**Culture clash:** How can a single YouTube video cause such a worldwide uproar? In this story, [Muslims interviewed](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/17/world/middleeast/muslims-rage-over-film-fueled-by-culture-divide.html/) by reporters from The New York Times say they’re not just upset that the film caricatured the Prophet Muhammad, Islam’s founder, using sexual imagery and offensive stereotypes. They’re furious because they believe United States officials haven’t tried hard enough to prevent what they view as expressions of hate. Is that why the protests are happening? (For other views, read this story about political [power struggles](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/13/world/middleeast/ideological-struggle-seen-in-middle-east-attacks.html/) under way in the Middle East or this opinion piece on the [true meaning](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/16/opinion/sunday/douthat-its-not-about-the-video.html/) of the protests. ) What’s really to blame for the violence: cultural misunderstanding or politics.

**Free speech or hate speech:** Can people say anything they want in a video and post it on the Internet, or are there limits? Should Internet companies to craft free-speech policies that respect all countries’ values and laws in an age where information easily crosses national boundaries. Should our government allow the videos to remain on the Internet, choosing either the same or a different outcome than the one which occurred last week.

The [expanded role](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/03/us/politics/odierno-seeks-to-reshape-training-and-deployment-for-soldiers.html?pagewanted=all) of the U.S. Army’s special operations forces[throughout the world](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/30/world/africa/kony-tracked-by-us-forces-in-central-africa.html) now includes a deployment to [Honduras](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/06/world/americas/us-turns-its-focus-on-drug-smuggling-in-honduras.html?hpw), where it is helping fight drug smuggling. Should the military be involved in the war on drugs? Does military involvement in poor, weakly governed countries destabilize them?

The Supreme Court is expected to rule this month [June 2012} on when, if ever, it is appropriate to sentence juvenile offenders to life without parole. [The arguments this spring](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/21/us/supreme-court-revisits-issue-of-sentences-for-juveniles.html) showed the complexity of drawing the lines between child and adult, and between justice and cruelty.

When minors commit violent crimes, should they be treated differently from adults? Is prison effective as a punishment and deterrent for juveniles, or does it harden a young person who might otherwise recover?

Canada is going to stop [minting and circulating pennies](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/30/business/global/in-canada-the-pennys-time-to-shine-is-over.html), because they cost a lot to make but are not worth very much. How should the U.S. update its currency? By replacing “In God We Trust” with a more inclusive motto? By redesigning bills so the blind can tell them apart? Or by rejecting coins and bills altogether and switching to a digital alternative?

This week [March 2012], the Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum said that it was [snobbish](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/28/opinion/bruni-its-a-college-not-a-cloister.html?scp=2&sq=bruni%20and%20santorum&st=cse)to think that everyone should aspire to go to college because [some people have skills and interests that aren’t academic](http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/02/26/santorum-says-religion-and-conservative-principles-are-at-risk/). But is enough done to help those people secure income without higher education? Is the value of a college degree exaggerated? If not, are colleges doing enough to help disadvantaged students, [and others](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/02/business/dealbook/state-cutbacks-curb-training-in-jobs-critical-to-economy.html?hp), succeed?

[Legislation](http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?121+sum+HB947) to allow home-schooled students to play varsity sports at public schools [passed the Republican-controlled Virginia Assembly on Wednesday.](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/09/sports/virginia-home-schoolers-make-a-play-to-join-high-school-teams.html?_r=1&hp) It will now go before the State Senate. Robert McDonnell, Virginia’s Republican governor, has said he supports the bill.

Alabama and Mississippi are considering similar legislation, and 25 states now allow home-schooled students to play sports at public schools with varying restrictions. Is this a move in the right direction?

In a recent essay in The Times, Lawrence Summers, the former president of Harvard University, wrote about [preparing American students](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/22/education/edlife/the-21st-century-education.html?_r=2&pagewanted=1&sq=lawrence%20summers&st=cse&scp=1) for the future. In the essay, he said that international experience was essential, arguing that English’s emergence as the global language makes the investment in other languages less essential.

Does he have a point? Even though Americans [aren’t as monolingual](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/15/opinion/sunday/are-we-really-monolingual.html) as you might think, is learning a language other than English a worthwhile investment?