Why the influence of Islamic extremism threatens human rights worldwide

RICHARD LEAVELLE/opinion

In Turkey, perennial applicant for membership into the European Union, a female reporter named Aliye Cetinkaya was stoned by members of an angry demonstration for failing to wear a head scarf. She faces charges from an Islamist organization for inciting violence; if convicted, she could go to prison for up to three years.

A thousand miles away, in the Netherlands in 2004, Theo van Gogh releases Submission, a film through which he relates his view of Islam as fundamentally detrimental to women. He is brutally murdered that same year.

Nearby, in the banlieues of Paris, many non-Muslim women dare not go out in public without a burqa, for fear of incurring similar harassment. The French shopping chain Carrefour has posted a sign in Arabic at its stores; in translation, it reads, “Dear Clients, We express solidarity with the Islamic and Egyptian community. Carrefour doesn’t carry Danish products.”

Across the Atlantic, in Canada, a Justice Department study observes a growing Muslim community and proposes legalization of polygamy, stating, “Criminalization does not address the harms associated with valid foreign polygamous marriages and plural unions.”

Few dispute that much of the western world, particularly Western Europe, is set to experience a significant demographic shift in the near future. Some projections predict a doubling of the Muslim population in Europe between 2005 and 2015. Furthermore, with the aging and extremely low birthrates of non-Muslim Europeans, Muslims seem poised to hold an ever greater share of the population and influence on the continent; analysts believe that France, for instance, might see a Muslim majority by the year 2050.

Of course, such a change is not harmful by itself. With new cultures come new perspectives and increased opportunity for constructive social engagement. Unfortunately, much of the Muslim message in the present day is dominated by an ideology that seeks to eliminate the very framework in which engagement can take place, a movement characterized as “islamo-fascism” in a recent speech by President Bush. Primarily, the

Defending affirmative action

DAVID HOLMAN/opinion

Affirmative action is unfair both to students of color and to white students. It harms the self-esteem of those who feel that they may be admitted based on race. It promotes the idea of different privileges for different races. It may put unprepared students into an overwhelming academic atmosphere. And it may prevent qualified white students from being accepted to institutions. I don’t think that affirmative action is fair, and I would like to see it done away with.

But guess what, 300 years of kidnapping people from Africa, selling them as commodities, raping them and making them slaves for profit wasn’t fair either. The merciless genocide that has made extinct around 1,700 separate Native American nations that once called this land their home was not fair. The collective harm these “unfairnesses” have done to the self-esteem of all races in this country makes the injustice of affirmative action look like a pittance; nothing.

We cannot discuss affirmative action out of its historical context, which is profoundly racist. All levels of the US government from local school boards to Congress have systemically and brutally oppressed Non-Anglo races, and even some Anglo ones like the Irish. Everyone happily agrees that this oppression has decreased in the last fifty years, but not only do some persistent forms of it live
I would like to commend you and the other writers for putting out *The Observer* race issue. I am very impressed by the number and quality of its articles. It no doubt took courage and determination to write and publish this issue; believe me, I know how it feels to be on the receiving end of some of the unfortunate discrimination and hatred that results from challenging the status quo on campus. Keep up the good work!

–ANDREW NAVRATIL, '07

I have checked out *The Observer* race issue and am disappointed to say that I am not happy with the one sided views of the paper. I will write an opinion piece dealing with some issues I believe are important to counter. But seeing how I know that the Conservatives are truly not interested in open community dialogue, I will present my opinions to be published in other campus papers.

–CHAI LEE, '09

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### Radical Islam threatens liberty

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impetus for this particular set of beliefs is that a certain strict interpretation of the Koran unequivocally provides the sole authority on truth which must be imposed upon the entire world through terror or legal accommodation. Western civilization, along with many of the civil liberties it has envisioned over the years, is a nemesis standing in the way of this realization.

