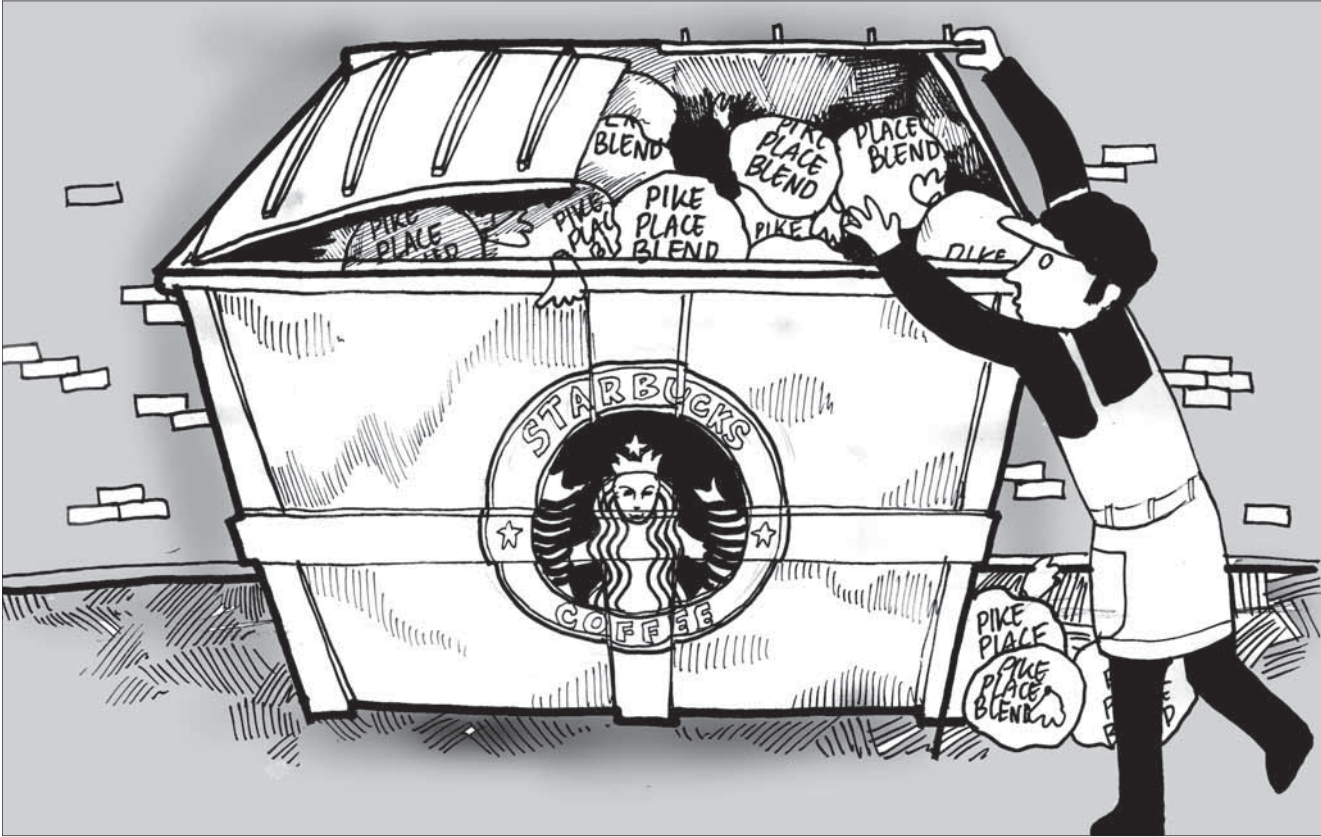


# Forum

## FromTheEditorialBoard



Lizzee Solomon/Art Editor

## Back to basics: Over-marketed coffee

Coffee shops have a lot going for them, not the least of which is the charm of their understated simplicity — after all, people just want coffee. Given that, it’s easy to pinpoint the beginning of Starbucks’ struggle as the time when the company’s focus changed from *coffee* to *coffee and all its possible accoutrements*.

Last week, Starbucks announced its latest strategy for upping the ante within its market — not other coffee shops, but McDonald’s and Dunkin’ Donuts, the low-cost competition. The strategy: a return to the basics, with an “everyday” blend, the new Pike Place Roast. The PP Roast comes in response to regulars’ complaints that they never know what the coffee will taste like, since the ’Bucks changes it up every day. Now, this signature blend will be offered daily as a way to insure consistency in flavor.

And along with the new blend, Starbucks had a new (albeit very temporary) strategy for showcasing the PP Roast. In a display of incredible wastefulness, Starbucks instructed its baristas to toss any brew more than 30 minutes old. Last Tuesday, an *msnbc.com* article quoted Starbucks Chairman/CEO Howard Schultz as saying, “We’ll be pouring out more coffee than most people serve.” In a world that’s quickly going green, it’s hard to believe that such a strategy made it to the table, let alone into practice. Such smug wastefulness also greatly contradicts the “back to basics” concept supposedly associated with the PP Roast.

