

The Battalion Editorial Board

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The following opinions are a consensus of The Battalion opinion staff and senior editors.



Free to choose

Court ruling upholds First Amendment

The Supreme Court Thursday refused to hear a case that would allow the Federal Communications Commission to place a 24-hour ban on radio and television programs it deems "indecent" due to excessive violence, sex and foul language.

By refusing to hear the case, the court has sent a clear message to lawmakers that it will not tolerate any act of Congress which places restrictions on freedom of speech, even when it comes to the nation's airwaves.

The government has no place deciding for its citizens what they should and should not watch in the privacy of their own living rooms. The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution specifically protects Americans from this kind of Big Brother mentality.

Besides, American television already has an effective method for deciding whether a show stays on the air: ratings. If a person disagrees with what they see on the screen, they can either change channels or turn their set off. Viewers have a choice. Under the FCC law, viewers would not.

But, this doesn't mean that producers should throw good taste to the wind and bombard viewers with

profanity and explicit sex scenes. Television producers bear the tremendous responsibility of providing the public with quality entertainment instead of mindless trash.

A complete ban on such material would only serve to deter programmers from developing innovative television shows. Popular programs such as "All in the Family" and "Saturday Night Live" would never have made it to the small screen had the ban been in effect at the time of their creation. Producers would have chosen to avoid programs containing any hint of material which could be seen as "indecent."

While it is easy for a small vocal group to dictate what the nation should watch on television, no group should hold such power. It is impossible for someone to decide for another what constitutes offensive material. One person's definition of obscene may be another's definition of art.

Individuals can decide for themselves what they find offensive. They do not need someone else telling them what is immoral.

Sense of safety

Police substation helps to calm fears

College Station police wanted to instill a sense of safety and trust for Southgate residences when they opened a police substation at a neighborhood apartment complex one year ago.

In the year that has followed, the substation and its officers have done much to cut down on the crime that had given the area such a bad reputation.

"Southgate village has changed 100 percent," one resident said. "There are no more fights, no more druggies around. There's trust here now. It's safe, just like a normal residence."

At their one year anniversary Thursday, College Station police were congratulated for a job well done for their work in reducing the amount of crime that occurs in and around Southgate.

The Southgate area, residence to many low-income families, has seen an increase in the number of crimes reported, while seeing a decrease in the amount of crimes committed.

Police officials were originally afraid that residents would resent the police being in the complex, but the majority of residents welcomed the police to the neighborhood and appreciate what they have done

towards curbing crime in the area.

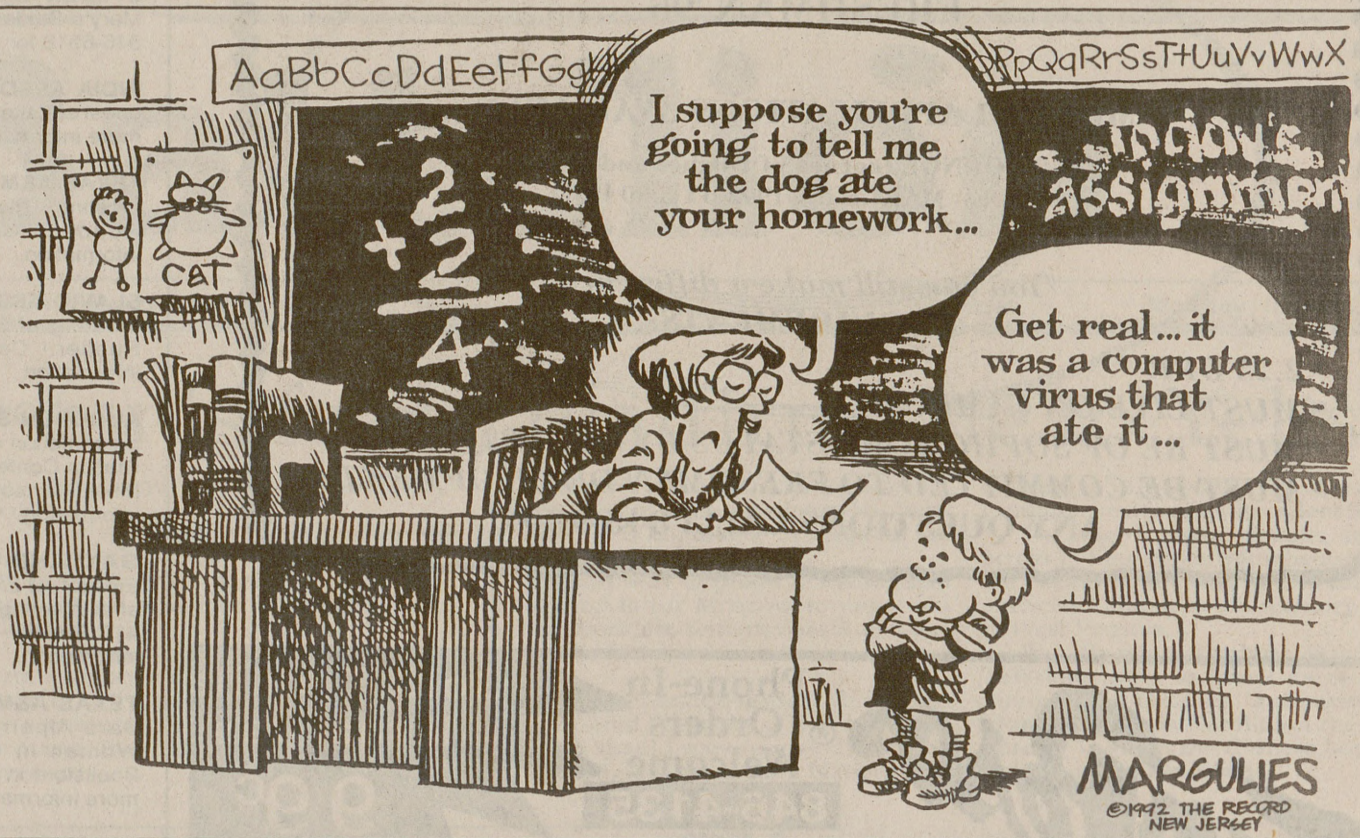
More than 1,200 people have visited the complex's police substation, and a reported 100 incidents were handled as a direct result of an officer being on duty at least six hours a week in the office.