Islamo-fascism proves attractive to a community that has failed to interact effectively with its surroundings. In a recent poll, 4 out of 10 British Muslims expressed support for Sharia (Islamic “Law of Allah”) being introduced in certain parts of the United Kingdom. Approximately 20% felt some sympathy toward the “feelings and motives” of the London transit bombers.

What is Western Europe to do in the face of a rapidly growing segment of society that abhors many of the principles for which it stands? Increasingly, countries like France and the Netherlands have seen a rise in the popularity of populist right-wing leaders who propose stricter immigration policies and initiatives for the preservation of European culture. Other countries, such as Spain, have shifted towards greater accommodation, perhaps hoping to outlast the furies of the Islamist wave.

The stage is set for a major bi-cultural confrontation.

A dozen Danish cartoonists choose to depict the prophet Mohammed derogatively, and the Muslim world, along with many of the Western powers, explodes in indignation.

Meanwhile, a cartoon in a major Muslim publication shows Anne Frank in bed with Adolf Hitler. Another depicts a figure crucified upon a Star of David. In yet another, a crazed rabbi summarily executes the faithful with a blood-stained scimitar.

In paleo-Islamic countries stretching from Indonesia to Tanzania, for those who stand in the streets holding signs reading “Freedom of Expression is Western Terrorism” and “The Holocaust is a Big Lie!” and “God Bless Hitler,” there is no sign of a double standard at work here.

With these signs of impending universal Sharia, can anyone really say that this assessment is misguided?
Demystifying the Paper Wars

GINGER PRICE/editor

In order to more amusingly address the ongoing epic battle among three of Carleton’s major periodical publications (The Carletonian, The Observer, and The Lens) I have decided to weigh in on this he-said, she-said situation by addressing some myths and facts about press life on this campus. Much like Star Wars, Carleton’s epic saga of Paper Wars suffers from excessive hype, lack of foundation and some terribly bad scripts. Accusations have flown, insults have been traded, and once or twice it’s almost come to sticks and stones. So where does all this animosity come from? Naturally, you’re free to judge for yourself, but from what I’ve seen, I have a few theories...

Myth 1: None of it is personal. Of course it’s personal. At a small, socially active college with approximately 1700 students on campus at any given time, it’s all but impossible to publish any sort of newsletter concerning student affairs without involving someone you know. I myself have the unique position of being good friends with the editors of all three major publications. If this nonsense is going to stop, the first step is going to be to acknowledge that we all have personal stakes in these publications and the people they affect. Some people need to be more sensitive to this fact... and some people need to be less so. Because sometimes, let’s face it – we all accidentally say things that are really, really stupid.

Myth 2: The Contentious 3 are out to get each other. Oh please. Who has the time? We all have homework to do and lives to live. Sure, we all have a solid personal and professional investment in the quality of our publications, but seriously – do you spend all your spare time plotting against someone who wrote an article that offended you? Do you spend all your extra energy worrying about unequal funding or propositioning the CSA to rearrange leadership to your liking? Perhaps there is some bad blood running around, but as I have seen before – it’s really nothing that a well-placed Friday Flower wouldn’t cure.

Fact 1: The editors are not controlling the media. Beyond censoring out grammatical errors, curse words, and the occasionally truly inappropriate personal statement, the editors of our college’s publications neither dictate nor control the opinions put forth in the articles they publish. In our eyes, everyone is entitled to an opinion, and everyone else is entitled to agree or disagree as they see fit. That isn’t to say that, if you see an article in the paper you don’t like, you can’t write in and complain or file a counterpoint. Of course not! These Paper Wars would just be a lot less complicated if people would spend more time explaining the foundations of their own views and less time criticizing those of others.

Fact 2: We all love a good scandal – real or imagined. This fact needs no explanatory paragraph, just two words: human nature.

Fact 3: Everyone at this college is very smart and opinionated. I am amazed on a daily basis by the intelligence and insight demonstrated by Carleton students. I have better conversations with the people here than I’ve ever had in my life – even with people whose opinions I utterly and completely disagree with. Not a day goes by when I don’t think, “I wish this person would put their views in writing and submit it to one of the papers for everyone to read.” Sadly, many never will – often for fear of being ridiculed, or even just disagreed with. They will remain lost forever, tragic casualties of the Paper Wars.

