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Inauguration 2009: Barack Obama and the (Economic) Challenge he must face

By: Casey Camire

On a blustery January 20th, Barack Obama was sworn in as the 44th president of the United States, and, despite the flub heard 'round the world, the day seemed to go off without a hitch. If only the economic problems he immediately face could be as breezy.

To put it simply, this isn't the best time in American history. Sure, there has been worse, bet there has been much better. Our economy, once the shining model of deregulated Capitalism has been in a spiral since the end of 2007, with the tremors initially felt in the financial markets spreading outward rapidly. Consumers, unsure of how stable their jobs are, tightened their belts, and cut demand at a rate not seen in decades. One by one, businesses are failing. The unemployment rate is on the rise, and the stock market is falling. Across the board, red lights are flashing, telling us that if we don't act quickly, things could get much, much worse.

However, like almost any problem, the solutions proposed fall right down party lines. The Democrats, with Barack Obama in the White House and a majority in both houses of Congress have proposed a massive government-spending stimulus, with billions going towards infrastructure, schools, alternative energy projects, and other programs that will slow the fall of the economy, while at the same time employing millions of Americans. If the plan succeeds, Democrats and many economists say that we can see a definite end to the downward plunge of the economy by late 2009, and a small up-tick by 2010. The Democrats argue they have history on their side, citing both our Great Depression and Japan's "Lost Decade," two instances where government spending slowly pulled economies back out of the abyss.

Republicans, however, have a different idea. They support the idea of government spending, but in a different form – tax cuts. Tax cuts, Republicans say, free up the average American, as well as big industry, to invest in themselves and ultimately spend more independently. That new flurry of spending, should in theory, boost the economy back to health. Republicans also claim to have history on their side, citing the wild ride of the 1980's that took the nation's economy to new heights under Ronald Reagan's tax cut era.

While both sides have merits, both too have drawbacks. The Democrat's proposal, already coming with a fair amount of sticker shock, can actually run the risk of being too small. In fact, it's better to spend nothing than not enough. If enough isn't spent, the money simply goes to waste. Also, there is a high risk of the money being wasted on projects that have little or no lasting



economic impact. With the Republican's proposal, recent history is their greatest enemy. Many economists blame the infamous "Bush Tax Cuts", coupled with rapid and wanton deregulation, as the reason for this violent downturn. Instead of spending the money freed up by tax cuts, many businesses and individuals pocketed them, or invested them in risky (and now failed) enterprises, thus garnering a negative economic impact. As is true with any human experiment, success is always wanted, but failure is always a possibility.

Despite all this bad news, Americans seem more hopeful than in recent years. As a nation, history has shown that through downturn after economic downturn, we have always bounced back stronger more robust, and more resilient than before. Now, as the Democrats seem poised to pass their economic stimulus package, history will decide which route we should have taken. Regardless of what ideas make it where, all Americans wish just one thing: they hope that it works.

LATIN CLVB By Alexandria Noxon

Latin Club is a wonderful after school activity for students to join. You can meet new people, and make new friends while learning and improving your Latin skills. While anyone taking Latin can join, anyone who asks Mr. McQuiggan can join, too. Platt's Latin Club participates in the Connecticut State Latin Day, a day that showcases the state's Latin talent. If you come the 1st and 4th Wednesday of every month you can join us for a riveting game of Certamen, a form of Latin trivia. We are also building a chariot for the chariot races on Latin Day. If you are artistic, you may come and help create our flag to represent Platt High School. There is always something for you to do, so come on in! Meetings will be announced in the morning, or you can stop by Mr. McQuiggan's room (#113). Its fun, and you can make many new friends!



Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA)

By Kate Mordarski

Kids rush by, scurrying off to their bus or after-school activity of choice. Lost pencils and papers stir in the wake of heavy footsteps as the last bell of the day rings. Away from the after school-chaos, in a classroom, a group of students assemble.

The room is filled with chatter, spilling from the mouths of an assortment of members. A girl with dark eyeliner, black clothes and matching expression snaps her gum. A boy wearing a Naruto sweatshirt is deep in conversation with a preppy-looking blonde. Walking by the room, you wouldn't be able to tell that the diverse group inside was meeting for one unified cause- to offer support to friends and fellow students who are gay.

The Gay-Straight Alliance, or the "GSA" as it is more commonly referred, is a new addition to the many clubs that Platt has to offer. Whether you are gay or straight, all are welcome; just as the name implies. Some join to give support to friends, while others are there to receive support. The GSA is one of the only places where you don't have to be afraid of being judged or discriminated against. Discussions are encouraged about every subject, from offensive commonly-used words to religion's take on gays. Whatever the topic or sexual orientation of the person, you never feel uncomfortable speaking up at the GSA. All the members strive to replace ignorance and prejudice with understanding and support, creating a welcoming atmosphere where you don't have to be afraid to be yourself.

So, whether you are a moral person and an advocate of gay rights, or if you are looking for support and understanding about your situation, feel free to stop by a GSA meeting some time. Gain some awareness, make new friends, and don't be afraid to be yourself!

An Editorial: Roberto Caceres

Game or not, the show must go on.

Life is a game show. When you lose it could be the end of the world, and when you win you walk away with a prize that pales in comparison to the profit made by the company producing the show. But unlike most game shows, Life isn't optional. From the day you are born to the day you die, involuntary functions, such as breathing, keep you a returning contestant on Life; the game show where anything is possible and the only answers necessary are the ones you don't know.

