Prime-time voyeurism

The phenomenon of Reality TV

By Kevin Borgardus

The phenomenon of Reality TV - also called Prime-time voyeurism - has recently become a television event and, even more, a subject of gross national discussion. One must question the popularity of such reality-based television shows as Survivor and Temptation Island. As a species, the human race is perfectly content to dwell on an hour in the company of the “real” cast of these shows. Why are we so ecstatic at the prospect of an immunity challenge, a voting off, and other such nonsense? Must we invent and conjure these elaborate games, pushing our fellow men (and women) through the gauntlet of starvation or sexual deprivation, to entertain ourselves? I decided to hazard an answer myself — entitling, of course, the help of my friends. I began my intense research of these two shows that consist of a reality unknown to myself. I should comment on the present giant of the reality television genre, Survivor. The new series commenced directly after another magnet of audiences, the Super Bowl. Though the Baltimore Ravens eventually won that contest, their trials will be meager when compared to the struggle of Survivor; where only one victor will be selected after months of play in the Australian outback. In the meantime, the contestants will struggle to survive on measly supplies and seek refuge from the harsh climate.

The real danger, though, comes from their peers — Survivor is a game of strategy where political alliances come to play. Gaining each other's trust or losing it in the process, people play on emotions and desires to protect themselves. The last series involved some unsuspecting parties, such as Sean and Colleen, who did very well in the show, but even they were not immune to the tenacity of Rudy and the guile of the eventual winner of the grand prize, Richard. Dave Chavanne ’03, “loved the show.”

In the original, very few survivors realized how to play the alliance game from the start. The original Survivor occurred in Australia. Each competitor knows the score. Each player was already discussing strategy in the first episode. The show has become so successful that it is playing in contention with such heavyweights as Friend. The Outback, now inhabited by television crews and snarfy game show hosts, has certainly become a much more dangerous place.

Temptation Island has definitely made a significant, and uniquely Fox, addition to its package: sex. The premise of the show is that four couples of serious intentions are taken to a remote tropical island utopia where food, drink, and luxuries are infinite, and then split apart from each other. Then, 14 beautiful and hormonally driven singles are thrown at the men as well as the women. Each night they must be graced with a date of sorts. One member of the couple picks the single man or woman as his or her chosen date. Anything can and usually does happen on these dates and everything is recorded and shown to the other half of the couple. Of course, someone must be voted off. The couples do the voting and exile the singles to the mainlands that are just not heating things up enough. My lasting impression of the show is how willing people are to hurt and wound each other in matters of the heart – Temptation Island is a graphic display of romantic vindication in front of the national public. Paul Sennott ’03 hopes, “that an active volcano erupts on the island, killing all the contestants for their stupidity.” I really cannot blame the single men and women for their actions; they are rewarded with cash for every day they stay on the island while their goal is to seduce extraneously attractive members of the opposite sex. One must question the sanity of the couples however. Why do they destroy the most meaningful relationship of your life in front of a televised audience? Fifteen minutes is worth an awful lot these days.

In sum, our perception of reality has become deeply twisted. I never found the need to consume rats or cheat on my significant other, especially when a nearby cameraman happens to be rolling. I assume the warm glow of the living room set is more satisfactory and comfortable now than the world outside. Reality has become too much for us and we now need to watch it from the safety of our own homes. So, flip that channel and enjoy the carefully packaged reality that is now guaranteed by prime time.

By Alicia Starkey

Congressman McGovern speaks at SPUD orientation

On Saturday, Jan. 27, US Congressman Jim McGovern (D-MA) delivered the keynote address for the Student Programs for Urban Development’s (SPUD’S) Orientation and Training Day. His speech, entitled “Community Includes the Most Vulnerable,” primarily focused on the incredible gratitude he holds for Holy Cross students and their volunteer efforts.

Brian Murphy ’02 introduced McGovern as one of his "favorite politicians," and provided the audience with a brief background on the Congressman’s legislative accomplishments, as well as his personal connection and efforts to help the less fortunate.

Murphy stated that Congressman McGovern was popular with voters in his past election that he ran unopposed. He added that in the late 1980s, McGovern led the investigation of the six Jesuit priests and two young women murdered in El Salvador. He also served as an ardent supporter of "Project Remember," a neighborhood revitalization project that has renovated hundreds of houses in his Congressional district, including several here in Worcester. In addition, McGovern has volunteered at Mt. Carmel House and currently serves as a member of the Board of Trustees for JVI – the Jesuit Volunteers International, an organization that many Holy Cross students choose to participate in following graduation.

McGovern opened his speech by stating that the approximately 400 students participating in the training day were an "incredible inspiration" and told the audience, "You have made my day and my weekend… I will say thank you several times today.”

Such support, he added, emerges clearly from "the evidence of a large number who do care, and who want to make a difference and to understand.”

He continued his speech by briefly describing his experiences in 1989 to solve the murders in El Salvador. The Congressman particularly appreciated the opportunity because it "helped to promote peace" and stated he found it "gratifying personally [to work] with Jesuits from the University of Central America.”

He also commented that those Jesuits were "killed because they were advocates of the community… fighting for rights for people who have nothing… [They] did it because it was part of their faith and with incredible determination.”

McGovern said this experience, in particular, caused him to be "reinvigorated by my purpose.” He added that commentaries in literary works, such as Hillary Rodham Clinton’s book “It Takes a Village,” are correct; it does take an entire community to raise and give people an important sense of hope, "All they need is a helping hand, a hand of friendship, [one that says] I value you as a person.”

McGovern then described his experiences as a graduate student at American University. While there, one of his instructors, Professor McCarthy, was a writer at The Washington Post and encouraged McGovern to join him on his trips to a domestic women’s shelter in China town run by Carmelites nuns.

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BY CHRISTINE KETTMER

McGovern at HC, page 12

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CRUSADER FEATURES STAFF

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CRUSADER FEATURES EDITOR

Dim the lights; snap on the run- way music and get ready to be dazz- led. Tonight the Hogan Ballroom will play host to the Black & Gold Fashion Dinner and Fashion show, a semi- formal event that promises partici- pants dancing, food and of course, the runway action. This annual event, which has wooed the Holy Cross and Worcester community for the past two years, in one of the first events ringing in Black history month—a period devoted to the celebration of Black history and culture.

The fashion show will feature 17 models from diverse ethnic back- grounds strutting down the runway in clothing donated by local malls and the Worcester Fashion Outlets. In a mutually beneficial event, ven- dors from the Auburn Mall, Solomon Pond Mall and the Fashion Outlets will be given the opportunity to have their latest urban, casual, formal, seasonal and career wear presented to the crowd.

In addition to the runway show, tonight’s event will include a “soul food” dinner. DJ Mark Estrada will provide music during the show and dinner, which is scheduled to run between 7 and 10 p.m. Students and faculty are then welcome to stay for a dance party following the show, featuring a surprise guest DJ.

The Black and Gold Fashion show will take place tonight from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Tickets will be on sale through this afternoon at the Hogan tables as well as in Kimberly Dinner Hall. Admission is $18 for the general public, $15 for Con- sortium students and $11 plus meal invalidation for Holy Cross students. This event is sponsored by the Black Student Union at Holy Cross.