

Briefs

METRO

Cops Arrest 'Ninja Vigilantes' in NJ

Police arrested two males who were dressed as ninjas and armed with "knives, Chinese throwing stars...swords and bows and arrows" in Clifton, NJ on Aug. 22. Tadeusz Tertkiewicz, 20, and Jesse Trojaniak, 19, told police that they are known "on the streets" as The Shinobi Warriors, and that their goal is to rid the city of drug dealers. The pair were allegedly on their way to "deliver menacing letters" to drug dealers and users.

Lennon's Assassin Denied Parole for Fifth Time

On Aug. 12, Mark David Chapman was denied parole and ordered to remain at Attica Correctional Facility, in New York, where he has been detained for more than 20 years. According to an article in the New



York Daily News, the parole board noted his "clean prison record... and positive institutional adjustment" but cited the pre-meditated nature

of the manner in which he killed Lennon as reason for him to remain institutionalized. The article also noted a statement from Lennon's widow, Yoko Ono, in which she said she feared for her own safety and the safety of her son if Chapman were to be released.

NATIONAL

Obama's Success Worries Some Civil Rights Activists

According to a recent New York Times article, some black scholars and political figures are concerned that if Barack Obama is elected president, some will see his victory as evidence that racial discrimination and inequality no longer exist. There is concern that poverty-stricken blacks will be increasingly "blamed for their troubles." In addition, some worry that it will be much more difficult to pass public policy agendas that would help poor blacks, as whites will assume that "the nation has transcended race."

Study: 20 Percent of Cell Phones Test Positive for MRSA

A recent study conducted by researchers at the University of Arizona showed that 20 percent of cell phones test positive for the often-deadly staph infection MRSA. The study also noted that, although MRSA tends to linger in hospitals, 12 percent of last year's outbreaks occurred outside hospitals, usually in locker rooms. The study's lead researcher advises everyone to clean their cell phones regularly.

INTERNATIONAL

EU Pressures Russia to Withdraw Troops from Georgia

European leaders from the EU will convene to discuss future relations with Russia after the nation failed to pull back troops stationed in Georgia following a request from French president Nicolas Sarkozy, according to the Sydney Morning Herald. The EU leaders will assemble Sept. 1 in Brussels.

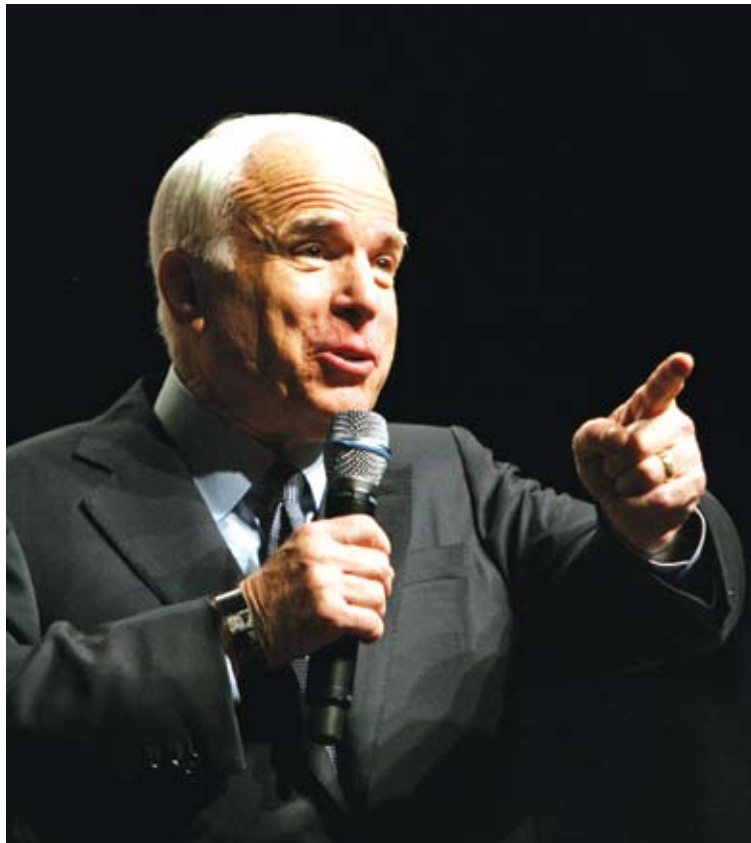
Russian troops have been engaged in combat in Georgia in an attempt to regain control of South Ossetia, a "breakaway" region. Over 115,000 individuals have been displaced and thousands have been killed as a result of the conflict, according to CNN.

Israel Released Jailed Palestinians in Peace Attempt

Israel released 200 Palestinian prisoners on Aug. 25, including two convicted murderers, in an attempt to "energize the peace process" with Palestine, according to CNN. The members of an Israeli victims' rights group cried foul, calling the two murderers "terrorists... with blood on their hands." The Israeli government stated that the two men are considered low-risk, and that they have both served long sentences.

