

A SIGN OF THE TIMES

Unsound diversity initiatives at Times led to Jayson Blair plagiarism fiasco

The story of Jayson Blair must not simply be dismissed as the story of a journalistic bad seed who finally got weeded out by the system. It is, instead, a tale of political correctness run amok at a place formerly considered a bastion of credible, albeit somewhat liberal, journalism: The New York Times. It is also the story of diversity initiatives and affirmative action being taken to ridiculous, even criminal, levels in society at the expense of the truth and journalistic integrity.



GEORGE DEUTSCH

As Universal Press Syndicate columnist Ann Coulter put it, "Blair's record of inaccuracies, lies and distortions made him a candidate for either immediate dismissal or his own regular column on the op-ed page." Most people are probably happy not to see the latter.

But the facts are clear. Blair's decisions and actions lacked ethics and integrity. As a reporter, he cared only about himself and furthering his career at the expense of the truth — the one thing every reporter should hold dear. Then why did The Times keep him around? One would think the reports of his many mistakes would follow him and even overshadow his race. Wrong again.

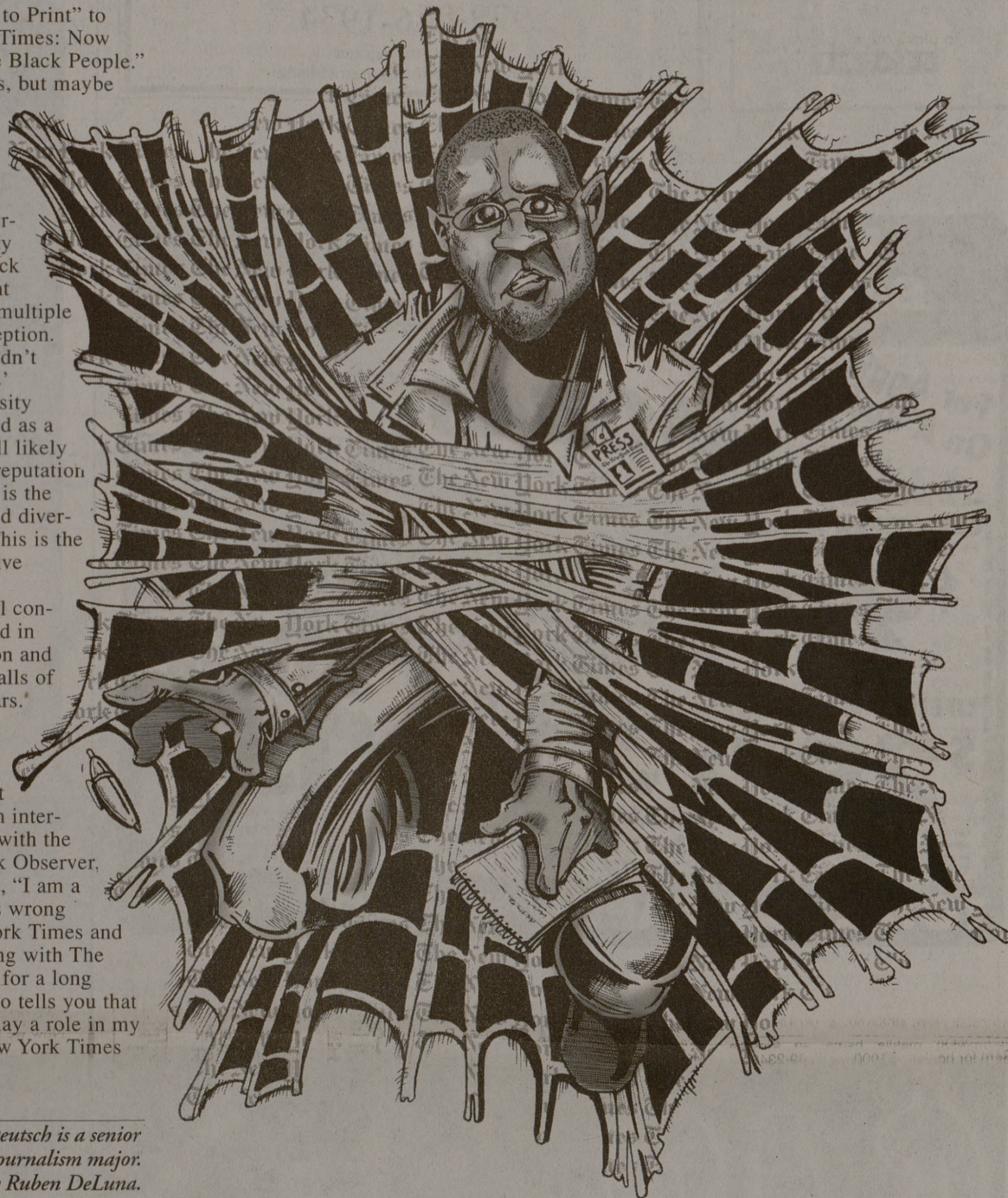
As it turns out, The Times' Editor in Chief Howell Raines was well aware of Blair's penchant for lying and love of deceit, but was too much in love with the diversity Blair's race brought to the newsroom to take disciplinary action. When asked why he continually promoted Blair and covered up his professional problems, Raines said he didn't want to "stigmatize" him. God forbid anyone knows that a Times' front page reporter is a journalistic fraud. Just because he's black doesn't make it OK. This is the type of flawed thinking Times' management apparently operated under. Columnist Ann Coulter even suggests changing the Times' slogan from "All the

