



Time to eliminate Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell

W Adriana Zalloni
World Editor

On Jan. 27, 2009, CNN reported that President Barack Obama said that he would work with Congress and the military to repeal the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy.

According to the Center for Military Readiness, the policy was enacted by the Clinton Administration as a compromise position in 1993. The Human Rights Campaign’s website, www.hrc.org, explains that Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell bars gays, lesbians and bisexuals from openly serving in the military, due to the fact that their presence may cause “disruption” to the high standards of the military. The “don’t ask, don’t tell” terminology stems from the promise that military superiors would not inquire about service members’ sexual orientation, provided that service people do not volunteer information about their sexual preference.

I agree with Obama’s statement that “[the U.S.] finds unity in our incredible diversity, drawing on the promise enshrined in our Constitution: the notion that we are all created equal, that no matter who you are or what you look like, if you abide by the law you should be protected by it.” America’s diversity is part of what makes it great.

It doesn’t really make sense that a country so set on eliminating intolerance would allow such prejudice to continue

Why, then, are so people many against the repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell?

According to www.cnn.com, Sen. (and former Presidential candidate) John McCain A-AZ—an Air Force veteran and former prisoner of war in North Vietnam—explained his objection.

“This successful policy has been in effect for over 15 years, and it is well understood and predominately supported by our military at all levels,” McCain said. “We have the best-trained, best-equipped and most professional force in the history of our country, and the men and women in uniform are performing heroically in two wars. At a time when our armed forces are fighting and sacrificing on the battlefield, now is not the time to abandon the policy.”

When would be a good time to abandon it, Sen. McCain?
In the past, the United States has worked to eliminate racism, sexism and religious and ethnic intolerance. As a country, we have made immense progress to treat those of different races, genders and cultures equally. It doesn’t really make sense that a country so set on eliminating intolerance would allow such prejudice to continue in this one area.

According to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), implicit in Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell are additional prohibitions: don’t pursue, don’t harass. However, www.hrc.org points out that these elements of the policy are often ignored. In 2000, an HRC survey revealed that four of five gay service people (or those suspected of being gay) experience harassment, whether it is in the shape of offensive speech, gay jokes or derogatory names. Also, there have been reports of physical abuse due to service members’ sexual orientation, some cases in which the victim died. When asked why they failed to report the incidents, gay military personnel “cited fear of retaliation,” the HRC reports.

America’s diversity is part of what makes it great

Obviously, if the harassment of even closeted gays exists in the military, the policy is not working. Revamping the policy would have two benefits: openly gay service personnel (or those suspected of being gay) would no longer face speculation—and resultant harassment—about the sexual orientation, and gays, lesbians or bisexuals in the military would be protected by the provisions of a new policy.

CNN reported that in a message to Pentagon leadership, Gen. John Shalikashvili, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said, “As a nation built on the principal of equality, we should recognize and welcome change that will build a stronger more cohesive military.”

It just doesn’t make sense to require service members to hide their sexual orientation. The gay men and woman who volunteer to fight for our country deserve the utmost respect in all areas, especially this one.

Disaster in Haiti shakes up students

W Uzma Ahmad
News/Wire Editor

“I was in denial. I just could not fathom the event itself or the emotional consequences for all the people of Haiti,” senior Josphine Tritch said in describing her initial response to the recent earthquake in Haiti.

According to The Associated Press, the earthquake, which shook Haiti on Jan. 12, was the worst recorded in the area, reaching a catastrophic 7.0 on the Richter scale. Only 10 miles from the epicenter of the quake, Haiti’s capital, Port-au-Prince, suffered major damage, including the collapse of the Presidential Palace and many major hospitals.

Among the students and teachers who were in “fear and shock” in the aftermath of the quake was Haitian freshman Sunshine Simon whose mother was in Haiti during the incident.

“I felt very scared and worried for my family back home,” Simon said. On the news, “I saw thousands dead, fallen to the ground. It made me so sad,” she added.

Simon’s twin sister, Sunbright, was also “terrified” after hearing about the earthquake. “I was so scared that my family and friends might be dead or hurt,” Sunbright said.

The Simon sisters were unable to contact their mother in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake.

“I was so worried because I didn’t talk to my mom until three days after the earthquake hit,” Sunbright said.