Media Coverage of the Presidential Election: Fair or Biased?

Democrats Receive More Overall News Coverage than Republicans



TOMAS OVALLE/MCT

McCain laments the lack of positive press coverage of his campaign.



CHUCK KENNEDY/MCT

Obama has generally benefitted from positive press coverage.

By CASEY FELDMAN
News Editor

This election season, the Democrats have received substantially more news coverage than have their Republican counterparts. According to *The Swamp*, the Chicago Tribune's Washington office, about 80 percent of all election stories this summer featured Barack Obama, while an average of 55 percent of news stories mentioned John McCain. In fact, the only time McCain received more news coverage than Obama was when he released an ad in which he criticized the large amount of news coverage that Obama receives, *The Swamp* also reported.

But whether Obama's news coverage is more positive than negative—and what effect the discrepancy in news coverage between parties will have on the election—is less cut-and-dry.

"Most voters know who they are voting for, regardless of media coverage. Media, however, can influence the swing or independent vote," said Paul Levinson, Fordham professor of communication and media studies.

"Obama receives so much media coverage because he represents something genuinely new and original in American politics," said Levinson. "[He is] someone of African heritage running for, and becoming a nominee of a major party for, president. Hillary is something genuinely new and original, too: the first woman ever to come close to receiving a major party's nomination for president (and a former first lady)."

"Obama's media coverage is more positive than negative," said Levinson. "McCain's seems more negative than positive. But McCain can't help but get negative media coverage when he identifies with the Bush administration... and stumbles in his speech."

Research shows, however, that media coverage of the candidates vacillates greatly. A study from the Center for Excellence in Journalism shows that in 2007, Obama received far more positive coverage than any of the other possible candidates.

However, this appears to have changed. The Center for Media and Public Affairs at George Mason University found that ABC, NBC and CBS were tougher on Obama than on McCain after Hillary Clinton dropped out of the race and Obama

clinched the nomination.

The study reports that "since the primaries ended, on-air evaluations of Obama have been 72 percent negative, a 46 percent increase in negative coverage since the beginning of the primaries. That's worse than McCain's coverage, which has been 57 percent negative, an 11 percent change since the beginning of the primaries during the same time period."

Why the change? Some attribute it to Obama saturation: people are simply getting tired of hearing about him. CNN.com reported that a recent poll found that 48 percent of Americans believe that there is too much media coverage of Obama, and 38 percent believe there is not enough about McCain. Another poll cited in the same article stated that 49 percent of Americans feel that the press is pro-Obama.

Pat Wylie, FCLC '09, feels that the media does, in fact, seem sup-

porters censuring the media's love affair with Obama, according to Politico.com.

Wylie also stated his belief that within the two campaigns' differing marketing approaches, Obama's is more effective. "He has spent money on national infrastructure...and voter registration drives...as opposed to exclusively running ads like McCain has been doing... and that will really help him on election day," he said.

Perhaps McCain's most famous response to Obama's extensive media coverage? A campaign ad in which he compares Obama to Paris Hilton and Britney Spears and suggests that Obama is too big a "celebrity" to lead the country.

"I thought the ad was clearly born of jealousy in the McCain campaign, about the great international response to Obama's overseas tour," said Levinson. "I doubt that ad will convince anyone not to vote for Obama—it will only make people

news magazine show "Extra."

In contrast, McCain was interviewed and featured on the cover of *Fortune* magazine. The article focused on his planned economic policy.

"The American public has to get to know Obama and his family," said *Fortune*. "The coverage is vital to their success. [Their] message—Obama has a strong and energized family, and he is ready to bring that growth, energy and youthfulness to the White House."

However, it seems as though McCain's 22-year-old daughter has managed to add some "youthfulness" to the McCain campaign. A Columbia University grad who majored in art history, Megan runs the McCain Blogette from her father's campaign trail. She often blogs about fashion and political figures' shoes. She wants to be a fashion designer, famously called Obama "sexy" and voted for John Kerry in 2004. Could Megan be a secret weapon for the McCain campaign?

"She sounds like an interesting character," said Kamel, who classifies herself as a democrat, "but I don't think it would change my opinion of McCain."

"I think Obama has a very appealing and photogenic family, much like JFK," said Levinson. "McCain, of course, is much older, and can't compete on that level. I think Obama and his family's appearances, although very engaging, won't have that much effect on the election—which will be decided...by substantive, not cosmetic, factors."

Fortune stated that although it seems that many publications have an interest in McCain, "the reality is that more Americans spend time with *People* magazine or *Us Weekly* than *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*. Both candidates need access to as many voters as they can get. Like it or not, McCain and Obama are in the celebrity spotlight and must literally play to the press."