Starbucks is being so smart, it’s being dumb. The over-marketing is unappealing — the wasted brew and the “back-to-basics” gimmicks are being sold to the cus-

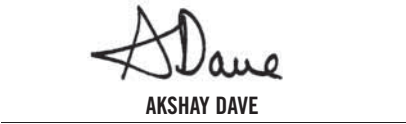
tomers the same way Starbucks tries to sell the idea of a Skinny Latte, a pointless exercise in simplification that fails, because it’s just as easy to say, “Give me a skim latte,” as it is to say, “Give me a Skinny Latte.”

In the end, Starbucks is just selling yet another image. The kicker is that going back to basics could be as easy as a focus on good coffee and good prices, without the special effects. Throwing out coffee every 30 minutes isn’t basic, it’s stupid. Come on, Starbucks.

### Editorial Dissent

Small coffeeshops that avoid the pretensions of hipster-dom reign supreme over Starbucks in coffee quality and atmosphere. That said, Starbucks can keep messing up — it just helps the small guys.

## Obama is to Hillary as young is to old



AKSHAY DAVE

As the critical Pennsylvania Democratic primary draws ever closer, the Obama-versus-Clinton drama is reaching its boiling point. Hordes of college students across the state and the country have pledged their support for Barack Obama, while a large majority of senior citizens have signed on to support Hillary Clinton.

Obama claims that his campaign is all about change. He continues to bombard us with idealistic propaganda about how he will achieve health care reform, border security, international peace, and a strong economy — all at once. This hopeful rhetoric is appealing to a younger generation, like that which includes you and me. But rather than truly being a rhetoric of hope, Obama’s words are just part of a political ploy, and young people are easy targets because their minds and hearts are filled with enthusiasm and positive thoughts for the future.

Clinton, on the other hand, continues to rant and rave about her experience in the White House and Senate, her knowledge of politics, and her understanding of complex situations; the list is endless. Seeing that older people are generally more resistant to change, all Clinton is doing is disagreeing with Obama’s hopeful rhetoric to secure a bunch of votes. In fact, according to NBC exit polls in early March, she has 59 percent of the votes in the over-60 category and 53 percent of the votes in the 45–59 category.

Obama understands how young people think, and he exploits this knowledge to his advantage. Rather than being about the voters themselves, he recognizes that the younger generation has great unused political potential, and is finding a way to channel it for his own benefit. He’s not doing anything wrong, though — he’s simply playing the political game. In fact, it’s our own fault for not recognizing Obama’s false promises

and hollow speeches. In mid-March, an analyst for NBC news reported that 57 percent of people younger than 29 and 54 percent of people in the 30–44 category prefer Obama.

Clinton plays with politics in the same way. During the televised Democratic debates, she discussed her proposed policies as a means of reclaiming America for the people and fixing the problems created by Bush’s Republican era — basically nothing original. To combat Obama’s statement that he would try to talk to Cuba and Iran, Clinton threw a fit about how America never negotiates with leaders that commit atrocities against their own people. Certainly, such a nostalgic approach resonated with senior citizens who still have a great sense of patriotism fueled by World War II and, later, Vietnam. On the other hand, Obama has visited a lot of college campuses and has been seen in various newspapers talking to students. This approach has made him popular among younger voters.

It is time for our generation — and the general public — to realize that modern politicians are concerned more with power than policy, and that — irrespective of race, gender, or social background — they will do almost anything to get votes. But, if tomorrow, lobbyists are in vogue and all of the college students look up to them, it will take less than a second for Obama to switch allegiances and claim that lobbyists are central to the process of freedom and democracy and everything else he would control if elected president. Clinton could pull off something similar and stop her visits to Kosovo and African nations just because her support base does not value humanitarian visits any more.

The old and young population division of Clinton-versus-Obama has been exacerbated by the media, which fails to tell the common citizens that they are being exploited as a pawn in the creation of a political order that is neither representative of nor for the people.

*Akshay Dave (asdave@) is a first-year ECE student. He welcomes all responses.*

## LetterToTheEditor

### Barack Obama will bring about tangible change

While reading Tarun Bhan’s April 7 SayWhat? column, “Look past Obama’s rhetoric of ‘change,’” I was reminded why I have stopped following cable news channels and political analysts for any substantial information regarding presidential campaign issues. In order to convey the complexity of the issues in 15-second soundbytes, the pundits have stereotyped each of the candidates such that they fit into neatly drawn boxes. According to the media, Clinton is the policy wonk, McCain is the maverick, and Obama is the inexperienced dreamer. Unfortunately, this has propagated misinformed arguments, such as that Obama lacks political experience and that his talk of change is just rhetoric.