Many teachers and students expressed the belief that the school community holds great responsibility in coming to the aid of the victims of the earthquake.

“I absolutely think [the role of students and teachers] lies in education,” English teacher Dana DesJardins explained. “I think we have to be informed,” she added.

Tritch added that “it is good to be aware, but it is not so helpful if you don’t act on that.”

Addressing Haiti’s need for support, students such as senior Noor Hasan have taken it upon themselves to make a difference for the earthquake’s victims. Within a week after the disaster, Hasan, who is the captain of West’s poetry slam team, organized Poetry for Haiti, an open-microphone session that raised around \$300.

According to Hasan, Poetry for Haiti’s goal was to “raise awareness for what is going on in Haiti.”

Mission accomplished, said Trich
“Poetry for Haiti was [doubly important] because it allowed people to share their voice about this global issue in a larger



A man sits beside his crumpled house in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Photo courtesy MCT Campus

dialogue and gave people a chance to participate and to ameliorate some of their grief,” she added.

For DesJardins, Poetry for Haiti was successful in that the open-microphone was “able to make a tremendous difference in the school’s consciousness. One of the things...that really gets in the way is when you feel you can’t do anything,” DesJardins said, adding that Poetry for Haiti was a positive way for students to actually help, as it was a “first step in getting informed.”

Hasan concurs.
“I think [Poetry for Haiti] positively affected students at West because...people had a chance to come listen to poems, but at the same time, they were learning about what is going on in Haiti,” Hasan said.

Hasan said that she believes that although it may be difficult, students should come to the aid the earthquake’s victims.

“It would be extremely hard for students to just get up and catch a plane to Haiti, but sending emails, telling friends and family to donate and getting involved in organizations is a great way to start,” Hasan said. “I think that donating money is just the first step, but it doesn’t really involve communication,” .

According to Tritch, “working with charity organizations is great because it allows people to feel as if they are working towards a solution.”

Across West, students and teachers emphasize the immense support that is still needed by the Haitian community, despite the rescue efforts of many organizations and countries.

“The earthquake was a horrible natural disaster, and we really need to be there for the people of Haiti,” senior Fatima Elahi said.

Sleep deprivation causes student unrest

W Daniel Friedman
Staff Writer

“I really wanted to fall asleep, but I had so much homework to do. I knew I had to stay awake, or I would never have gotten it done,” senior Ned McElfresh said after pulling an all-nighter. “I was just overwhelmed with a monsoon of homework, and that meant sacrificing some sleep.”

A recent sleep-deprivation study in the *Washington Post* suggests that such study habits might not be healthy for high school students. Researchers, led by James Gangwisch of Columbia University, found that sleep-deprived teenagers were 24 percent more likely to become depressed and approximately 20 percent more likely to have suicidal thoughts. The results were drawn from data collected from a survey of 15,000 American teenagers and their parents.

According to school nurse Becky Osaiof, “Even those of us in the adult stage need a minimum of eight hours to adequately take care of the emotional spiritual and mental aspects of our life; it is not just physical.”

The American Sleep Disorders Association recommends that teenagers get 9.5 hours of sleep but reports that the average teenager only gets 7.4 hours per night. This is compounded by the fact that the teenage brain is still developing, which makes sleep even more crucial.

For many students such as McElfresh, the combination of

extracurricular activities and hours of homework has made sleep deprivation a part of everyday life. McElfresh concedes that staying up late is detrimental to his health.

“Usually when I have to stay up late, I just feel terrible, and it makes getting through the next [school] day so much harder.”

Still, he views it as a necessity.
Junior Sam Stein agrees with McElfresh.

“Often, between school and [extracurriculars], I have [no time] for lesiure. I am always juggling homework and [practice],” Stein said. “I sometimes can’t get my homework done, so I [scramble] to do my homework in study hall.”

Social studies teacher Shaun Waldron said that she recognizes the effects of sleep deprivation in her classroom.

“I don’t necessarily think it is appropriate for students to be sleeping in class. [School] really isn’t the place for that,” Waldron said.

However, Waldron added that school is all about choices, and sometimes, that means students choose to get their homework done at night even if they have to sleep in class the next day to recover.

Math teacher Sharon Mikula agrees that recovering from all-night study sessions in class is unacceptable.

