



## Censorship and murder are two different things

It takes only two events occurring simultaneously to get me on my soapbox. One is bright people who use poor logic. The other is the application of poor logic to espouse a worthy cause. Todd Honeycutt, columnist for *The Battalion*, has managed to do both.

In the March 2 issue of *The Battalion*, he stated that he has "no quarrel" with Ayatollah Khomeini calling for the assassination of Salman Rushdie. Rushdie is the author of "The Satanic Verses," which is said to be a condemnation of the Islamic faith.

If it was Mr. Honeycutt's intention to elevate the adrenalin of some of his readers to a near lethal level, he has succeeded in his endeavor.

He has succeeded not only because his position is objectionable, but because much of the "evidence" he used to support that position was irrelevant. He attempted to use the Rushdie crisis as a receptacle for all the causes of the world and the ills of society.

If the outcome of the Rushdie situation was not vital to all that I hold dear, I would not be seeking redress now. But the outcome is of pivotal importance to myself and millions of others who take for granted that we will not be condemned to death for our ideas or beliefs.

Todd seemed to be playing "devil's advocate" by implying that he approves of the Ayatollah's actions against Rushdie. The "devil's advocate" technique is an effective technique for communicating a point of view — when it's used properly. The author was incapable of remaining in character throughout the piece, which resulted in a muddled message.

He said history offers many examples of "perceiving strong measures to combat a perceived enemy."

Todd did not acknowledge that there is a vast difference between punishment by "strong measures" and punishment by death.

Using historical examples as evidence, he implied that, because Christians have committed similar abhorrent crimes in the past, it's OK for the Ayatollah to commit the same crime today.

One historical example he used was the Roman Catholic Church giving Galileo an option of choosing between death or his belief that the Earth orbits the sun. Other examples included the Spanish Inquisition and puritan witch-burning.



**Stephanie Stribling**  
Columnist

Todd is absolutely correct. History books assure us these atrocities were actually committed, some by the hands of our own ancestors.

That makes it right? Of course not. History is not an arbitrarily chosen subject you're forced to pass to get a degree. History is a record of our triumphs and a signpost for our mistakes. We must learn from these mistakes, not justify repeating them because we've made the same mistakes before.

Some inappropriate examples were used to draw parallels with the Rushdie incident. One was Shreveport's banning of "Huckleberry Finn" for the use of the word "nigger."

So they banned the book. If Mark Twain were alive today, what are the chances President Bush would have him assassinated?

I'm not extolling the virtues of censorship, but if I have a choice between censorship or death, give me censorship. It's the best publicity a book can get.

Todd floundered again by attempting to draw a Rushdie parallel right here at Texas A&M. He said that A&M students "feel the same kind of threat."

The same kind of threat as what? The same kind of threat Rushdie feels?

That's a pretty serious allegation. If Todd is aware of a student who's had a bounty placed on his or her head, I sure wish he'd share that information with us.

He said a "furor" is created at A&M when bonfire is criticized. He may be right. There are probably some students who would create a "furor" over the criticism of any A&M tradition. But has that "furor" ever stirred the administration to call for the assassination of a student?

He said students instantly "take offense" when someone says "the Corps consists of a bunch of empty-headed peons who should be thrown off campus."

Gee, I guess they're just too sensitive

I'm not even in the Corps and I'm offended by that statement. But then there's never been anything very flattering about name-calling, particularly for the one doing the calling.

He also said that racism at A&M is "... brought into focus and is violently denied." That may well be the case. But the administration has never condemned to death those who bring racism "into focus," or those who "violently" deny it.

The last insightful A&M-Rushdie parallel was a real pearl of wisdom. Todd said that individuals at A&M who are perceived as a threat are often told "Highway 6 runs both ways."

Right on. But it's only a suggestion — one that simply says that if you don't like it here you are free to take a hike.

However, if someone pointed a gun at your head and offered the same suggestion, that might be a different matter all together. Don't you think?

What do all these things have to do with Rushdie anyway? Let's see a recent example of an individual who has had a bounty placed on his head by the American government because they found his ideas or beliefs to be threatening.

But there is truly an American counterpart to Rushdie. She is the self-proclaimed atheist Madeline Murray O'hare.

O'hare has attempted to rock the foundation of our nation's majority faith — Christianity. We banned her and we burned her books. Most of all we feared her effects on the Christian faith. But the U.S. government never put a bounty on her head.

They may not have liked what she said, but at least she was allowed to say it. She continues to speak today, and her publications are available for purchase. It never cost O'hare her life.