When Barack Obama talks about change, what he means is changing the way government is run. Obama believes that the government should be accountable to all of its citizens, not just white people or black people or rich people or poor people, but to everyone. The change he calls for means leveling the playing field so that we all have a chance to achieve the American Dream. The change he calls for means helping students who have to pay astronomical tuition rates by offering tax cuts in exchange for public service and raising the caps on federal loans and grants. The change he calls for means having a responsible health care plan that is not written by insurance companies that forces citizens to buy health care even if they cannot afford it, but rather a plan that is affordable to all and offers com-

prehensive benefits. This is not rhetoric. This is change we can believe in.

The charge that Obama lacks experience is just as ridiculous as calling his call for change empty rhetoric. During Barack Obama’s tenure as a U.S. senator, he has sponsored and passed major bipartisan legislation, such as the Coburn-Obama Transparency Bill, which creates a publicly searchable website that tracks the \$1 trillion in earmarks, contracts, and federal grants, as well as the Lugar-Obama Non-Proliferation Initiative, which seeks to reduce surplus stockpiles of conventional weapons.

At a time in our country’s history when we have so many challenges facing us — the economy, the war in Iraq, health care — we need a leader capable of uniting the country. If we are to have a national dialogue on the issues that affect us all, we need a president who is willing to level with and be accountable to the people. This is what I believe Barack Obama brings to the table and that is why I will vote for him on April 22.

I urge you all to look past the rhetoric clouding the media and to take some time to actually read the candidates’ platforms and see their plans for yourself. If we rely on the pundits to make the call for us, then we will continue to repeat unquestioningly what they have to say and will remain misinformed.

Krishnan Aiyer, CIT 2008  
Co-President, Carnegie Mellon Students for Barack Obama  
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## Choreographing diversity is common, wrong

In an article printed last Monday, “Michelle Obama speaks at presidential rally in Skibo Gym,” The Tartan discussed Michelle Obama’s visit to our campus and the questionable acts that followed on the part of those coordinating the event.

The Tartan’s reporting of these statements was devised neither as an attack on Barack Obama’s campaign nor as a sensationalized or inflammatory article. The statements made by these event coordinators — who, as it is now known, were volunteers rather than part of Michelle Obama’s team — were reported not to cause controversy, but because Carnegie Mellon students seemed genuinely shocked, and as such, it is the journalistic responsibility of The Tartan to report them. The issue at hand is that the aforementioned statements surprised the students in the audience for Michelle Obama’s speech, which took place on a campus known for its (albeit insular) diversity.

It is commonly known that the majority of political candidates perform such

acts of crowd organizing to counterbalance stereotypes associated with that candidate and portray that candidate in the best light possible. John McCain’s event organizers have been accused of beefing up the crowd of young people behind the Senator. Hillary Clinton’s organizers have similarly made the news for incorporating middle-aged men and a younger Hispanic population to indicate that she, too, has a diverse group of supporters. The event coordinators at Mrs. Obama’s speech followed in this vein.

However, in this case, the language used by the event coordinators was surprisingly politically incorrect in its bluntness and lack of sensitivity. While we on the board find it disappointing that we, as a nation, are so used to inorganic campaign strategizing, we were less offended by the volunteer coordinators’ actions than the way they went about them. If choreographed diversity is a part of the campaign process, it should at least be done in a more diplomatic and less offensively blatant

manner.

When reports of choreographed audiences surface in the news, readers most often answer with a shrug, as the technique has become increasingly common, and even expected, in political events. Still, it is important that we not become so used to this tactic that we begin to ignore its manipulative nature.

On a campus worth celebrating for its great racial and ethnic diversity among an intelligent, well-informed group of young voters, we as a student population are surprised at the need to alter the face of our student body. We do not think this event should be held against the campaign of Barack Obama. This is not an issue of Hillary versus Barack, or even of Republican candidate John McCain against either Democratic presidential hopeful. Rather, this is an issue of the character of political campaigns in our country today, and of the need for political correctness — or, even better, non-discriminatory campaign procedures — that serve not to alienate, but unite young voters.

## Elections — over on the first try

While the passing of another cycle of student government elections rarely merits an article on the process itself, we want to congratulate student government, and specifically the Elections Board, for making this year’s elections a process worth being involved in.

With advertising materials stocked with puzzle pieces and plaid, technology-enabled student debates, and a new voting system that has alleviated the

issues of last spring (and fall), we have seen a greatly reformed elections operation in 2008. The student body has noticed as well, resulting in nearly 1800 votes and an election that was ratified by undergraduate Student Senate and the Graduate Student Assembly the first time around.

After last year’s extended period of system failures, eligibility issues, and general indecision, this year’s election

process’s simplicity has become notable.

As the timely election will allow for more work to get done under their terms in office, we also congratulate the Elections Board for executing the elections without issues. So with an election done right we congratulate Jared and Pooja, as well as Evan, and wish them all enjoyable and productive terms as they take office this year not in autumn, but in April.

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