Fortune said: "The media coverage for the 2008 presidential campaign ranges in quality and points of view. I urge all observers of this political process to keep their minds open and consider a range of voices...This is not a time for Americans to just be recipients of messages, it is also a time for Americans to be more discerning and proactive about the messages they are accepting from a range of media outlets."

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— PAUL LEVINSON, professor of Communication and Media Studies at Fordham

portive of McCain. "I love how the media continues to report about John McCain being a 'maverick,' and supposedly being willing to buck the Republican line. When you look at many of the policy ideas that he has presented, they are very similar to what we have seen from the current administration," he said.

"I've actually been impressed by the media not being totally biased," said Yasmine Kamel, FCLC '11, adding that she does not believe that Obama receives too much media coverage. "I guess Obama gets a bit more attention because he has some kind of 'star quality'...and the media is always biased towards that," Kamel added. "But I think, for the most part, things have been pretty fair."

Wylie said, "I think that McCain complaining about the lack of media coverage of his campaign while Obama was in Europe was laughable." During Obama's overseas trip, McCain famously sent an email

who don't already like Obama feel better. People who are opposed to Obama don't really care about his 'celebrity'—they're just looking for any way they can to attack him."

Monique Fortune, professor of communication and media studies at FCLC, said: "Political campaigns always have the smack of 'show business'. The speeches. The radio and television ads. The Web sites. The town meetings... There is always flash before substance."

In terms of media outlets, Obama and his family have received coverage in very different venues than have the McCains. Obama, along with his wife, Michelle, and his two young daughters, appeared on the cover of the July 23s issue of *People* magazine and the June 21 cover of *Us Weekly*, in addition to the August issue of *Esquire*. Traditionally, both publications are celebrity-oriented. Michelle also graces the current cover of *Ebony* magazine, and Obama's daughters were interviewed on the celebrity

Rate of Suicide and Depression Increases in College Students Across the Nation

Mental Health Experts Offer Tips to Help Students Recognize Signs of Depression in Others

By CASEY FELDMAN
News Editor

Mental illness is scarily common in college-age students. At the very end of the Spring 2008 semester, two male Fordham seniors committed suicide. "One was a CBA (College of Business Administration) commuter student who died at home; the other was a Rose Hill student who died in his dorm room," said Bob Howe, director of communications at Fordham. Incidents such as these are not unique to Fordham. In fact, suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students, according to CNN. In light of this, the Observer spoke to a number of experts in order to help students understand the causes of college-age mental illness, recognize the signs that a friend or roommate is suicidal and ascertain an appropriate course of action.

What Triggers Depression and Suicidality in College Students?

"There are always a certain number of people who, in their first semester of college, have a breakdown," said Deborah Rubin, a New York City-based clinical social worker and psychoanalyst. "It's connected to losing the whole support system that they had—friends, family, the place where they grew up." Conversely, Rubin said, another stressful life change occurs when students are graduating from college and begin to worry about facing the pressures of living in the "real world" and being truly on their own for the first time.

"College can also be a point where people who have had problems all along are unable to cope anymore," Rubin said. "I have had a number of patients who did break down at this age. Sometimes an underlying biological disorder, like bipolar, will emerge."

Bipolar disorder, sometimes known as Manic Depression, is classified by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) as "a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in a person's mood, energy and ability to function." Individuals with bipolar disorder, according to the NIMH, experience extreme mood swings

"There are always a certain number of people who, in their first semester of college, have a breakdown."

—DEBORAH RUBIN, NYC clinical social worker and psychoanalyst

ranging from a high-energy manic state to a low-energy depressive state.

"One of the things that people should be aware of is that individuals who are bipolar are more likely to commit suicide. If someone is extraordinarily depressed, they don't have the energy to [commit suicide]," said Rubin. When a bipolar person is in a manic episode, "they are more likely to kill themselves" than when they are in a depressive episode, Rubin stated.

Additionally, with individuals who may not be bipolar but who are depressed, when someone is "so depressed that they are doing nothing but sleeping," they are not as likely to commit suicide, said Rubin. Surprisingly enough, "it's usually when they start to become a little less depressed that they are more likely to commit suicide, because they have more energy," Rubin stated.

"The typical onset of psychosis, like schizophrenia, is 19-20 [years old]," said Lisa Miller, a former social worker who currently works in in-

patient adult psychiatry at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital, near Columbia University.

Miller described "psychosis" as a deep level of unreality within which an individual is unable to function. She stressed that some people can appear to be normal, "high-functioning" individuals, and that it is not always "crystal clear" that someone is mentally unwell. Miller stated that, often, individuals become "psychotically depressed: when [they're] not seeing reality the way others see it."