The office, located at 143 Luther St., was provided by the complex free of charge and every patrol officer has a key to it.

The substation has provided officers the chance to become directly involved with residents, an aspect of patrolling that many other police forces often overlook.

The College Station police have taken and shown a concern for the community and taken public protection to a new level for a small town such as College Station for which they should be applauded.

Other larger cities have failed to take steps such as this one in order to protect and inspire a sense of trust between the police and residents. Such measures should be adopted by other cities and taken more seriously by other police forces around Texas and around the nation. Just as they have decreased crime in the college station area, such steps may decrease crime around the nation.



Ramadon reality

Muslim holiday calls on its followers to make tough sacrifices

It's almost time... what a hard day. What time am I supposed to break my fast, again? 'Oh yeah... 6:30. Its only 6:15... and I'm so hungry. I don't know how I made it. God was with me today, he gave me strength and will. 'Oh, its time- Bismillahir rahmanir rahim (In the name of God, most gracious, most compassionate)... some milk and dates to break my fast and then I have to pray... Allahu Akbar(God is great).



Anas Ben-Musa

I feel like this almost every day during the month of Ramadon. I am hungry, but after a certain point food is a secondary nourishment. I am not starving myself or on a mystical trip. Ramadon just teaches me how God is the most important aspect of my life.

Ramadon is the ninth month of the Islamic year and the fourth pillar of Islam. The Islamic year is based on the lunar calendar. Ramadon started this month over a billion Muslims in the world fast or "sawm."

The term "sawm" means to fast, but it has a broader meaning. It is not a simple abstinence from food or water but to control the love of comfort and passions. From sunrise to sunset a Muslim cannot drink, eat, smoke, ingest anything nourishing(vitamins) or have sexual relations. It teaches Muslims what it is like to feel hunger and to thank God for what they have. The practice of fasting during Ramadon is for God and to show obedience to him. It is a specific act of worship that is unique compared to other acts of worship in Islam. Only God can really know if you are fasting throughout the day.

Ramadon is a difficult month, yet in my experience it is the most

enjoyable and soul-searching time of the year. Many Americans don't realize the far greater importance of this month. Ramadon is the month of forgiveness, of getting closer to God, and most importantly, a month of Jihad.

The term Jihad has been misinterpreted and misunderstood by Muslims and Western society. Americans who even recognize the term understand it to mean "holy war," but that is only a secondary definition. Lunatics like Saddam Hussein and Mohammad Khaddafi have totally distorted and misrepresented the true understanding of Jihad. In the process, many Muslims along with Western society came to adopt the distorted meaning.

Jihad simply means, "to try one's utmost." Jihad is a personal struggle. A constant process that is concerned with establishing "Ma'rut" (good) and removing "Munkar" (evil) from one's life and society. In addition, Jihad demands the use of all our energies and resources to remove "Munkar." In the process, the need to give up one's life might be necessary. That is where "holy war" can be interpreted. But even this definition is misunderstood. Muslims are not a bunch of lunatics that plan kamikaze attacks. To fight and die for the cause of Islam is considered by God the greatest sacrifice a human can make and in turn is rewarded in the hereafter. There is no fear of death for those who truly believe.