Does this article solve anything? Probably not. But hopefully it’s cleared up a few little things and encouraged Carleton students to keep using their heads and their voices – no matter which paper you choose to write for. Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words are way too much fun not to throw around!

The staff editorial represents the majority opinion of the editorial board.

[editors’ note]

After a brief hiatus, The Observer has finally returned to publish its first issue of winter term. There are many reasons for this, not the least of which is all four editors’ involvement with a certain academic team. Also, in the wake of the race issue controversy, our reputation suffered a great blow, and we wanted to wait until the time was right to reassert ourselves as a presence on campus once again.

This campus has a thirst for controversy and conflict. The term began (and continued) with a heated debate regarding The Lens, a debate from which The Observer was conspicuously absent. And for good reason - we do not see ourselves as competitors with other campus publications. We recognize that these publications each have a particular niche. Just as the Carletonian is the quintessential campus newspaper, The Observer is well-suited to being the campus counter-point. We’re happy where we are, and we wouldn’t have it any other way.
Are human rights universal? The universalist theory holds that they are common to all human beings and represent the minimum requirements for a fulfilling life. Relativism, on the other hand, argues that each society is diverse and therefore has a unique set of rights rooted in its own cultural and historical traditions. According to relativists, because of these inherent differences, each community must respect the practices of another group, even if its traditions violate the other’s conception of human rights.

Today’s cultural relativists dismiss global human rights as a product of Western cultural imperialism. Thomas Franck and Amartya Sen demonstrate that the outrages against universal human rights come from those in power and are not accurate representations of the communities at large. Sen points out that many Asian politicians lay claim to unique “Asian values” of Confucian-based order and discipline that conflict with Western notions of civil liberties. Westerners in turn contribute to this false impression of cultural dominance by implying that human rights originated in Western civilization, when in fact “the broad sense of entitlement of every human being is really a relatively new idea, not to be much found either in the ancient West or in ancient civilizations elsewhere.” Further, advocacy of limited personal freedoms existed in ancient Asia as well as in the ancient West. Without a well-founded background in history, people make sweeping judgments about a culture, and this ignorance leads to violence.

Meanwhile, as the debate over human rights persists, the international community should prepare to implement better mechanisms of enforcement for whatever consensus is ultimately reached. However, the human rights issue is particularly tricky because declarations of the U.N. General Assembly are not laws. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a broad definition of human rights and is not respected by many states in the international community, to which the recent, widely-publicized examples of gross human rights violations in Rwanda, Afghanistan, and Somalia can attest. Even binding treaties like the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child are not easily enforced.

Current instruments of enforcement include the NGOs Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. In 1993, after 40 years of deliberations, the U.N. created the position of High Commissioner for Human Rights whose job it is to publicize human rights abuses. To date, the combination of publicity and pressure from NGOs and government coalitions has proven the most effective method of securing global human rights, since trade sanctions do not mete justice on the real victims, who become even more cut off from international assistance.

To ensure that universal human rights laws are respected, the international community should make the costs of deviation greater than any short-term benefits a state may receive from defection. Treaties are ultimately insufficient deterrents for those bent on persecuting certain groups, as there are rarely serious repercussions from violating a treaty. International legal institutions, however, have the authority to punish those who break laws regarding universal human rights. Perhaps, in time, the permanent International Criminal Court will raise states’ cost of committing crimes against humanity and strengthen international concerns for human rights.

The importance of defining and protecting universal human rights appears to be taking hold in the international community. A 1998 Economist article observed, “The surprise of the past two decades has been that [governments] are now acting as if human rights law (which has always been at the furthest edge of international law) matters.”

