



1. *Graduating from Politics*
2. *“Americana a Roma”*
3. *Barbara Bush, Compassion Personified*

Graduating from Politics

By SAM BENEVELLI
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The last few weeks of any senior’s time at Hamilton are rife with reflection. Through all the final papers and presentations, it is exciting to look forward to a postgraduate life but also nostalgic to consider how Hamilton has changed each of us. I know, through positively and negatively impactful experiences, that Hamilton has shaped me in innumerable ways. The Alexander Hamilton Institute and my connection to political controversy on campus through this publication have certainly helped define my political views and how I see myself participating in politics at all after graduation. One of the many things I am looking forward to upon graduating is leaving behind a political categorization game which is played by both students and faculty.

Hamilton, like many colleges, loves stereotypes. The light side/dark side rivalry is cute and fun. Our categorization and limitation of individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds at Hamilton is more troubling. Not only does the sorting of our peers into stereotypes make us lazy members of a community; it also kills any chance of meaningful improvement in student’s treatment of each other or in conversation.

Another student involved with the College Republicans my freshman year once expressed his frustration at my participation in the group because I was not conservative enough for his liking. To him, I was the definition of a RINO, a phrase often used in the party which means “Republican In Name Only.” Looking back, I could see why some Republicans would call me that. As a woman who acknowledges the existence of climate change, I did not fit the stereotype of this crowd. In the next few years, through my involvement in the AHI, I was encouraged to think critically and to use historical facts to support an argument, and learned how to define my

own political opinions. However, in these four years, I can recount only a few times I have had conversations about the practical problems of our country, solutions to problems, or how students want to get involved in politics. My conversations with those whom I identified most closely with politically died the moment I was categorized as “other” by this self-selecting conservatives on campus.

Hamilton has taught me how to approach problems with reason and forethought, and to consider multiple perspectives on how to approach issues facing our campus community and our country. The most frustrating element of politics on college campuses is how lazy the participants tend to be. Not only are students and professors typically unwilling to engage in uncomfortable discussions. In addition,

any possible discussions are held in such a safe intellectual space that there is no effort to thoughtfully consider the effects of a belief or policy. I look forward to having the choice, after graduation, to enter political discussions when I find I can make an impact or contribute to the conversation. On campus, students or at least those who aren’t “progressive” are constantly confronted with meaningless and shallow political discussions in every aspect of their lives.

I look forward to leaving behind the negative spiral of political discussion and inaction that occurs on campus. I look forward to having the opportunity (and responsibility) to work for impactful, positive changes in an atmosphere free of unnecessary and unproductive categorization. Hamilton has taught me well how to approach policy with measured restraint and deliberation. I think I will step back from daily political drivel once I graduate, at least until I can positively apply the skills which Hamilton, the AHI, and my peers have given me in the last four years.

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“Americana a Roma”

By CLAIRE ANASTASIA KITZ
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How do words find parallels in images? Where do art, architecture, history, and beauty intersect? Rome provides its own ethereal and persuasive response. Rome is the natural habitat of artisans, ancient works of civilization, Latinists, philosophers, saints, architectural edifices, political revolution, and Italian madness, creativity, and mirth. The folly of human life encounters the divine in this city. It is where ancient culture merges with contemporary life and becomes a harmonious chaos. Rome is the archetype, the original.

I have imagined studying here for a semester, and now I am doing so. It is the perfect way to see Rome from a new perspective. Not the eyes of an overwhelmed or lost tourist in a jumble or maze of three million people, but those of an affable resident and serious college student. Yes, of course, Rome is a modern-day Italian city. There are lots of visitors, noise, locals on cell phones, traffic jams, congested streets, Fiats, Vespa motor scooters, dogs on leashes, overcrowded cafes, and bars. And no doubt a myriad of sightseers and students just like me have

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wandered around Rome, taking in the grand vision while consuming (in volume and with regularity) many espressos, cappuccinos, plates of pasta, slices of pizza, gelatos, an occasional Aperol Spritz aperitif, bottles of fizzy water, and glasses of wine without missing a beat.

But Rome is more than the sum of those parts. Yes, the uniquely Italian sustenance and libations are part of both the semester abroad and the booked tour, long known to travelers as the “Roman Holiday.” Rome, I have gleaned, is also a dramatic composition, a tribute to antiquity and a centuries-long metamorphosis. It is prized as a

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“AMERICANA A ROMA” cont.

walking museum where the modern city collapses into the past with a blink of an eye, or a turn through the piazza. One does not just read about historical events here. One is transported to them.