“If you are so tired or you feel so bad that you can’t keep your head up, then you should go home.”

However, senior Zack Warso assigns at least part of the blame for students’ sleep deprivation on teachers.

“When every teacher gives something to do for homework, it adds up, and students end up staying up until [1 or 2 A.M.],” Warso said.

Students mourn death of legendary writer

W Uzma Ahmad
News/Wire Editor

“I thought it was extremely sad because he is truly one of the greatest figures of American literature,” senior Jeremy Berman said in response to the recent death of renowned author Jerome David Salinger.

Salinger, 91, died Jan. 27 of natural causes. His literary reputation is in large part based on his popular 1951 novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, which explores themes of teenage isolation, confusion, angst and disenchantment. Not only did the book receive widespread international acclaim, but it is also considered to be among the best American novels of the 20th century by magazines such as *Modern Library* and *Time* magazine and by numerous teachers, scholars and critics.



Salinger

The author’s death reverberated among literature buffs of all ages.

“I was really disheartened when I found out that [Salinger] died,” senior Fatima Elahi said. Elahi said that she read *The Catcher in the Rye* as part of her sophomore honors English curriculum.

“Before we read the book, we learned a lot about [Salinger] as an individual,” Elahi said. “That made me respect him as a person a lot.”

Freshman Viki Tomic also expressed sadness upon learning of the author’s demise.

Tomic said that she was “really disappointed in hearing that [Salinger] died. I did not want to stop reading [*The Catcher in the Rye*]. Salinger had the ability to closely connect with teenage readers. I felt that I could really relate to the book.”

Salinger’s landmark novel is also one of West’s junior English literature selections (and a part of most high school English departments’ curricula).

“Teachers like teaching [*The Catcher in the Rye*] because students like reading [*The Catcher in the Rye*],” English teacher Michelle Hettinger said. “Salinger really grasps those feelings of uncertainty and insecurity and the questions and doubts that you have as a teenager,” Hettinger added.

Berman concurs. “[The novel] has been taught for decades, yet it is something that current students can talk about with adults,” Berman said. “It is a book that has been enlightening kids for generation. *The Catcher in the Rye* is definitely one of the great pieces of American literature,” he added.

Tomic agrees.

“*The Catcher in the Rye* was really inspirational to me,” Tomic said. According to Elahi, “*The Catcher in the Rye* is such a classic book.”

She also believes that Salinger and his works “positively affect teenagers because although [*The Catcher in the Rye*] was written decades ago, it teaches us about growing up and taking responsibility for our actions,” Elahi added.

According to www.examiner.com the “death of bestselling author appear[s] to be boosting interest in the books that made [him] famous.”

Salinger’s other famous works include the short stories collection *Nine Stories* and the novella *Franny and Zooey*. He also made many contributions to *The New Yorker* magazine.

“I am glad people are returning to [Salinger’s works],” Tomic said, adding for those who are new to Salinger, I would really recommend reading [*The Catcher in the Rye*],” Tomic said.

English teacher Lia Sosa expressed concern about Salinger’s unpublished work.

“It makes me sad that we don’t have some of the other works he was written,” Sosa said. “I wonder what his kids are going to do with them, because supposedly he has notebooks and notebooks filled with unfinished work.”

Although critics suggest that like Ralph Ellison and Harper Lee, Salinger’s influence is disproportionate to his production, Berman feels the accolades are deserved.

“I think we should all pay respect for the man who gave us *The Catcher in the Rye*,” Berman said.

Local breakfast spot satisfies diners’ appetites

W Daniel Friedman
Staff Writer

Along the drive through downtown Skokie, Pat’s Place hardly stands out among the motley assortment of shops and restaurants. Yet, for Niles West students past and present, Pat’s Place has become a beloved destination to get a hot meal after practice or between finals.

The namesake proprietor of Pat’s Place, Pat Bellos, has worked at the restaurant for the past 30 years, and the restaurant has been in her family for over 45 years. Amazingly, she seems to remember every patron as if (s)he were a regular customer. Frequent diner and sophomore Marc Julien has noticed this unusually sincere hospitality.

“The people who work there know you, and they talk to you, so you feel more comfortable there. It is not like any other restaurant,” Julien said.