The second, much related, critical issue facing the international community today regards the status of asylum-seekers. The High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) grants refugees the right to seek, but not obtain, asylum based on a “well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.” Subsequent definitions in 1969 and 1984 have described the refugee as a person fleeing from external or internal violence, but these make no mention of those seeking to escape racial, religious, or societal persecution. No wonder the international community lacks a consistent stance on refugee rights; it cannot protect the rights of a group it cannot even define.

There are refugees for whom remaining at home is to die or face physical abuse, and there are others who feel compelled to leave because the quality of life in their home country is extremely poor. The issues surrounding the former group of refugees can be viewed as an outgrowth of the debate over universal human rights. Since human rights are not unanimously accepted, it is difficult to enforce claims to them. As a result, increased global conflict based on acute human rights violations has forced “the exodus of a large number of persons due to civil war, violence, and large-scale disregard of human rights.”

Asylum-seekers from these circumstances pose all sorts of challenges to their host countries. The questions of voluntary repatriation, length of time spent in a host country, and the obligations of the host country to the refugee make the problem of refugee rights particularly complex.

The latter group of refugees, those migrants seeking an improved quality of life, threatens a state’s national identity. The difficulty in asserting one’s national identity is nothing new in international continued on p. 5
Refugees
continued from p. 4

relations; traditional national identities are already called into question by the rapidly expanding technologies and communication systems, compliments of globalization. However, refugees seeking longer-term residence in a foreign state further confuse a state’s national identity because, as Held notes, “When people move, they take their cultures with them.” The result is tension between the embrace of a multicultural identity and the fundamentalist backlash, i.e. the current crisis in France.

As the global population climbs by 200,000 each day and globalization threatens the uniqueness of local culture and leaves states vulnerable to fundamentalist attacks, states have become more wary of granting foreigners temporary or permanent refuge in their countries. Although a recent article in The Economist reports that more immigrants arrive legally than illegally, citizens fear that their government cannot control who enters the country. This trend of hostility toward foreigners, combined with the large overall increase in refugees, makes the problem all the more pressing. Impartial organizations, namely the UNHCR and various NGOs, should help facilitate additional international burden-sharing agreements to cope with the additional refugees. If all states agree to these measures, their small sacrifice of national sovereignty creates an equitable, universal method for distinguishing and treating refugees.

States also have the responsibility to reassess their immigration laws and migration procedures. Ivor Jackson argues that the lack of coherent migration possibilities leads other types of asylum-seekers, those migrating for economic or social reasons, to overwhelm the system designed to aid victims of extreme human rights violations. The “practical difficulties” associated with the inefficient arrangements for “regular” migrants, as well as the growing number of asylum-seekers, contribute to states’ resistance to granting any kind of protection. As Jackson suggests, states should streamline the bureaucratic process so that legitimate asylum-seekers and migrants from either category can enter.

In addition to the humanitarian element inherent in a state’s provision of asylum, the article in The Economist offers another incentive for states to revise their migration procedures: opening one’s borders boosts economic growth. Economic reality makes migration inevitable anyway, despite the existing restrictions, because “the rich economies create millions of jobs that the underemployed young in the world would willingly fill.”

The refugee issue must be treated with urgency because states are beginning to shift their attention from the critical humanitarian aspect of providing refuge for displaced persons toward the bureaucratic complications that arise from admitting refugees. If this issue is not expeditiously addressed, then states will continue the trend of clamping down on their borders instead of reforming the process to accommodate the persons in true need. ■

On responsible journalism

TREVOR BURNHAM/opinion

“CSA grants $21,000 in unprecedented funding to the Lens.”

The headline, which accompanied a front-page article written by Carletonian editor in chief Erica Peterson, speaks for itself. I have already written a letter, published in the following week’s Carletonian, on the numerous inaccuracies and biases in the article. But as the weeks have gone by, I’ve realized that the article is only a part of a larger trend of antagonistic anti-CSA bias in the Carletonian. There is less interest in presenting facts than there is in producing scandals. And at Carleton, that’s a mistake.

