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SPORTS  
OPINION

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## Features

ARCHIVES &gt; APRIL 1, 2003 &gt; FEATURES &gt; Article View




## Six Haverford War Protestors Choose Arrest

By **Stephanie Rudolph and Jessica McDonald**

STAFF WRITER AND FEATURES EDITOR

It's a rainy Wednesday night and the six Haverford war protestors, arrested on March 20, trudge down to the 800s of HCA to meet for a potluck super. On the table is an array of food including colorful homemade pasta salad which incorporated all the colors of both the American and the Iraqi flags (with the exception of blue because there are very few blue foods). They are together for the first time since their arrest and are discussing how to tackle the legal consequences they face.

The first day after Bush announced the beginning of the war, six Haverford students--Elsa Noterman '06', Sarah Morris '05, Dana Ford, '05, Nadja Eisenberg-Guyot '06, Jamie Hanlon-Smith '05, and Elizabeth (Yaya) Liem '04--went into Philadelphia where they participated in a planned protest to block the Federal Building. For many of Haverford's arrestees the act of civil disobedience had been planned about a month before, when they joined the Brandywine Peace Community in signing the Iraq Pledge of Resistance. The decision, however, was not an easy one to make for all of the participants. Noterman was debating her decision for about a week before the event, deciding only the night before to definitely go through with her plans.

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Morris began planning this protest about a month ago when she met Bob Smith, a coordinator of the Brandywine Peace Coalition at a workshop. The protest was mostly organized through HAPI; however, Liem decided to participate only the Monday before the protest. Liem explained, "My choice to do civil disobedience was independent of the group."

The protestors felt their act of civil disobedience was important for both pragmatic and symbolic reasons. The protestors felt they were successful in drawing attention to their cause. People who heard about it on the news, politicians who have offices in the building, and individuals attempting to access the building were all compelled by the circumstances of the protest to stop and think about the war. Morris recalled her "political awakening" in 10th grade when she saw the WTO protests in Seattle, and hopes that this protest may serve as such an awakening for others. Additionally, Morris explained that the protest also had a lot of symbolic power. The government has violated its contract to protect her as a citizen and she needed a way of "actively withdrawing consent" from the government. Liem added that the protest was necessary to propel social change: "You always need a radical faction in order to move the collective consciousness in that direction." Hanlon-Smith said, "I explored every other means of expressing my dissent...[this was the] last nonviolent option." Ford emphasized that she did not want to get arrested but felt it was necessary in order to express her dissent.

Aside from the pragmatic and the symbolic, some felt civil disobedience was something they needed to do. Noterman explained, "It felt like the right thing to do in my heart." Morris agreed, "Something inside told me it's what I should do."

Despite their confidence in their cause, the protestors explained that they were extremely nervous and uncertain of the consequences. Noterman said, "I don't think I've ever been that scared in my life." Both Ford and Hanlon-Smith had been arrested in the past and were worried about the consequences of being arrested for a second time. However, Ford (who was arrested earlier in the year for a war-related protest) did not weigh the consequences in her decision to be arrested. She explained that war is so damaging and has so many consequences that she could not weigh her personal consequences against the consequences of war. Hanlon-Smith agreed: "I'm 22 years old, and there are people younger than my age fighting and dying and killing for what they believe. The least I can do is risk my freedom."

More than 100 people were arrested at the protest and Morris estimates that only about 20 of them were students. The group of protestors was diverse in both age and background. The Haverford protestors noted seeing a ninety-year old woman in a wheelchair, veterans, old women, religious leaders, and lawyers.

Noterman shared a cell in jail with mostly older women and no Haverford students. Many of the older women couldn't even remember how many times they had been arrested for civil disobedience. They shared stories about their "best" arrest, did yoga, and sang songs. Although they could not see the other cells, there was a great deal of energy and the cells chanted back and forth.

At the actual protest, the Haverford Affinity Group which was comprised of the six protestors, a student from Wesleyan, a Swarthmore student, and an adult from the Haverford Quaker Meeting House, stood in the rain for two hours before being arrested, according to Ford. Despite the cold, rainy weather, the protestors said it was easy to keep their morale up because of the energy of the 50 Haverford students who came to protest the war and support the arrestees. The 50 students stood approximately 20 meters away from the Haverford Affinity Group, according to Hanlon-Smith. The protestors all felt greatly indebted to the Haverford students who provided emotional and physical support. Not only did they dance around, sing, and chant but they brought the Haverford Affinity Group food, warm drinks, and clothing. According to Liem, "Having their support gave me a renewed faith in Haverford College's activist movement."

Morris describes that actual moment of arrest as extremely powerful. According to Hanlon-Smith the Affinity Group was given a three minute warning before arrest. At that point they linked arms and were cuffed (with plastic cuffs). While this was happening, the 50 Haverford students were yelling, chanting, and screaming in a way that Hanlon-Smith described as "inspiring." The police were not rough and those who had been arrested before found the experience with the federal marshals to be much more positive than their past experience with the city police. According to Noterman, the officer who arrested her said, "Did you get enough to eat? 'Cause you'll be in there for a while...You should have worn warmer clothes."

The Haverford Affinity Group was released within a few hours and the process was described as fairly organized. They face a \$250 fine and were charged with a federal misdemeanor but several are determined not to pay the fine. According to Ford, "paying the fine is an admission of guilt." Morris agrees and is quite reluctant to give money to the federal government which will likely go right back into sponsoring the war. The protestors plan to meet with lawyers this week to discuss the legal ramifications of their actions. They will consider a hearing where they will challenge the fine or attempt to replace the fine with community service hours. They will also discuss possibly requesting that the money be donated to a charitable organization. Overall, they hope that the \$25,000 that the government will collect from approximately 100 arrested protestors will not all be filtered back to the war from which they so strongly dissent.

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