"Kids have pressure from school and social pressure...and [in college], they don't feel like they can go to their family anymore," Miller said. On top of these stresses, there are also some surprising triggers for manic episodes, whether or not a student has ever exhibited manic symptoms in the past.

All-nighters—whether due to partying or to studying—have become commonplace on college campuses. But who would have thought that late nights could trigger a "psychotic episode?"

"Disruptive sleep cycles can trigger a manic episode," Miller stated. "It's a shift in brain chemistry," said Miller, that can cause a person who "has seemed completely normal their whole life" to go off the deep end.

Other triggers? Drugs, which can cause "substance-induced psychosis." "I see this show up in just regular, smart Columbia students, who are under stress and away from home," Miller stated. "They experience multiple triggers, like staying awake all night...then they smoke marijuana... then that triggers a manic episode."

Miller continued, "This was surprising for me, because many people do fine with marijuana. We don't know why, it just causes a shift in brain chemistry...they can smoke marijuana for years and then something gets triggered... even after the [immediate effects] of the drug have worn off, [psychotic behavior] continues, because it triggers a brain imbalance." People can become "paranoid or grandiose." Or, like one Columbia student Miller saw, they think that all their teachers are sexually attracted to them, or that there is a conspiracy against them among faculty and students.



CRAIG CALEFATE PHOTO ILLUSTRATION/THE OBSERVER

Students should learn to recognize the signs of depression in others and should know where to turn for help.

can trigger Schizophrenia that may not have surfaced or may not have surfaced for many years."

"It's normal-seeming, smart people...who feel pressure about school and get caught up in social [issues]... and who don't know how to apply their intelligence to their emotional life," concluded Miller.

Symptoms?

"If someone seems dejected and [sad], and if somebody is focused on how inadequate they are, that's a sign [that they may be depressed or suicidal]—they don't feel good about themselves and are constantly putting themselves down," said Diana List Cullen, a New York City psychotherapist and licensed clinical social worker. "Also, if they worry a lot, and they seem pessimistic or isolated from others." Cullen also stated that, in conjunction with the other symptoms, being very judgmental of others is an important sign that something is amiss. Sleeping a lot—or not sleeping at all—is also an indication of depression, according to Cullen.

Miller said, "If people say weird things that sound depressed or bizarre...or [not normal]," that is a sign that they are, mentally, out of touch with reality and don't see things the way that everyone else sees them.

Said Sivanie Shiran, assistant director of counseling and psychological services at FCLC: "Perhaps you... notice that they've been acting very differently lately—more socially reserved...eating [more or] less than

usual, performing [poorly] in classes or at work. They may even be taking more drugs and drinking more than usual or acting in other impulsive ways that you know are likely to get them into trouble or hurt them..."

"If you have a sense that someone seems so weird and out of it that you wouldn't want to talk to them," said Miller, "that's a red flag that [there is a problem] and that they should be seen by a professional."

How Should Students Cope?

"It's important if you're concerned about somebody to ask them if they feel suicidal," said Cullen. "A straight-forward question never hurts, and avoiding it is not giving the person the opportunity to feel that they can talk about it." Shiran said, "The best thing you can do is just to listen and be there for them." How to bring up this potentially contentious subject? "It's very important, when you're asking them, to act as if you're interested in how they think or feel," said Cullen. "Don't act as if you're challenging them."

That said, all the experts stress that getting the help of a professional is essential: both for the individual in question and for those who are attempting to help him or her. "When a friend or roommate is depressed... it is not something that [students] should handle by themselves," said Rubin. "Go to the counselors, go to the RAs. It's not right for an 18- or 19-year-old to be shadowing someone who seems depressed... it is a

huge burden."

No one wants to feel as though they are betraying a friend, so it is often hard for students to make the decision to call a friend's parents or to alert the counseling center. "People tend to respect other people's desires, and this is a situation where you shouldn't," said Rubin.

"I almost don't know anyone who hasn't... known someone who committed suicide," Rubin continued, "I think that we do underestimate the seriousness of depression, in particular. And it's a hard thing to expect a college student to spot in another college student, but the only thing that can possibly turn that kind of situation around is professional help."

"When I was in grad school my closest friend spent the entire year in a psychotic state, and she [eventually committed suicide]," said Rubin. "She was functioning on a very high level—she was a graduate student at Yale, she was teaching students, she was taking classes, she was working on her dissertation... At the same time, she was containing that [psychotic] part of her."

"I've never forgotten it. [A friend committing suicide] really is something that marks you for life. In retrospect, I realize that although I knew that she was really psychotic, it never occurred to me to do something."

Miller said, "People lose track of paying attention to the emotions of others at college because everyone seems stressed... It's not about being paranoid about other people, but about being responsive to who, and what, is right in front of us."