The journalists at the Carletonian naturally imitate their elders at more reputable publications, such as the New York Times, where a hard-hitting, investigative what-questions-isn’t-the-government-answering tone is expected. But the CSA Senate is not a vast, faceless bureaucracy juggling life, death and taxes. It’s just a group of students, most of whom were elected at some point, that’s responsible for allocating limited funds between numerous student organizations. Unlike The Carletonian, it has a comprehensive website with a list of members and guidelines it follows. Students concerned with CSA matters can e-mail or talk to their senators, who, frankly, enjoy the attention.

In my opinion, the CSA could do a lot more to increase its transparency. Posting the full, detailed budget online was hotly debated last year, but was strongly opposed by Treasurer Laura Monn and several senators (a summary can be found at csa.carleton.edu). The main reason expressed for not doing so, although I disagreed with the decision, rang true: If the budget went public, The Carletonian would use it to attack us at every opportunity.

To talk to a senator is to understand the immense amount of consideration that was given to all of the major funding decisions of recent years, from the impinging ovens that produce the personal pizzas that new students can’t imagine a world without, to the original Lens grant, which—in my personal opinion—was the most potentially important contribution to the college that the CSA has attempted in all of my years here. In hindsight, the decision should have been tabled to allow for further student input, but the reason that such a tabling was seen as unnecessary at the time is simple: Despite the major- ity of senators entering that presentation on what the student budget went public, The Carletonian was hotly debated last year, but was strongly opposed by Treasurer Laura Monn and several senators (a summary can be found at csa.carleton.edu). The main reason expressed for not doing so, although I disagreed with the decision, rang true: If the budget went public, The Carletonian would use it to attack us at every opportunity.

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Students expect their newspaper to be relatively objective. As a result, when it leans strongly toward one side, students tend not to question it. I hope that one day, The Carletonian will live up to students’ higher expectations. Unfortunately, the position of editor in chief is not an elected one. ■
I don’t feel your pain

PETER FRITZ/opinion

How we, as individuals and as the Carleton community, ought to respond to Hurricane Katrina has been a pervasive topic since Fall Term. With the unprecedented move by the faculty to suspend classes the first Friday in Spring Term, it is even more important to think about what our role ought to be. The opening words of Andrew Williams, Director of Multicultural Affairs, at the first Chili Night of Fall Term still stick with me: “Everyone in our office has been hurt, hurt and confused by the events surrounding Hurricane Katrina, as no doubt many of you have been.” They articulated an approach I have heard articulated over and over again, in a variety of contexts; a sentiment of response to tragedy that deeply worries me.

Disasters, terrorist attacks, and other tragedies have the potential to affect us, intimately and not so intimately. The pain and hurt felt when one loses a home, a friend, or a member of one’s own family is acute and requires great strength of character to overcome. In every time we have looked toward individuals as sources of inspiration. Figures like Plutarch’s Aemilius Paulus, Helen Keller, and even Lance Armstrong have not only done great things, but also in the process have overcome great personal adversity. And we admire those people because it is not wholly usual for individuals to rise as they did.

How ought we, as individuals feeling the effect of a tragedy indirectly from the television, from the newspaper, from the third hand story, emotionally respond to that tragedy? The sentiment encapsulated in the comments above, when expressed as a response to such indirect experience represents one possible avenue. One might call such a response the “I feel your pain” response, if not pioneered, then at least brought into the mainstream by a particular former president. This is the notion that an otherwise uninvolved individual can experience a level of pain and suffering commensurate with the pain and suffering of an individual who has directly experienced tragedy. Everyone has an equal opportunity to feel the devastation, the loss, the agony, associated with a tragedy; trauma can be just as easily inflicted upon the now-homeless individual as on the television-watcher sitting in his chair comfortably at home. Thus, if we do not admit our pain, we are simply disreguing it; it is a lie to say that one feels no personal pain per se.