News That's Fit to Print" to "The New York Times: Now With Even More Black People." Clearly, she jests, but maybe she's on to something.

After all, The Times' management was doing nothing but advertising its diversity by keeping a black writer on its front page even amid multiple incidents of deception. Only, the plan didn't work. The Times' attempts at diversity clearly failed, and as a newspaper, it will likely never regain its reputation of prestige. This is the expense of flawed diversity initiatives. This is the price of affirmative action.

This issue will continue to be argued in print, in television and throughout the halls of academia for years. But what did the man himself, Jayson Blair, have to say about his actions? In an interview last month with the weekly New York Observer, Blair rightly said, "I am a symbol of what's wrong with The New York Times and what's been wrong with The New York Times for a long time. Anyone who tells you that my race didn't play a role in my career at The New York Times is lying to you."

George Deutsch is a senior journalism major. Graphic by Ruben DeLuna.



Sharon buying time

"I think that the idea of keeping 3.5 million Palestinians under occupation is the worst thing for Israel, for the Palestinians and also for the Israeli economy." This recent quote by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in the Israeli newspaper Marniv indicates a total change in the Israeli government's perspective on the current conflict in Gaza and the West Bank.



DAVID SHOEMAKER

Using the word "occupation" in reference to its military operations might give hope to Palestinians and the Bush Administration that Israel might pull out soon and end its direct influence on the areas, paving the way for the success of the "Roadmap for Peace." But upon closer inspection, it looks like Sharon is simply playing for time to keep the status quo. Sharon is making promises in negotiations that he may not be able or willing to keep. One difficulty he will face is getting his own party to back the policy change. After his statements about ending the "occupation" of the Palestinian territories, Sharon faced criticism from within his own party, including ministers in his government, according to the BBC. Sharon's Likud party has traditionally been quick to take defensive action in favor of increased Israeli settlements.

According to the BBC, freezing Israeli settlement expansion is a key part of the first phase of the Roadmap and parallel progress is expected on all parts of the plan, meaning Israelis and Palestinians must both show progress. On the matter of settlements, it would be a total change in policy for the current Israeli government to stop expansion, and would alienate its right wing political base.

But the continuing combat in the region is the worst sticking point. Israel originally maintained that combat had to stop for any peace process to continue. But the new Roadmap calls for concurrent progress on security issues instead of a Palestinian-centered approach. Again, Sharon's offer to pull Israeli troops out of occupied territories and allow Palestinian security forces to take over and pursue groups such as Hamas seems to fit the plan. These policy changes look like they follow the changes outlined for Israel in President Bush's Roadmap. But they will be hard to implement due to domestic Israeli or Palestinian resistance, and might be just a play for time by Sharon. Sharon's concessions might really be made

in the interests of peace, but it is more likely he is hoping to buy time so the status quo, or something similarly benefiting Israel, might emerge from the process.

The two biggest reasons why Sharon might escape his promises would be a loss of interest on the part of the United States or actions of Palestinians outside the official government to derail the process. Sharon may think that if he can draw out the process long enough, new foreign or domestic problems will force the Bush Administration to move its primary attention elsewhere. So if he can just weather the interest of the United States for a year or so without any real changes, he stands a chance of never making any changes.

