May 4 Task Force holds competition for T-shirt design

The May 4 Task Force is calling for all creative students to help commemorate the 39th anniversary of the shootings on May 4, 1970, by submitting a T-shirt design.

The T-shirt design competition is an annual event held by the task force. The T-shirts will be sold on the day of the commemoration.

The designs, which are due by March 19, should be no more than two colors and be scalable from 2 inches to 10 feet for use on buttons, T-shirts and the backdrop.

All designs should represent this year's theme: "Remembering the past, shaping the future."

Students can submit either drawings or photographs via e-mail to may4taskforce@yahoo.com, or submit them in person at the task force's weekly meeting.

Meetings are held at 7 p.m. Thursdays in the May 4 Resource Room on the first floor of the library.

The winning designer, who will be chosen at the March 19 meeting, will receive $39 and four T-shirts.

—Melissa Dilley
Filo and Vecchio to speak at May 4 commemoration

Task Force selects theme and annual T-shirt design

Planning for the 39th annual May 4 commemoration is in full swing now that the theme has been illustrated.

May 4 Task Force chose the winning illustration in its annual T-shirt design competition at the last meeting.

John Powers, the Task Force president, said the illustration of a peace sign with the bottom part made up of the Taylor Hall pagoda was chosen because it was unlike any design the group had seen before.

While the design is not completely finished, the group thought it would best represent this year's theme: "Remembering the past, reshaping the future."

T-shirts will be sold on the day of the commemoration for $15, Powers said.

In addition to the design, two speakers have been finalized.

John Filo, a former Daily Kent Stater photographer who took the famous May 4 photo of a girl leaning over the dead body of Jeffrey Miller, will be speaking.

The then-14-year-old-girl in Filo's Pulitzer Prize-winning photo, Mary Ann Vecchio, will also speak.

Vecchio was not a student at the time, but a runaway who was protesting the war.

Powers said he hopes the speakers' connections to the historic day will draw students to the events on May 4.

Powers also said the group has been working to get students more involved by collaborating with the group working on the Symposium Against Violence.

The symposium, which will run May 3 through May 5, will coincide with the May 4 events.

— Melissa Dilley

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There are better ways to remember May 4

As a student at Kent State, I've always felt that it was important I attend the May 4 Commemoration every year. Logistically, the May 4 Task Force has always done an impressive job. Still, each year I've attended, the event has seemed to not be about the Kent State shooting. Every year I've attended, in my view, has been about Iraq and George W. Bush.

Last year it was no different. There was a lot of time devoted to Iraq and Bush and surprisingly little to May 4. Shortly after the commemoration started, a peace march organized by the Anti-War Committee and Portage Peace Coalition began. I decided to participate to express my outrage over the war. This was perhaps a mistake.

When the leaders of the march asked us to stop at the site of the May 4 victims' deaths, I overheard a disappointingly large number of protesters express exasperation and irritation. In looking around I noted any number of flags displayed—red and black flags, Earth flags, Palestinian flags, Lebanese flags.

There were no U.S. flags displayed that were not defaced. The U.S. flag at the front of the march was upside down and marked with an anti-war slogan.

We stopped at the MCTC building where several protesters covered the glass walls of the building with peace flyers. At least one protester attempted to convince others to engage in a sit-in with him, but this idea did not catch on. The march continued until it reached the West Main Street bridge. There was a lot of commotion and talk of having a sit-in on the bridge to obstruct traffic. At least one group of people began singing "The Internationale." At this point, I left.

I later learned that four of the protesters were arrested for refusing to clear the road after the police attempted to re-open the bridge. Some of the remaining protesters then verbally harassed drivers before going to police headquarters to chant, "No justice, no peace, fuck the police!"

My experience was thoroughly disillusioning. It was less an act of protest against an unjust war and war criminal president than it was an excuse to engage in mindless America- and Iraq-bashing. Displaying one combatant's flag (Palestine) but not another (Israel) is not supporting peace, it's supporting that combatant's victory.

I was similarly irritated by the lack of any standard U.S. flags. It's important to send a message of support for the basic American values of universal liberty, equality and respect for human rights by using standard flags. Not to do so only leaves us vulnerable to charges of anti-Americanism. I was struck by the foolishness of obstructing traffic. Nonviolent civil disobedience is a wonderful weapon, but like any weapon it has to be aimed at the right people. No one in the Bush Administration cared if traffic in Kent was obstructed. All the protesters accomplished was inconveniencing their fellow residents. It was an act of political masturbation — it accomplished nothing other than making them feel good.

It was an understandable impulse to use the May 4 Commemoration to speak about Iraq and Bush. The parallels between the Iraq War and the Vietnam War are obvious. It's fair to remark upon the past repeating itself. But the event itself ought to be about the Kent State shootings. Had there been a separate ceremony to protest the war, I wouldn't have minded.

It's my firm hope that this year's commemoration will reddenicate its focus to the Kent State shooting. I hope the spirit of activism against unjust wars remains but finds a more appropriate venue than the commemoration. And I hope that we always remember the victims of May 4.

As for future anti-war marches in Kent, I hope its participants remember peace doesn't mean taking one side or another in a war, and the flag of the United States is a flag of liberty and equality that was hijacked by the far right — a flag we on the left need to reclaim.

And I sincerely hope that instead of engaging in harassment of their fellow citizens and poorly-aimed civil disobedience, protesters organize a respectful and peaceful march that does not obstruct traffic or lead to any arrests.