However, when we make everyone a victim, the actual individuals directly affected by a tragedy who have lost their business, their best friend, or their daughter, lose all significance. The “I feel your pain” school does not in actuality recognize a meaningful distinction between the universal passive effect and the direct effect. There can be neither great heroes nor ordinary heroism. Actual suffering is devalued and made meaningless. This cannot be the only way.

In fact, it is not. It is possible to understand the wretchedness of an event, to feel compassion for those affected, without feeling personally afflicted. This approach understands pain and suffering as a tragic part of the human condition that some are affected at particular times and others are not. Those who are not affected have a responsibility to both respond with compassion and to behave with a dignity that comports to the humble understanding that only happenstance prevented them from a similar tragedy. The pain felt by those directly affected is not devalued, for those who are not directly affected do not attempt to create their own pain. Suddenly, we see heroes emerge, like those named before. Heroes who can give us inspiration and hope, inspiration to see the adaptability and possible greatness of humanity and hope that we might behave the same should we personally encounter tragedy. I refuse to devalue and denigrate the pain and the accomplishment of those affected by Hurricane Katrina.

Affirmative action

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on, but its harmful effects are multi-generational. Thus, our efforts at equality must be multi-generational. To think that by abolishing racist institutions we can suddenly achieve equality risks washing our filthy hands of centuries of merciless oppression. We must use these hands to build equality.

My mother’s family members come from Pennsylvania and have been in the US since before the revolutionary war. My father’s were religious refugees from czarist Russia. None of my relatives directly benefited from slavery or racial oppression that I know of, but I’ve inherited a wealth of indirect benefits while people of color often inherit a wealth of setbacks and difficulties. It doesn’t matter if my ancestors held slaves or not, just as it doesn’t matter very much if a person of color’s ancestors were brutally oppressed or not, because results of privilege are often the same today.

Reconstruction and most subsequent efforts to compensate oppressed nationalities by the U.S. government, do far more to assuage national guilt than to actually pay back (much less with interest) generations of thankless toil and suffering that helped build the nation we benefit from today. Sadly, our government rarely operates by the moral dictum that when you make a terrible mistake, you don’t just move on, you fix it, no matter how much humility and painful justice such action requires.

I believe that universal access to quality education is the most effective way to ensure a meritocracy in this country, and to provide equal opportunities to people of all races. I strongly support affirmative action because it is just one very small measure to correct an imbalance of opportunity and privilege whose historical foundations cannot be denied. It is a measure aimed at one of the many root causes of racial inequality in America – systemic exclusion and discrimination of people of color from access to quality education.

I don’t think Martin Luther King looks upon this land from above and sees the equality he dreamed of yet, but I think he

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might be proud of some of the collective efforts society has made, of which affirmative action is a part. Affirmative action is a tool to address systemic racial imbalances caused by the American system stemming back hundreds of years. It's not fair but neither was the officially sanctioned system that created this imbalance; this policy is attempting to counterbalance the other with a degree of success not seen in other attempts by the US government to compensate for its systemic inequality.

Nothing can make up nor compensate for the genocide and tyranny upon which our country is based, but we must work tirelessly towards eradicating its lasting effects upon our society. That would be a more fitting memorial to the end of racial oppression than any statue, museum or street name. I hope that in fifty years, all races of this country will reach a consensus that the tool of affirmative action among many other intentional socio-economic balancing mechanisms has served its purpose and agree that such a corrective measure is unnecessary. However, there is no such consensus and I believe that although our collective efforts are admirable and progressing, they are not yet finished because socio-economic inequality and lack of access to education still fall along the racial lines created by our past.

I acknowledge the oppression in our nation’s history although most conservatives (and many liberals) would call me guilt-ridden and self-hating for implying that we moderns have any responsibility to our past and its persistent effects. Anyone who benefits directly or indirectly from injustice and doesn’t feel guilty is suppressing something.

What do we do with this guilt? Do we whine, moan, and call ourselves bad names? I feel inspired and eager to build things. Let us look on past injustices as an opportunity to better ourselves today. That is what responsible people should do with guilt: use it to improve.