Sharon may find himself let off the hook by Yasser Arafat or militant groups such as Hamas. The Bush Administration has emphasized it no longer wishes to deal with Arafat in the peace process, although, according to an article from The Houston Chronicle, he "has sought to inject himself into the process." Arafat might prove to be a stumbling block for peace again by trying to place himself in a position to derail the process unless his demands, whatever they are, are met. His attempts to be involved will weaken new Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas' hope to convince the Israelis that he is dealing in good faith.

But an even greater threat is the specter of groups such as Hamas derailing the process. Unlike Arafat or Sharon, their negotiations are only bound by their rage toward Israel. In the long term the only solution is the destruction of such groups. But in the short term, they need to be convinced to cease hostilities. Fortunately, according to an article from The Chronicle, Abbas said Hamas may be convinced to agree to a cease-fire very soon. But as long as such groups exist, there is a possibility they will conduct operations that will give Sharon an out to drop out of the peace plan.

Sharon's promises may be simple lip service to the Bush Administration's plans. But his play for time may backfire if his own people and the Palestinians really want peace more than he does.

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Sex segregation flawed

Middle school sacrificing sociological growth

It is at school that children are first introduced into society. Throughout this experience they're educated not only



SARA FOLEY

on the basics of academics, but on society and life. However, Kimberly Middle School in Kimberly, Idaho, has placed a roadblock on the path to higher understanding and has done so at the expense of the students' sociological development.

Last year, following a recent nationwide trend, a system of gender-segregated classes was implemented in the school's sixth-grade classes, and now has plans of expanding into higher grades, according to cnn.com. The school administrators claim the change has alleviated discipline problems and distractions in classrooms. Administrators have ignored the greater possibility that this system is detrimental toward learning methods of interaction between the sexes, as well as simultaneously forcing students into sexual stereotypes instead of providing equal education for all.

The reason behind the change toward single-sex classes is that it was thought that boys tend to be stronger in areas of math and science and benefit from individual study, whereas girls require a stronger emphasis because they are generally weaker in this area, according to cnn.com. By grouping students based on gender stereotypes, administrators are confining them into the image created for them by the administration instead of allowing them to perform individually. The concept of placing stu-

dents in classes by their ability instead of their sex apparently didn't occur to these administrators, who are simply pleased that they don't have to deal with as much talking during classes.

Another supposed advantage of this plan was to lower the amount of distractions in the classroom to make a more comfortable learning environment at an age where many students are embarrassed to express themselves when around the opposite sex, according to cnn.com. However, if a school's administrators want to prepare students for the real world, or even prepare junior high students for high school, they must understand that a discomfort, such as having to speak in front of members of the opposite sex, is minor compared to later challenges in life.

It would be ridiculous if classrooms were divided by race or religious beliefs to make students feel more comfortable, but for some reason, gender segregation is a concept teachers and administrators approve of.

This system only throws the quality of education for a loop. Instead of focusing on techniques to teach material more effectively or targeting the learning styles of individual students, the teachers and administrators of Kimberly Middle School have forced students into stereotypical roles that more than likely do not represent many of the students. Society and education have progressed past the point of these confines, but educators' minds

obviously have not. Furthermore, the most evidentiary instance of this program's uselessness is that there is "no measurable way to judge if the system works," according to an Associated Press article, and no distinct difference of improvement in the grades of students within the segregated system and those of students who previously had integrated classes. Had the single-sex classes produced a dramatic increase, the sacrifice of social development could be considered. However, the lack of benefits in any aspect besides fewer class disruptions suggests that the school needs to train teachers to deal with discipline problems and not divide classes by gender.

School administrators prance around a new trend every few years, protesting that if all students wear uniforms, or if different standardized tests are used, or if the classrooms were segregated by gender, then the difficulties of educating children would miraculously disappear.

The doctrine of "separate but equal" in education was abandoned in 1954 when the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional. Separating classes by gender is only slightly different than by the basis of skin color. Title IX instructs extra-curricular activities and sports should get the same funding for boys and girls teams. However, Kimberly Middle School has ignored legislation from the past and chosen to harm its students for the sake of convenience.

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