Still, something else about last year's commemoration sticks out in my memory. As I was standing at the display of shoes for Ohio soldiers killed in action, I felt someone touching my right shoulder, as though to comfort me. I turned, but there was nobody there. It wasn't a person who had touched me. It was the flag of the United States.

Zach Wiita is a senior political science and theatre studies major and a columnist for the Daily Kent Stater. Contact him at zwitta@kent.edu
39th Annual May 4th Commemoration

Sunday, May 3, 2009:

Poetry Reading:
Remembering the Past and Coming
Together
7:30pm, KIVA
Join the May 4th Task Force and several Kent poets for a poetry reading featuring selections from Come Together: Imagine Peace now available from Bottom Dog Press.

Annual Candlelight March
10:30pm, Commons (March begins at 11pm)
Join us for this silent, solemn march. It is approximately 1.3 miles long and is wheelchair and stroller accessible.

Monday, May 4, 2009:

Annual Silent Candlelight Vigil
Midnight-12:24pm, Prentice Parking Lot
The Annual Silent Vigil will be held throughout the night in the Prentice Parking Lot. Participants stand for half hour shifts. To reserve your space, please contact the May 4th Task Force

Annual Commemoration:
Remembering the Past, Shaping the Future*
Noon-2:30, Commons
Rain location: KSU Ballroom, Student Center

Speakers Include:

John Filo
Kent State student photographer who took the Pulitzer Prize-winning May 4, 1970 photo

Mary Ann Vecchio
Eyewitness to the shootings and subject of John Filo's famous photo

Lawrence "Pun" Plamondon
Native American activist and author

Laurel Krause
Sister of slain student Allison Krause

Alan Canfora
Wounded at Kent State May 4, 1970

Special performance by:
Color in December

Presentation of Eyes Wide Open Ohio:
AFSC of Ohio

All events funded by Undergraduate Student Fees
Today is part of the healing process

John Powers, president of the May 4 Task Force, was the first person to address the crowd of hundreds that had gathered on the same hill National Guardsmen had marched on in 1970 for the 39th annual commemoration yesterday. He said people often ask him why his group continues to "glorify" the darkest day in Kent's history. "Powers said the day is for the same people who ask the question. "People have no idea how divided the times were and the political impact the slaying of four students had on this campus," he said. However, for many, the day isn't about the speakers or the anti-war protest that follows the ceremony. Chic Canfora, sister of Alan Canfora, who was wounded on May 4, said it is about the reassurance the family members and friends of victims feel when they see everyone coming together to remember. Survivors from May 4 found their places on the hill and near the Taylor Hall pagoda, not only to remember, but to heal. See MAY 4, Page 6

For my fallen sister

Dear Sandy,
As I sit here trying to write this, I find it very hard to put yesterday's events into words. I suppose what they say about sororities is true: "From the outside in, you can't understand it, from the inside out, you can't explain it."

So what would I say if you were here? I wish it were easy.

Last fall I rushed and joined Alpha Xi Delta, of which you were a member. Before I joined, I did not participate in the events commemorating May 4. Before I joined, I did not even know your name.

Yesterday was the 39th anniversary of your death, along with Allison Krause, Jeffrey Miller and William Schroeder. The day you died, you were 20, my age.

See SMITH, Page 6

Highlights from the May 4 commemoration

"For 25 years I avoided talking to Mary Ann because I thought I had ruined her life."
— photographer John Filo, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his photo of Mary Ann Vecchio over Jeffrey Miller's dead body

"She inspired me to believe that the world can be changed by one person, just like you and me."
— Laurel Krause, on her sister Allison Krause, one of the four students killed on May 4, 1970

Read more from these speeches and others and see more photos from yesterday's commemoration ceremony. Page 8
Krause is now an environmental activist on the Northern Coast of California. She attributes her courage to take a stand to her older sister.

Babette Gorman and Jack Buckingham are just a few of the many who attend commemorations and represent why it is important to continue remembering May 4.

Buckingham heard about the shootings when he was a freshman at Denison University in Granville in 1970. He said although he didn’t have a connection with the students or the university, the event changed his life.

“I had been conservative before, but it changed my perspectives,” he said. “I didn’t know what to think about a country that would allow our government to kill college kids.”

Buckingham and his partner Gorman have traveled from Columbus to Kent on May 4 for the last 10 years to remember and gain insight to what happened that day.

Gorman said over the last decade she has been inspired to be more actively involved in government because of speakers at the commemoration.

The crowd yesterday was filled with many like Buckingham and Gorman whose lives have changed as a result of the sacrifices made by those who stood up for what they believed in on May 4.

Others gathered in the Commons had their own way of remembering May 4. ROTC members held their annual “I Love America” barbecue near Engleman Hall.

“To us, it’s honestly a time to celebrate,” said Frank Phillips, a senior architecture major. He added that they are not trying to disrespect those participating in the commemoration ceremony; this was simply their own way of commemorating.

As the speakers told their stories, ROTC members played a football game and had a cookout at the bottom of the hill.

Laura Spehar, a freshman hospitality management major, said she came to the commemoration ceremony to learn more about the events of May 4, 1970.

“I could put myself in their (the speakers’) emotion and feel what they were feeling,” she said.

She said students have a lot to learn from those who spoke to become an activist in their community.

And for those like Alan Canfora, the commemoration ceremony is a way to make sure these issues aren’t forgotten.

He ended his speech by declaring, “Long live the May 4 movement for truth, justice and Kent State University.”

Contact student politics reporter
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