I have visited many of Rome’s impressive spectacles. To name some of the places seen this semester: I have marveled at the Pantheon where Raphael the painter and architect is buried, the iconic Colosseum, Trajan’s Column celebrating his triumphs in the Dacian Wars, the 135 Spanish Steps linking Piazza dei Monti with Piazza di Spagna, the equestrian statue of the philosopher ruler Marcus Aurelius on the Capitoline Hill, Bernini’s Baldachin (bronze canopy) in St. Peter’s Basilica, the Emperor Nero’s Domus Aurea (“golden house”), Michelangelo’s “Last Judgment” in the Sistine Chapel, and Raphael’s frescoes in the Papal Apartments. There are also hundreds of churches and chapels in Rome, an overwhelming number, but I have visited several gems over the course of my time here and contemplated their beauty.

Rome was blessed with many

benefactors in its history: erudite, heroic, beleaguered, visionary, tormented, scholarly, faithful, creative, practical, stoic, rejected, even martyred. Caesar Augustus, Lucretius, Ovid, Cicero, Vergil, Marcus Aurelius, St. Peter, Livy, St. Cecilia, St. Paul, Michelangelo, Raphael, Botticelli, Bernini, Caravaggio — and the anonymous stonemasons, blacksmiths, glassblowers, and carpenters also come to mind. They bore witness to the fall, revival, renaissance, and re-invention of Rome on the literary, political, artistic, architectural, and theological planes. To meander through Rome, to see it, is to be indebted to them. They are an essential part of its story, its history.

Whether in class or touring on foot, four months of living here was never going to be enough time to explore its cultural legacy, but it is a fantastic beginning. My knowledge of Rome has grown through on-site studies and lectures that animate texts. Professors and lecturers have taught me that Rome is polysemous; she is of the world, yet not of the world. Vergil, Livy, and Ovid described it as the “Eternal City,” and those words resonate. I have

lived in a city that celebrates “la dolce vita” (the good life), values the life of the mind, honors the past, and acknowledges the sorrows of the heart. I have seen Rome’s decay and limitations, and I have appreciated her extravagances, her devotion, and her melancholia. I have lamented Rome’s bureaucratic inefficiency and postal delivery bottlenecks, but remain an enthusiastic advocate. I have gained a deeper understanding of the figures who inspired change, transformed Rome, and continue to inspire.

Rome intrigues those who visit because it casts a spell both past and present. It changes how one sees life and how one interprets the world. Marcus Aurelius was right: “the soul becomes dyed with the color of its thoughts.” When I leave Rome in May, I know this city will remain with me. I hope to return to the Eternal City, even if it is only in my daydreams. The Russian poet Anna Akhmatova wrote about traveling to Italy as a moving experience, “a dream you remember all your life.” For my time in Rome, I know this will be true. *Grazie mille*, a thousand thanks.

Barbara Bush, Compassion Personified

By ALLISON ZUCKERMAN
STAFF WRITER

Barbara Bush, the wife of George H. W. and mother of George W. and Jeb Bush, died last Tuesday, April 17, in her Houston home at the age of 92. As the outpouring of condolences and fond remembrance of her long life demonstrates, Barbara is beloved by an entire nation. While frequently referred to as the matriarch of the politically powerful Bush dynasty, she redefined the role of First Lady and became a celebrated figure of compassion, fortitude, and grace.

It is tempting to dwell solely on her roles as wife and mother to two presidents, but she deserves recognition in her own right as a strong and passionate woman, committed to improving the lives of Americans. As First Lady in 1989, she launched the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. She advocated for increased literacy to

overcome social and economic inequality; consequently, her foundation has provided family literacy grants to millions of low-income American families.

Additionally, Bush is celebrated for breaking the presidential silence on the AIDS epidemic that destroyed countless lives during the 1980s. The stigma of the AIDS virus terrorized American society as well, which is why Bush made such a profound statement when she visited Grandma’s House, an AIDS hospice in Washington, in 1989. Her compassion for those whom society had discarded is clear in the photo of her cradling a baby infected with AIDS.

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To Bush, these were not pariahs, but scared people who needed love and help.

Perhaps it was her own experience with death and illness that contributed to her universal empathy. In 1953 her daughter Robin was diagnosed at the age of three with leukemia, a disease poorly understood and not openly spoken about. Bush uprooted the family to Manhattan, where she sat by her daughter’s side for months of regular bone marrow tests and blood transfusions. She remained there until Robin died seven months later.

Bush, however, overcame her own immense grief to not only raise five other children and support her husband’s political ambitions, but also to become nationally respected and loved. A forced to be reckoned with, she was formidable and witty and has definitively joined the American pantheon of heroes. She believed in the power of the human connection. During her lifetime, she clearly demonstrated it by reaching out to many unfortunate Americans who required the compassion that she gave so freely.

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