Despite my recognition of our history and its continuing impacts, I love this country, its land, and its people. But this love is not unconditional nor should patriotic love ever be so. I hold our government to the same standards to which I hold my friends and myself, and though I may love them all, we all make mistakes and should be quick and persistent to fix them as best we can. We must never let the government’s laws and policies dictate our morals and actions. Indeed, the reverse must be true: we all must seek to hold our society to a high standard of morality through love and action.

My love for America has the prerequisites of equality, liberty, and freedom which the government has consistently failed to safeguard for non-whites (among others). Therefore, let our love serve to not just to criticize but to build and improve upon these failures. Fifty years is a short time, and affirmative action is one small but important part of building a new balance of equality and meritocracy from the legacy of systematic oppression. Affirmative action is a bitter pill, a corrective measure. It supports the idea of different races having different privileges and it’s unfair. Unfortunately, different races do indeed have different privileges in our society and affirmative action is a tough but necessary tool to help correct this imbalance that we as a society have created.

Socio-economic inequality and lack of access to education still fall along racial lines
I have a dear friend that I'll call “Ruttiger.” Ruttiger is not the portrait of clean living. He drinks, he smokes various things, he curses like a sailor and has committed many an unwitting drunken groping of yours truly. However, both I and my mother love him. When I mention my mother’s undying adoration of Ruttiger to others who know him, the news is always met with a hearty, incredulous guffaw. My mother, however, has a very good reason for loving Ruttiger: “He’s never angry. So many of you Carleton students are just angry. Nothing fazes him.”

In the interest of full disclosure, I have been that angry Carl more times than I can count. My boyfriend and I are infamous for having 2 AM screaming matches over what Karl Marx was really saying. I once yelled a girl I didn’t even know in the fourth Burton lounge for a good ten minutes. Over what? I believed Lance Armstrong was a bad guy because he divorced his wife, left his kids, and ended up with Sheryl Crow. But I have, as of late, discovered a little secret for controlling my perpetual indignation over everything large and small: apathy.

“Sure,” you might say, “apathy is fine if you’ve been getting yourself worked up over Lance Armstrong’s personal life.” But it helps me cope with other, more important things, too. In between three classes, comps, hosting social events, co-directing the Mock Trial program, music lessons, orchestra, exercise five days a week, going to counseling, eating, sleeping, and taking care of hygiene, I become a very frazzled person. I’m sure many of you are, too. More power to you if you don’t need apathy to cope with Carleton. I beg you, go out and do everything you can to make the world a better place! I do support you wholeheartedly, and reading about your achievements in the 'Tonian makes me proud of the fact that I go here. In a world where people really don’t seem to care, you maintain my faith in humanity.

But I suggest that some Carls can’t become completely invested in all of these causes because their lives are all they can handle as is. Just because I don’t work for every cause I believe in doesn’t mean I don’t care. I care, but I can’t care about everything all of the time. If apathy is what I need to stay happy and healthy throughout the day and my time at Carleton, don’t begrudge me that.

And while I’m defending my coping mechanism, I ask that you consider something else: making friends with those whose values, morals, and political opinions are not your own. I’m a very liberal person from a very liberal city - Madison, WI - and I go to a very liberal school, so when I lived in Arkansas this past summer, I had to learn that very ability. I had a fantastic conversation with a Southern Baptist about his experiences doing community service in Turkey. I spent many pleasant evenings with my boyfriend’s die-hard Republican grandmother (the woman has Bush’s picture on her fridge, for God’s sake). And I had one of the best times of my life.

Truth be told, I have been through periods of time where I couldn’t stand to even think about Republicans, and these were frustrating and lonely times. So before you dismiss somebody, why don’t you have a cup of coffee with them? Why not see how they treat their other friends, their romantic interests, and animals? Carleton is a great place, but it’s best if you set some differences aside while not in the classroom. Go make friends with somebody different today; it’ll do you a world of good.