



DAVID HORSEY/SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER

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white flag during the war against terrorism and Kerry will be another Clinton who will try to appease the terrorists. We need to keep our homeland safe. Electing Kerry to the White House would put this country in danger and it would be another term of Clinton only magnified. It is imperative we keep Bush as president.

**Jerry Avalos**  
Valley Springs

### Coffin images

I am so grateful that our nephew, Kevin, has returned safe to his wife and four children from duty in Sadr City, Iraq. But will he ever be free of his thoughts about losing two buddies in mortal combat?

Do his emotions grab him as he sees the flag-draped coffins coming back from the battlefield?

I am broken up when I remember how we were forced to bury sailors at sea when we were fighting in the war zone during World War II. We should all honor the fallen and be thankful they are coming home to their loved ones for burial.

**Robert L. Heaton**  
Lafayette

### Marines advance

In response to a front page note May 2, regarding a story where Fallujah celebrates retreat, I assume you meant that the fine, young Marines were retreating. For your information, Marines do not retreat, they advance in a different direction.

**James McCuen**  
Dublin

### Not so shocking

George W. Bush is shocked! He's shocked that American armed forces personnel and mercenaries — excuse me — "contractors" are torturing the Muslim people the

welcoming us with rose petals and sweets as liberators.

**Sean K. Lehman**  
Pleasanton

### Political attacks

Recently there have been many political attacks on President Bush. I know that people are entitled to their opinion, but it is kind of ridiculous.

It is like being on an athletics team. There is usually a couple guys you don't like; however, you still have to respect them. If you don't, your team will fail, just like the United States will fail if we don't stand behind our leader.

Everything he does might not be right, but instead of just making useless complaints and accusations, people should actually try to do something constructive to help their country.

**T.J. Kelley, 14**  
Walnut Creek

### Insulting view

Tyler Sewell's letter in the May 6 Times illustrates the sad state of civic and history education in our country. Affirmative action is a flawed tool, but stating it "lowers our standards of excellence" is personally insulting.

I am an African-American woman who left high school in the top 3 percent of my class on top of school clubs, weekend volunteer work and an after-school job in a medical office.

I earned my bachelor's and master's degrees and continue to volunteer in my community. I am not unique among minorities. But I'm regularly a victim of discrimination because people see my skin color, not my accomplishments.

A walk in someone else's shoes would show Sewell we are nowhere near a state where "the need for affirmative action no longer exists."

Preferential treatment in college admissions? Let's examine

"legacies," students benefiting because generations of their families have attended the same school.

Generations enjoyed the privileges of higher education while my ancestors were denied basic human rights. Forty years of change does not eliminate hundreds of years of injustices.

Let's stop categorizing ourselves as "us" vs. "them." Maybe then we'd find that common goals and values lead to equal opportunity.

**Michelle Mellon**  
Walnut Creek

### Connect Iraq dots

I believe we have lost sight of our purpose for going to Iraq. So let's connect the dots.

Where are the weapons of mass destruction? Well, they were either hidden or destroyed just prior to our movement into Iraq. Some have turned up, but no doubt Saddam had weapons and would have used them. What's the big mystery here?

Did we act unilaterally? No! President Bush built the best coalition possible given that our MIA European partners and the United Nations (Oil for Food Program) were on the take. Should we have bribed them?

The Iraqis don't want us there. This is pure bunk. Who in their right mind would prefer torture chambers to freedom? The media only show the insurgents (terrorists) fighting. Are the media going door-to-door asking the average Iraqi? Of course not.

What is our exit strategy? What was our exit strategy when we declared war on Japan? Go in, kill them until they surrender and get a treaty. Our exit strategy in Iraq is democracy. It fits into an overall plan to fight terror.

This will be a very long and costly war. President Bush has made this point so many times I think the media must be deaf. By the way, what is our exit strategy for Bosnia?

**Randy Merrell**  
Martinez

### New leadership

OK, so it's clearly time for everyone in the country to take one giant step back, take a deep breath, and then own up to the unavoidable — we are being governed by an administration in Washington whose massive incompetence clearly exceeds anything we've seen in our 228-year history.

It would be unreasonable to expect our Republican brethren to abandon their party and vote for a New England liberal. Therefore, the only honorable choice for them is to realize what the majority of their fellow citizens have already painfully learned — George W. Bush is simply not ca-

pable of running the Free World — and set about nominating an actual leader to run for president under their banner in 2004. I suggest Sen. John McCain of Arizona.

**Jim Hogan**  
El Sobrante

### Kudos to 'Nightline'

ABC "Nightline" took an extraordinary and, in these politically divisive times, courageous step in honoring the soldiers who have died in the current Iraq war.

No matter what our individual position is on the merits of this war, we should commend ABC on its decision to do something that is shamefully long overdue.

When has it ever been appropriate to hide and ignore the deaths of soldiers who are fighting for their country? There is no patriotism in such a cowardly act as refusing to acknowledge these deaths in public photos and public tributes and, as is the case with this president, in refusing to attend a single funeral. We all need to pay more tribute to our soldiers. I don't agree with this war, but I can still respect our fallen soldiers.

"Nightline" is to be congratulated for doing this. Sinclair Broadcasting, which has banned this program, should be ashamed of itself. We owe these soldiers much more than they have gotten from the government, the media and the public.

**Kate Sibley**  
Richmond

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## SATURDAY FORUM

This week's Saturday Forum topic is:

What do you think of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's budget proposals?

Letters must be 200 words or fewer and include your first and last name, address and daytime telephone number. All letters are subject to verification and editing.

Your letter must reach us by 3 p.m. Wednesday. Mail or fax your letter to:

Saturday Forum  
The Times

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