Having never been canceled, Life has been airing 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, since the dawn of man. To keep ratings high, Life



has evolved to contain many different spin-off versions. Participation on said spin-offs depends on age, sex, race, appearance, physical health, mental health, sexuality, social standing, financial standing, location and life style, and can be altered by either an ocean of change or prescription medication. Everyone plays Life, but not the same life as anyone else.

In Life, there are only two governing laws. These laws are written in stone, with no exceptions, or do-over's. The laws are as follows:

1.) Life isn't fair.

2.) The show must go on.

And as terribly cliché as they seem, I'm finding these, among other clichés, to be unavoidably true.

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An Update on the Wizard of Oz

By Ruchi Sheth

The Wizard of Oz
The Cast:

Dorothy- Melanie Gawlak
Tin Man- Matt Hubbard
Oz- Sydney Agosto
Scarecrow- Hillary Rolstone

Panther Press

"The voice of Platt"

Orville H. Platt High School; Meriden CT



Glinda- Stephanie Cruz
Wicked Witch- Gabby Sandoval
Lion- Andrew Gadwah
The Trio:
Kaylee Roby
Ashley Creen
Kristi Hoar
The Monkeys:
Josh Budwitz
Derek Drag
Matthew Beale

The cast and crew have been knee-deep in preparations for the school's upcoming play. We caught up with Mr. O'Brien, Melanie and Andrew. Here's what they had to say:

Me- "How are the preparations going?"

Mr. O' Brien- "They are going well."

Melanie- "We've been getting through a lot of stuff."

Andrew- "It's been tons of fun. It's coming together nicely."

Me- "What do you think of the performers?"

Mr. O' Brien- "We have a very talented group."

Me- "What has been the hardest thing so far?"

Melanie- "All the little movements. Like all the steps while singing"

Me- "How is the cast as a whole progressing?"

Melanie- "Everyone is doing really well."



An Editorial: Kayla Lyder

Technology

In today's world we are surrounded by technology, and it seems to be our whole life. People say that they can't live without it and we would be nowhere without it. Is that honestly true? I doubt it. People before us survived without it and they made out pretty well. Parents always yell at teenagers, saying that we spend too much time on computers or cell phones, or whatever it is. We rely so much on technology that I wonder what would happen if it were all to go away. How would we get by not getting that text about the latest gossip in school or not getting to Japan in under two days? Face it, we would not die! It might be hard at first, learning the old skills our ancestors once had and lived by. We would make it, though, and we'd do just fine.

I was watching TV when I saw a commercial that actually was all about not making it without technology. I sat there and laughed at how stupid that sounded. There are people making it all over the world without technology. These commercials make the U.S. sound kind of snobby, as if we have it all and that should be something important. Whether poor in America or poor in Kenya, they make it. I know for a fact that I'm even dependent on technology sitting here on the computer, using a light and texting my friends. That's how I grew up and how I'm used to things. I think that this whole rant came to me when I was grounded and was without my cell phone, computer, TV and everything else. Except for lights and water and those kinds of things, I need them!

I just thought of how I was acting like a spoiled brat, freaking out about missing my shows and all the other stuff; I found myself pretty ridiculous. Obviously I survived, and I'm doing just fine. I'm not saying that we should all just stop using technology cold turkey, just that we don't need it as much as we claim to. So, maybe for global warming's sake we can turn off the computer and go spend time with family just a little more.

BEWARE OF BOTTLED WATER!

By Kate Mordarski

Bottled Water is Expensive!

- Over 95% of the cost of bottled water is the bottle, label, lid, and transportation.
- 1.5 million barrels of oil are consumed each year to produce the plastic for water bottles. That's enough to fuel 100,000 cars.
- The U.S. currently spends \$100 billion annually on bottled water.
- Bottled water costs 240 to 5,000 times more than tap water.



Bottled Water is Wasteful & Toxic!

- Plastic is made from non-renewable materials, like natural gas and oil.
- According to the Container Recycling Institute, only 14% of plastic bottles are recycled.
- Plastic bottles can take 1000 years to biodegrade.
- It takes 1.3 gallons of water to rinse the plastic dust from a newly made one-gallon plastic water bottle.

Bottled Water is Not So Pure!

- Bottled water is cleaner, right? WRONG. The U.S. EPA sets stricter quality standards for tap water than the FDA does for bottled beverages.
- Arsenic, mercury, and bacterial contamination are found in a significant percentage of bottled water.
- Cancerous chemicals and toxins leach from the plastic bottle into the water it contains.

Bottled Water Sources

- The source location of bottled water is not required to be disclosed.
- 25-40% of bottled water is actually reprocessed tap water.

Things You Can Do

- Don't buy bottled water. Instead, use a stainless steel bottle.
- If you're unsure of your tap water, use a water filter.



Groundhog Day

By: Carla Sauza

Groundhog Day is an American tradition that has been held for more than 100 years. On the second of February, a groundhog would come out of his burrow and decide whether or not we have an early spring or a late winter. Tradition says, when a groundhog comes out and sees its shadow on a bright, sunny day, there will be six more weeks of winter. But if the groundhog does not see his shadow on a cloudy, wintery day, then we are in for an early spring.

For some people, it's confusing to remember what happens if the groundhog does or does not see his shadow. But by reading this old English song below, it will be easy to remember.

If Candlemas be fair and bright,

Winter has another flight.

If Candlemas brings clouds and rain,

Winter will not come again.

On February 2nd, of this year, the groundhog saw his shadow, meaning we have six more weeks of winter.

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Want to see your name here? Be a contributing writer to our next issue!