Harvard, Unstuffed
She's Harvard. So Are You.
(Discuss.)
Daniel Pipes

ONE OF THE FEW scholars who can claim to have predicted the 9/11 attacks, Pipes works from the premise that militant Islam is the greatest threat to democracy since fascism and communism. Sounds the alarm in a deluge of opinion columns, books, and speeches; his influence on the administration’s rhetoric has been increasingly evident since the foiled London plane bombings in August, which moved President Bush (2) to denounce “Islamic fascists.” Though often pigeonholed as a neocon, Pipes scoffs at the idea of a “war on terror,” arguing that Western societies nurture terrorists by refusing to name the enemy in their midst. His post-9/11 comment that “all Muslims, unfortunately are suspect” set off a storm of debate over racial profiling. A student of medieval Islam, Pipes saves special scorn for his former colleagues in Middle Eastern studies, characterizing the field as “an intellectual Enron.”

HOWEVER... Pipes’s Campus Watch program, which attacks academics he considers anti-Israel, has been accused of McCarthyism.

G O O G L E H I T S 2.9 million for 
“Daniel Pipes”; 1.38 million for “militant Islam”

Ruth J. Simmons

ONE OF THE FEW black presidents of an Ivy League school, and the first woman to hold the top job at Brown, Simmons has earned uniformly high marks in an increasingly daunting and contentious role. The moment the back-patting following her appointment ended, the hard work began: Simmons, the 12th and youngest child of East Texas sharecroppers, was up to the task. The former president of Smith College and an expert in French literature, she’s known as a forceful administrator. Has institutionalized need-blind admissions, improved financial aid and funding for grad students, expanded the faculty, and launched a $1.4 billion capital campaign. The mere mention of Simmons as a possible successor to Lawrence Summers as Harvard president set off alarms on College Hill. A columnist for the Brown Daily Herald wrote, “Simmons is beloved by the Brown University faculty, alumni and students, and her departure would be devastating to Brown’s reputation, future and morale.”

G O O G L E H I T S 63,600 for 
“Ruth Simmons”; 56 for “first black Ivy League president”

David Halberstam

THE FIRST AND ONLY black president of an Ivy League school, and the first woman to hold the top job at Brown, Simmons has earned uniformly high marks in an increasingly daunting and contentious role. The moment the back-patting following her appointment ended, the hard work began: Simmons, the 12th and youngest child of East Texas sharecroppers, was up to the task. The former president of Smith College and an expert in French literature, she’s known as a forceful administrator. Has institutionalized need-blind admissions, improved financial aid and funding for grad students, expanded the faculty, and launched a $1.4 billion capital campaign. The mere mention of Simmons as a possible successor to Lawrence Summers as Harvard president set off alarms on College Hill. A columnist for the Brown Daily Herald wrote, “Simmons is beloved by the Brown University faculty, alumni and students, and her departure would be devastating to Brown’s reputation, future and morale.”

G O O G L E H I T S 63,600 for 
“Ruth Simmons”; 56 for “first black Ivy League president”

Walter Isaacson

IT’S THE RARE writer who is as adept at explaining the troubled patriotism of the architects of the Vietnam War as he is at deconstructing the New England Patriots, but at this stage, Halberstam can write about whatever he damn well pleases. The “best war reporter of his generation,” in the words of Black Hawk Down author Mark Bowden, Halberstam towers over the nonfiction landscape. Made his name with Vietnam War reporting and the best-seller The Best and the Brightest (1972), then expanded his oeuvre to include the media, American history, and an Olympian range of sports, in the process forging a distinctively evocative storytelling style. Just as important, he introduced what he called the “backup catcher theory” of journalism—the idea that a second-string backstop has more telling insight into a team’s workings than its star. That philosophy informs much of today’s nonfiction, from Freakonomics to everything Malcolm Gladwell has ever written. Halberstam isn’t resting on his laurels, either: He’s polishing up his fifth book since 2000, on an early and pivotal battle in the Korean War.

G O O G L E H I T S 400,000 for 
“David Halberstam”; 56,800 for “narrative journalism”

Peter Sellars

THE AUDACIOUS avant-garde director marries art and politics, high culture and low, recasting classic works in modern form on stages all over the world. “I think he’s one of the great artists on the planet,” longtime collaborator John Adams (89) told the Chicago Sun-Times last year. Over the years, Sellars’s productions have famously challenged audiences. His Marriage of Figaro was set in a Trump Tower apartment, the female lead of his Don Giovanni shot up heroin during an aria, and his recent production of Mozart’s unfinished opera Zaide reset a story about Turkish slavery in a contemporary sweatshop full of illegal immigrants. He’s courted outrage since he was an undergrad: In 1980 he staged and starred in a production of King Lear on the Loeb mainstage that prominently featured a Lincoln Continental; the Crimson review began, “Peter Sellars has balls.”

HOWEVER... Sellars’s interpretation of Zaide moved the New York Observer to say that over the past 30 years, “Mr. Sellars has gone from being an engaging imp to a moralizing scold”; Variety went on “excruciating.”

G O O G L E H I T S 288,000 for 
“Peter Sellars”; 2.3 million for “Peter Sellers”