For Bellos, Niles West is more than an institution that supplies hungry teenagers. Her siblings attended Niles West, so she has a special appreciation for diners who stumble in from the cold draped in Wolves apparel (even if it is just for extra sprinkles to top off a chocolate milkshake).

The traditional diner menu consists of pancakes, waffles and omelettes for breakfast and burgers, sandwiches and soup for lunch. Some may call the restaurant old-fashioned, but Pat’s Place has become so popular because Bellos knows that hungry

students and athletes want “good food at the right price.”

Indeed, almost everyone from Niles West agrees that the price is right.

Senior Kevin Villanueva recalled that over the summer, “Pat’s Place was the place to go after football practice, because we were hungry and low on cash.”

For most students, racking up a bill over \$10 at Pat’s is feat worthy of Takeru Kobayashi. Villanueva’s favorite item, the deluxe burger with French fries, costs approximately a mere \$2.

Niles West alumnus Tommy Stern (’08) recalls that chocolate chip pancakes, an omelette with a side hash browns and a milkshake would total \$7-8.

Stern credits his experiences at Pat’s Place for inspiring him to join the charity Pancakes for Poverty. The charity, which is based at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, works to raise money for disadvantaged people by selling pancakes on the quad.

“I have no doubt that the pancakes that I ate at Pat’s Place and the pancakes I sell for charity are somehow related,” Stern said.

Along with Stern, Bellos recognizes the power that food can have to change a community. Over the years, her quality meals at great prices have fed students and fueled athletes at Niles West as they have moved their way through high school and beyond. Additionally, she values the sense of community that high school students bring to Pat’s Place.

Bellos added concisely, “I think all you kids are great.”

Pat’s Place is located at 5025 Oakton St. in Skokie.



Pat’s Place is a popular dining venue for students. Photo by Rexly Penaflorida II

California universities to screen applications for student dishonesty

W Morgan Quilici
Copy Editor

“I just assumed that [colleges] screened all the applications,” senior Alyssa Jutovsky said. “I was just really sure that I was accurate with everything that I put down. I did not lie about anything because I was afraid of what would happen,” Jutovsky said.

Jutovsky’s comments came in response to a *San Jose Mercury News* report that the University of California network would begin monitoring student application claims more closely.

Senior Edyta Cwiok shares Jutovsky’s preoccupation with accuracy.

“Every time I would write something on my application, I would ask myself if I could prove that I did it,” Cwiok said. “I would not [put down] anything I wasn’t sure they would accept.”

According to the *Mercury News*, the University of California

system sent out 1,000 letters to applicants for the 2010 freshman class, asking them to provide evidence to support what the students put on their applications. The evidence is to support statements made in personal essays and accomplishments included in the applications. The program was created in 2003 when the U.C. system switched to “comprehensive review” by which students began to be measured by not only academic success but outside activities. Although the draw is random, and only 1 percent of applicants is investigated for the review, the real goal of the process is to keep students honest when applying. The schools only ask for proof for information such as academic awards and extracurricular activities. They cannot ask for evidence to do with topics such as a disability, abuse or other personal matters.

“I would be surprised if [California schools] didn’t check up on applications,” senior Katarina Sostaric said. “I know plenty of students made things up to make themselves sound better. Personally, I am too paranoid to make anything up on college applications.”

Senior Prachi Shah said that she didn’t feel the need to lie on her application.

“I have spent a lot of time on activities so I think that it is very

unfair that some kids are just making up activities,” Shah said.

However, senior Rahim Bihmani found it hard to be completely accurate about some information.

“It is hard to be accurate with the number of hours you participated in from freshman year. Unless you start calculating from the beginning, it is not going to be completely accurate,” Bihmani said.

Senior Katie Keith did admit to some tinkering with her application.

“I did not lie. I just told the college that I was into a lot of clubs, [but] I hardly went to any of the meetings,” Keith said.

Senior Zack Warso took a similar tack when applying. “I didn’t make anything up; I just embellished a lot. I would make something that was not a big deal seem like a bigger deal,” Warso said. “In all honesty, I think most people did [embellish],” Warso added.

College and career counselor Daniel Gin said that he highly recommends being completely honest while applying.

“By signing the application, you attest that the information is accurate and true. If a college finds out that you lied or fabricated, it is grounds for dismissal or expulsion,” Gin said.