The most important message is not to stand in support of the Ayatollah unless you really mean it.

If you think we're hypocritical to condemn the Ayatollah's actions without condemning ourselves first, then simply say so. I'll still disagree with you, but at least I won't have to waste my time wading through meaningless rhetoric.

I think it's admirable to aspire to increase social awareness among your peers... as long as you restrict yourself to logical and insightful arguments.

**Stephanie Stribling is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.**

## Mail Call

### My blood is boiling

EDITOR:

This letter is in reference to Todd Honeycutt's column on the Ayatollah Khomeini's death warrant for Salman Rushdie. I am appalled at being compared to the Ayatollah and/or the book burners in our neighboring Louisiana.

I do not believe that certain individuals have the right to choose what others can and cannot read. I believe this is wrong, and I will feel this way as long as I live. Being compared to a few limited-minded book burners really boils my blood.

This same patriotic blood boils whenever I am compared to a hostage-holding, religious psychopath.

Any future references in this manner will not be read by this individual. Mr. Honeycutt has the right to voice his opinion, but I have the right to deny his radical viewpoints. I will choose to skip over his columns in future issues.

Gregg Waller '92

### No comparison

EDITOR:

It was with extreme disbelief that I read Todd Honeycutt's column on Khomeini in which he compared many Aggies to Iran's Islamic leader.

Mr. Honeycutt began by giving several Western examples of abominations like the Spanish Inquisition, and went on to list "monstrosities" that have occurred here at Texas A&M.

Honeycutt cited racism that is not only rampant on this campus, but exists all over the United States. I agree that this is horrible, and I try to do all in my power to resist bigotry.

Another example Honeycutt cited was the ridiculous notion that many Aggies violently opposed free thought.

Mr. Honeycutt has demonstrated in this logic a profound, and profane, lack of humanity.

Once again, I state my opposition to bigotry. As for the abolition of the Corps of Cadets, that was driven well into the ground when Mike Sullivan and Karl Pallmeyer were here.

First, I'd hate to believe that this letter (and even Honeycutt's columns) could be printed in such steadfast opposition to free thought.

Second, how in Beelzebub's name can you compare Aggies to Khomeini? He may be just as insane as Hitler was, but that doesn't make him better than any killer.

Next time you're walking down campus, Mr. Honeycutt, I want you to look into the eyes of a smiling Ag after he says "Howdy" to you. Look at those eyes and wonder if he's ever killed or mandated the death of someone.

Chris Anderson '89

### Vet school doing poorly

EDITOR:

What the hell is going on here?

First, we're going to have limited summer school this year due to a lack of funds. Now, the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine is in danger of losing its accreditation. And the last I heard, A&M wasn't even on the list of the top 100 academic colleges and universities.

But we do have the ever-pleasing sight of new buildings, parking garages and satellite utility plants popping up everywhere.

I don't think this should all be done at the expense of the student body. The main goal of any institution of higher learning, despite the research it does, should be to crank out young people prepared to face new challenges.

I'm not attending this University because of the research it does, or because it has the most modern and prettiest buildings. I am here because I want a quality education.

I want to go out into the work world prepared to handle everything and anything. I expect my University to help me with this. Thank God I'm not still intending on going to vet school. I'd probably be one of the lucky ones to spend two years working my butt off only to find that I could never practice because my education was not satisfactory.

It seems there are some sadly misguided individuals running this school. I think I'm beginning to believe there actually is no Board of Regents.

Right now we are far above the national average in the number of National Merit Scholars who choose to attend this University.

When these intelligent people begin to see they are only getting pretty buildings, I get this sad feeling they won't want to become Aggies.

There needs to be a reassessment of the priorities here.

If not, things are going to change — for the worse. A&M used to have one of the most acclaimed vet schools in the nation, even without the pretty buildings. Think about it.

Daniel Martillotti '90

### Grumbling over grackles

EDITOR:

I would like to point out an annoying and disgusting problem developing on campus. It's the birds — the grackles and (presumably) pigeons — that have populated central campus.

The fact that poor drainage around campus has us walking through a half-inch of bird excrement is intolerable. Give me toxic waste that's odorless and tasteless any day.

Now, anyone who knows me will tell you that I am always giving people advice on how to be better drivers or citizens. I am now extending that advice to the Board of Regents: Stop the birds!

Joe Bush '89

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

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(USPS 045 360)

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Journalism.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods.

Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: *The Battalion*, 230 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Battalion*, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-1111.

## BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed

