

# Kuznick, Stone lecture (continued from page 1)

to dispute and controversy.

Closing arguments from this episode ponder Wallace's ascension to the presidency, instead of Truman. Wallace was a supporter of civil and women's rights, and he touted equality around the globe. As an all-around humanist, it's clear that Wallace would not have dropped the bomb, let alone entertain the idea of such a powerful and unnecessary show of force to the enemy.

"The Bomb" could stand alone as a historical documentary, but the showy, and factual way that Kuznick and Stone present their thesis can't help but make one wonder how sterling the rest of the series is.

After the presentation of "The Bomb" ended, the audience was finally graced with Stone's presence, while he and Kuznick took their seats in the front of the MTCC auditorium, to field questions.

The first question from the audience pertained to Kuznick and Stone's physical authoring of the book. Essentially, which came first, the documentary or the book? Stone relays that he and Kuznick would come up with dense material, and

attempt to cut it down to a manageable size; this is hard to imagine, considering the extreme thickness their accompanying book possesses.

Kuznick and Stone transitioned into a question about the editorialization of their work. Stone explains that they created the multi-media output from the point of view of soldiers and workers, using their own experiences in the point of view they portrayed in "Untold History."

"It's ambiguous, life is ambiguous," said Stone. "There's facts, suggestions, and opinions [in 'Untold History.']. We editorialize because it's our movie."

Stone also says that because he and Kuznick came from different backgrounds, they were able to bring both left and right-wing influences into the movie and book. Kuznick explains that while Stone fought in the Vietnam War, dropping out of Yale (and a class with fellow Yalie, George W. Bush) to enlist, while Kuznick was an avid anti-war protester.

During this time, a few more technical difficulties presented themselves.

"For a technical institute, your [micro-

phones] suck," Stone said, after already admitting to the audience that he had gotten lost in the hallways of the MTCC.

Another audience member asked why the Truman epic tends to be the story that is taught in educational institutions, and prevails over the more nuanced versions and details of WWII. Kuznick replied, citing the 85% were convinced of the bomb's success, and 23% wanted more bombs to be used. Popularity has become the key to what is taught in history, and what is remembered.

A fairly predictable question, asking if the bomb had not been dropped, did Kuznick and Stone think the bomb would have been dropped, and where?

"We don't know," Kuznick said. "It's the same as drone technology, which we see as 'good.' What if China and Iran start using drones the way we do? What kind of species are we? We have 1.47 million a-bombs in the world!"

As the Q&A session continued, the idea of how this topic came to be studied was brought up. Kuznick answers with his involvement of the Enola Gay exhibit controversy of 1995. The Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum was to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Enola Gay's flight to drop the atomic bomb. The airplane had been refurbished, and was set to go on exhibit, but this was delayed. The exhibit also included a controversial artifact, the lunch box of an 11-year old who had all but disappeared during the bombing. While that exhibit was

closed down, the Enola Gay is a permanent exhibit at the National Air and Space Museum, but the lunch box now resides in Japan.

Kuznick stressed the depravity that nuclear weapons have had on our species.

Following this, was another question on the mechanics of producing, and selling this movie to the public.

"You can't," Stone said. "It's hard, don't even start. Documentaries are far cheaper [than blockbuster movies,] though."

Kuznick and Stone were asked why they'd like to tell a "different history."

"Peter is a professional [historian]," Stone quickly answered. "I'm an amateur."

Stone began to compare historical documentaries to historical WWII dramas, citing "Saving Private Ryan," "Pearl Harbor," and "Blackhawk Down" as part of the "American won WWII" myth, that the public buys into. He claims that such movies focus on individuals, rather than groups. Showing the great sacrifice that one person had made, but not the numerous sacrifices countless individuals have made. Stone suggests that movies like these make Americans "worship" the military, and don't consider enough points-of-view in their execution.

One audience member asked about the U.S.' de facto role of playing the "world police," taking the role from Britain during WWII, concerning the countries that need our help, and those who ask for it.

"The U.S. can't afford to play that role anymore. We need a real U.N. where people can make real decisions. We've over-extended our resources, and are too ambitious," Kuznick answered. "This leads to a collapse. The U.S. aren't the 'good guys' anymore. We're declining economically. International institutions need to step in, and bring in different ways to solve problems."

"What kind of planet are we, in that we think of ourselves in positive ways, but don't see malevolent practices," Kuznick continued. "What sort of legacy are we leaving to our posterity?"

The conversation of our current weapons-based military continued.

"We've had many close calls [concerning weapons of mass destruction.] Between India and Pakistan for example. We live in a dangerous world. Any single person should not have veto power on the human race," Kuznick said. "We should get rid of nuclear weapons, cut back on nuclear and conventional bombs. Actually conduct intrusive searches. There's a certain level of comfortability that shouldn't be born of our arrogance and hubris."

"These are not practical answers, they're hopeful," Stone continued. "We're against regional powers that are not on our side. Nothing works out the way you think they will. Let's not overlook the Roman Empire. [Empires] don't fade gradually."

One of the most interesting questions was relating to the new movie, "Zero Dark Thirty" and its glorification of torture.

"The forms of abuse in that movie are taken for granted," Stone answered. "They believe this terror exists. There's this sense of 'the other' on TV, like on that show, '24.' It's in our culture."

The last question of the session came from President John Anderson, asking about Truman's decision between bombing Japanese civilians, and saving U.S. soldiers.

"I write their paychecks," Anderson joked.

The panelists maintain that Truman knew this was to bully the Russian forces, and how many troops he would have to sacrifice.

"It's hard to know what Truman was thinking," Kuznick said. "He was not evil, he was a man. He didn't take any personal pleasure. Why do good people do horrible things? It's easy for the good to do bad."

The exhaustive, yet extremely titillating Q&A finally came to a close, where Stone and Kuznick retired to the MTCC Welcome Center to sign copies of their bulky book.

This event was sponsored by the Humanities Department, the College of Science and Letters, and the newly formed Lewis College for Human Sciences, which the membership of the audience reflected. Faculty and students abounded, though some students were in attendance merely for class credit, and the line formed nearly 45 minutes before the event was scheduled to begin. The turn-out left the MTCC Auditorium at near-capacity. This lecture was nothing short of a raging success.

Kuznick and Stone's liberal agenda was well received and applauded. The event's focus on nuclear power, and its destructive forces, through a humanistic approach, rather than a scientific one is welcomed. While IIT is renowned for our innovative approaches to engineering and architecture, the magnitude and quality of this event shows that while we focus on scientific aspirations, learning from history is always a point of view worth approaching.

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