Unfortunately, many Muslims believe causes that are not just or right. The importance of Jihad during the month of Ramadon cannot be emphasized enough. To me, Jihad means never being satisfied with myself. Each day I try to say to myself, "Am I really doing my best? Can I do better?"

I admit that some days I try harder than others, but that is an incentive to push myself more. It is a time to reflect upon the past year and learn

from one's mistakes.

Most people would consider fasting a whole month impossible. For me, it helps to go home during the weekends. I can enjoy a home-cooked meal and the pleasure of being with my family. My family usually invites our closest friends to eat dinner together with us. We stay up long into the night and eat, drink and talk.

I hope my understanding of Ramadon and experiences clarify some misunderstandings.

It is important that American society as a whole begin to understand the importance of Islam and its practices. There is over six million Muslims in the United States alone. By the end of this decade, American scholars predict Muslims will be the second largest religious population. Furthermore, Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, including the United States.

It is the process of Jihad that has allowed this incredible growth. To spread the word of Islam is a part of Jihad. It is a resource of all Muslims. It can be done by word of mouth, by being a good example, or the use of the pen. I have tried to be all three. As a columnist, each time I write and try to explain Islam, I try to help the cause of Islam. However it is not my purpose to convert or co-opt. My purpose is for clarification and understanding.

America needs to realize that Islam is a part of this great nation and will not go away. Ramadon is a great month to understand and learn about the Islamic way of life. I might sound really corny, but that is Islam. Islam's power is its ability to affect each individual in a different way. In turn, it creates a diverse society of devout worshippers. Just ask my fellow Muslim brothers and sisters from Indonesia, India, Western Africa or the United States.

Ben-Musa is a sophomore history and journalism major

Mail Call

Thank you for grad insurance

Graduate assistants received health insurance benefits for the first time last September, and I want to publicly thank the administrators and others who had the courage to support this new policy at a time when state and university budgets were being slashed. Without your efforts, I probably would have become an invalid within a year.

Just before the start of this semester, I began to notice a slight pain in my left hip. Normally, I would not have done anything about it, but through the health plan, a visit to the physician only costs \$5. I decided that just satisfying my curiosity was worth the \$5, so I made an appointment. At first, the physician wasn't too worried about the cause of the pain either, but he advised me to get an X-ray just to make sure the problem wasn't serious. I told him I didn't have enough money to pay for an X-ray that I didn't absolutely need, but the X-ray cost me nothing. The X-ray led to a Magnetic Resonance Imaging

scan (a \$1000 picture which again costs me nothing). Three weeks later, I was in surgery for a bone graft that only a few specialists in the country have ever performed.

I've been diagnosed with avascular necrosis at the tip of both femurs (the same problem Bo Jackson had). Fortunately, I was diagnosed in time for a surgical procedure that may help my body heal itself. The point is, however, that largely because of the health benefits for graduate assistants, I have a good chance of making a full recovery from the disease, and the cost to me for the surgery, hospitalization and everything will come to \$5, my co-payment for the first office visit.

Without the health insurance benefit, the following would have almost certainly been my fate: the pain in my left hip would have gotten worse, no bad enough, but soon enough, so that I would have been willing to pay for an office visit. At some point, I may have gone to the Beutal Health Center. Maybe they would have recognized my disease from an X-ray, maybe they wouldn't. Nevertheless, I would not have been able to cough up \$1000 for a MRI scan, which is what I needed to clearly expose the disease before it caused permanent damage. Thus, not having the money for state-of-the-art treatment, I would

have to hope for recovery without treatment (the odds of that happening are less than 1 in 10.) Eventually, the disease would have progressed to the point where I could not walk, much less do work I am familiar with. Unable to work, I'd finally qualify for Medicare. (I'd have to make less than \$500/month and be classified as disabled to get Medicare.) By this time, the only treatment would be to give me an artificial joint in both hips, and these new joints would have to be replaced about every ten years for the rest of my life.

I cannot find words to fully express my gratitude to all of you who fought to get health insurance for graduate assistants. I remember that people asked me to help push for the benefit, but I only had "time" to sign a petition. Thanks to your efforts and courage, I have a good chance of enjoying a physically active life, and I've only recently begun to appreciate being able to do just that.

David Kriewaldt
Graduate Assistant

Have an opinion? Express it!

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers.

All letters are welcome.

Letters must be signed and must include classification, address and a daytime phone number for verification purposes. They should be 250 words or less. Anonymous letters will not be published.

The Battalion reserves the right to edit all letters for length, style and accuracy. There is no guarantee the letters will appear. Letters may be brought to 013 Reed McDonald, sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111 or can be faxed to 845-2647.