

9-1-2003

Interview with Sabiha Basrai

Heidi M. Wilkinson

California Polytechnic State University - San Luis Obispo, hmwilkin@calpoly.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/moebius>

Recommended Citation

Wilkinson, Heidi M. (2003) "Interview with Sabiha Basrai," *Moebius*: Vol. 1: Iss. 3, Article 13.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/moebius/vol1/iss3/13>

This Interview is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Liberal Arts at DigitalCommons@CalPoly. It has been accepted for inclusion in Moebius by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@CalPoly. For more information, please contact mwyngard@calpoly.edu.



Sabiha Basrai

INTERVIEW WITH SABIHA BASRAI

Art & Design student & Co-coordinator of
Progressive Student Alliance

Heidi Wilkinson

HW: How have corporate donations affected decisions made about education?

SB: One of my biggest concerns is that higher learning should focus on enlightenment. There should be more emphasis on broadening students' horizons by exposure to new things. Yet we have corporate donors influencing students on a variety of levels. For example, the CEO (and Cal Poly graduate) of Raytheon, a corporation that engineers WMD's (Weapons of Mass Destruction), is coming to campus to speak. The idea that this corporation is "good" because its CEO is successful misleads students. I don't think we should be focused only on graduating good employees, but also on graduating quality human beings. If people leave an institute of higher learning willing to work for a corporation that creates missiles, maybe we are not graduating ethical human beings.

HW: How can we remain true to our mission and have university presidents who resemble CEO's?

SB: Our school is a polytechnic, a "learn by doing" school. I appreciate the effectiveness of the system's hierarchy. But people up in big positions need to listen to those in lower positions. This can happen. I was really impressed with how the university listened and worked with the complaints about campus diversity issues. Listening can really affect how we deal with donations influencing our university. Corporations want people who do not question authority, but the university is the place to challenge the status quo. Questioning is where growth and social change begin.

HW: What should the universities do about being put in the role of "manufacturing" students?

SB: Students don't see the alternative career options because of the corporate influences on campus. Many of the corporations that come to donate and recruit graduates are evil; the kinds of business they are involved in inflict suffering on the world. There are alternatives. I would like to see a situation where we don't need corporate donations.

HW: Are faculty, staff, and students part of the “corporate machine”? What should be done?

SB: I think everyone should question what is going on. I will blame people for voluntary ignorance. If a large corporation offers money to a department, people should ask what these companies do.

HW: Do you believe universities are in the “knowledge industry”?

SB: Yes we are in the knowledge industry, yet ethical considerations need to be acknowledged within the learning process. The mentality that we need to get a degree, get a job, is perpetuated enough at this university, but these drives shouldn't be at the loss of our conscience.

HW: How should the university and its internal departments deal with donations?

SB: Internal department funds can be distributed more fairly with more listening between groups in power.

HW: What should the purpose of the university be?

SB: The university is one of the few places left in the world where the mission is the growth of the mind, the pursuit of knowledge—not to make money but to grow as human beings. It is such a special environment because of that, because at the university people are not just numbers. Unethical corporations are poisoning this environment. 