

**PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS
DUE FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2008**

I. Democratic vs. Authoritarian

Use your notes from class, the Internet, dictionaries, encyclopedias, and your common sense to read and analyze the article below. Answer the questions that follow it in complete sentences or paragraphs on a separate sheet of loose-leaf paper.

Free speech: How Bush avoids dissent

The Bush administration may not know how to plan for a hurricane or a war, said *The New York Times* in an editorial. But never let it be said it can't plan a political rally. As a result of a lawsuit by two protesters and the American Civil Liberties Union, the White House has been forced to release a manual that details how President Bush's speeches and other public appearances have been "micromanaged and laboriously controlled for the past five years to weed out the merest whiff of protest." All those attending Bush public events, the manual instructs, are to be carefully chosen, with attendees searched for concealed anti-Bush banners. Seats closest to the stage are to be reserved for "extremely supportive" fans of the president. In the terrible event that a heckler somehow gets within earshot of the media covering the speech, a "rally squad" is to surround him waving pro-Bush placards and chanting "USA! USA!" Every modern administration has stage-managed public events to some degree, of course, but this White House's obsessive suppression of dissent is "out of place in a democracy."

It's even creepier than that, said **Dahlia Lithwick** in *Slate.com*. Dissent wasn't banned at these rallies just for the sake of creating an image of a president "universally adored" by his people. It

was also banned "to protect the tender sensitivities of the president himself." Protesters, the manual commands, were also to be kept out of range of the presidential motorcade, thus sparing Bush the unpleasantness of knowing there are people who disagree with him. Now we know why Laura Bush says she doesn't believe her husband's abysmal poll numbers, said **Tim Grieve** in *Salon.com*. The first couple travels everywhere in a bubble of stage-managed love. Bush himself has said that one "amazing" part of the presidency is the support he gets on the road from ordinary Americans. "Amazing? Not so much."

There's a bitter irony here, said *USA Today* in an editorial. The White House's Presidential Advance Manual was released to the public only after a lawsuit was brought by a West Virginia couple, Nicole and Jeffrey Rank, who were handcuffed, arrested, fingerprinted, and briefly jailed for wearing anti-Bush T-shirts at an Independence Day speech the president gave in 2004. After the Ranks had been hustled away, Bush told the extremely supportive crowd this: "On this Fourth of July, we confirm our love of freedom, the freedom for people to speak their minds. ... Free thought, free expression, that's what we believe." Too bad he forgot to tell his advance team.

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1. What happens to all people who attend a public event with President Bush?
2. Who is allowed to sit closest to the stage?
3. What is a "rally squad?" What do they do?
4. Do you think that President Bush and Laura Bush have realistic views on how much he is supported by the people? Why or why not?
5. What happened to Nicole and Jeffrey Rank? Why?
6. Based on the article above and your knowledge of democratic and authoritarian ideas, would you say the policy described above is more democratic or more authoritarian? Explain.