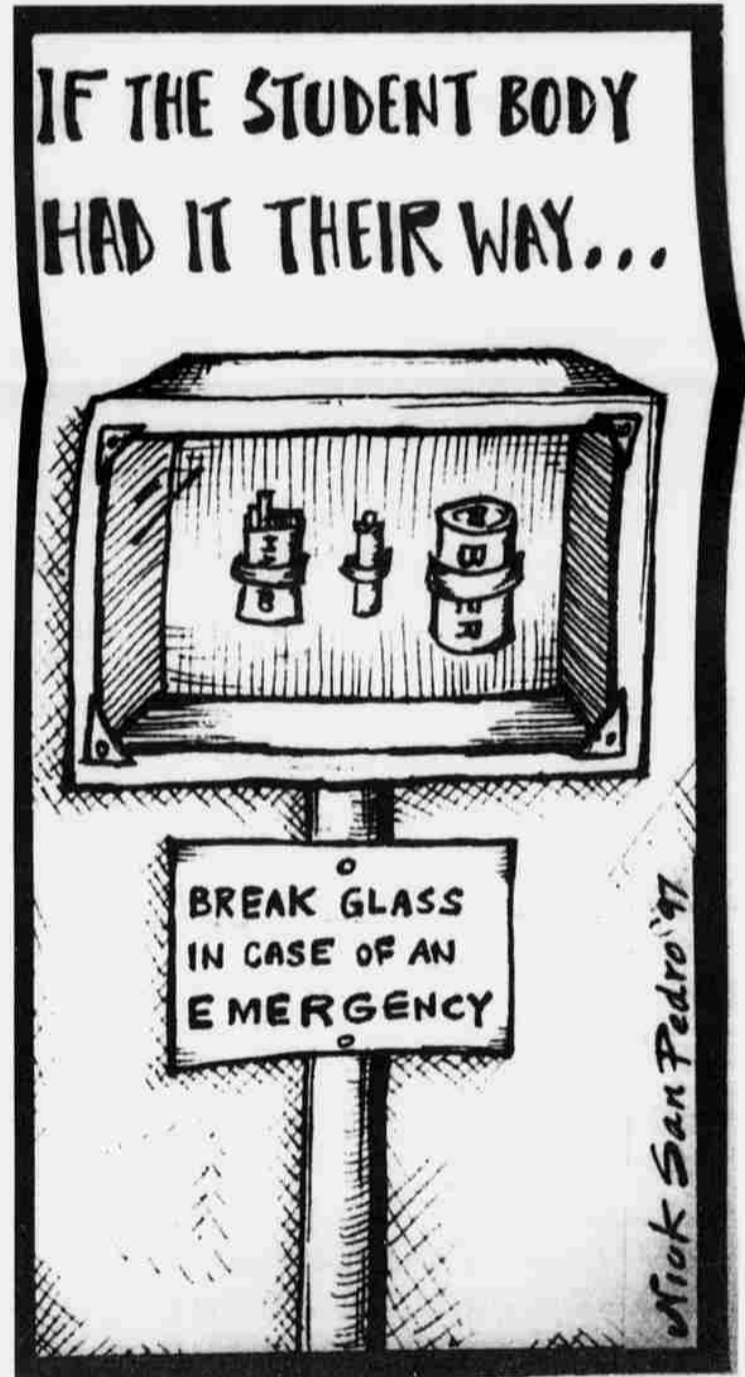
The student body at Stanford doesn't seem too impressed with the new arrival. One student told

Reuters, "To me she's just another girl here on campus. It's almost annoying how much press she gets."

But the Clinton's have made some arrangements to try to ease her introduction to college life. First, they made sure that they helped her move into the dorms Friday, although most students don't have a two block long limousine carpool to campus. Bill and Hillary sat in the crowd during a welcoming ceremony. In fact, Bill wore a name tag with his name on it. Like anybody wouldn't know who he was.

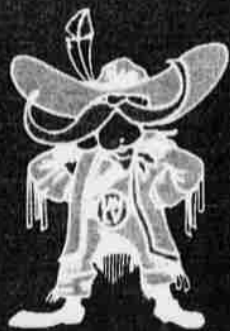
Then it was time to leave her behind. But she would not be left alone. Secret Service agents will protect her at all times. Boy, imagine the first college stud who tries to put the moves on her. The agents are all young and familiar to Chelsea. Plus they are planning to wear some casual clothes in an attempt to blend

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