

And now on to weightier subjects

There's more to life than singing and weenie dogs



ROBERT VASQUEZ
Columnist

Today we will be discussing Bosnia-Herzegovina and Saddam Hussein. OK, now that I've lost half of the readers who bothered to pick up this issue of The Battalion, I will endeavor to comment authoritatively on these topics which have been deemed important, (although I have no idea how to spell them, let alone understand their significance).

My columns, it seems, have not been hard-nosed, goat-getting, or irreverent enough to please the great editors-that-be. While all the other socially-aware and morally-superior columnists have been writing responsibly on such burning issues as rape, pestilence and road trips, I have dilly-dallied with tamer topics such as TV addiction and weenie dogs.

I realize that any reader would be hard pressed to describe my topics with such words as "relevant" and "gripping." In my defense, however, I have never succumbed to the intense urge to write on the one topic which took this campus by storm one quiet fall day nearly two years ago, when one very crafty columnist exploited a very serious subject: buttrucks.

And I never will. You will never see the word "buttruck" in any of my columns simply for the sake of sensationalism. As hard as I try to reach every student and expand my audience to a number larger than, say, two, I refuse to lower myself to that level where I turn to exploitation and pander to the lewd curiosity of the lascivious masses. Buttruck.

In the interest of shedding a very dim light on the important topics du jour, I have chosen to address more compelling issues, such as those we will discuss today.

Saddam Hussein is a bad man. Though he has been responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent people and shows no remorse for his actions, he still lives. Saddam Hussein, not Iraq, needs to be bombed. The man is psycho. The United States does not need to send thousands of troops to fight a war. All it would take is one or two well-placed assassins with good intentions and good aim.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is bad. At least the war being fought there is bad. Many people don't understand what's going on there because the minute they hear the words "Bosnia-Herzegovina" they immediately become confused. The brain shuts down and the eyes cross. At least that's what happens to me.

But the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is more complex than the spelling and pronunciation of the two words put together. As far as I can understand, (from snippets of conversations overheard at parties and on CNN), there are groups of people there who hate other groups of people.

The reason for this hatred is unclear. Maybe it's political, maybe it's racial, maybe it's religious. Croats and Serbians (who are two of the groups of people involved), have joined forces, trying to defeat the Muslims (another group of people) who live in Bosnia (which is a country, sort of).

The Muslims are a minority group in Bosnia, not unlike whites in Los Angeles, New York and most major US cities. The Croats and the Serbians are fighting to overtake the land called Bosnia and then kick the Muslims out. The Croats and the Serbians don't even like each other. They simply have a common purpose. That being hatred. And greed.

The part I don't understand is what the US is doing there. Word's like "humanitarian" and "civil" and "liberties" keep surfacing in conversations describing the mission of US troops in Croatia.

I just wonder who's job it is to decide that we belong in another country, fighting someone else's war. There are those who say that, in the grand scheme of things, we all have a responsibility to each other. If our fellow man needs help, they say, then we must oblige.

I just know that I wouldn't want the responsibility of deciding who will fight in someone else's war. I'm not good at telling people what they should and shouldn't do. Who am I to say what's right and wrong, simply because I have an opinion on the topic. Everyone has an opinion. I'd rather just talk about simple things. Things like singing, and weenie dogs. But not buttrucks. Never buttrucks.

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EDITORIAL

Taking the rap

Don't blame music for criminal acts

In the wake of the sentencing of Ronald Ray Howard to death by lethal injection for the killing of a Texas Department of Public Safety trooper, a lawsuit has been filed by the officer's widow against the rap artist and recording label that produced the "gangsta" rap music that was said to be an influence on Howard.

While Linda Davidson, the wife of slain officer Bill Davidson, wanted her husband's killer to be given the death penalty, she also agreed with the defense attorney's argument that it was the hard-core rap music that influenced Howard to pull the trigger.

Davidson is now suing Tupac Amuru Shakur, Time Warner, Inc. and Interscope Records for an undetermined amount.

"I feel like these corporations need to be responsible," she said. "I'm claiming that the 'gangsta' rap music was a factor."

Davidson's attorney, Jim Cole, said the lawsuit would ensure that music companies do not produce

speech designed to make people kill people. He also said the message of the lawsuit would be one of responsibility.

Howard confessed several times to shooting Officer Davidson in the neck with a 9mm handgun during a routine traffic stop for a missing headlight.

The responsibility for crimes such as Howard's lies with the offender.

If Davidson is successful in her lawsuit, not only will the First Amendment rights of musicians be limited, but the possibilities will be endless for criminals claiming their behavior was the result of a song they heard, a television show they watched, a billboard they read or anything else they have come in contact with.

The citizens of this nation cannot allow the justice system to continue its policy of eluding blame and shifting responsibility.

The courts need to remember that it was not an entertainer that committed the crime, but rather a criminal who pulled the trigger.



ANGEL KAN/The Battalion



MARGULIES
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NEW JERSEY

University doesn't need to protect Aggies from nude photos

Had never realized the extent of conservatism at TAMU proposed on Aggie by the fogs... A&M officials... recent incident involving the MSC Visual Arts Committee.

GUEST COLUMN

MUKUL GOEL

pus, an exhibition displaying pictures of nude people when Aggie Hostellers were visiting the campus.

The former students did not see the gallery which is now opened for public viewing. The matter is already silenced but I thought it might be worthwhile to convey this message to my fellow Aggies oblivious to the fact that someone else is trying to control our thinking process in the university we are so proud of.

TAMU is a great university and former students are a big contribution to its greatness. We don't want to offend them in any manner whatsoever. I could not help laughing at those individuals that assumed that the former students would be outraged by the mere sight of bare breasts or a penis of public hair shown in an innocent painting or photograph in a public art gallery and thereupon stop giving aid to the University.

Are Aggies so immature and their sensibilities so weak that will get shattered by the blow of a nude picture in an art gallery?

Similar cases have occurred in other universities where exhibitions had to be removed because the nudity might offend the board of directors and the benefactors of the university, consequently the artists immediately withdrew their work. We certainly do not

want our dear Aggieland to be shunned by the art world and the rest of the creative community. TAMU should not become a place where artists are afraid of being humiliated or judged by university managers and political players.

The Constitution gives protection to freedom of expression that transcends personal taste and correspondingly one had the right to turn a blind eye to any form of expression one doesn't approve of. The responsibility of interpreting any work of art is commonly shared by the artist and the viewers, not the art gallery or the University.

Regardless of the artist's intention in creating a work of art containing nudity, the erotic or sexual content is usually an outcrop of the viewers own feeling and cultural or social experience.

In other words "obscenity lies in the eyes of the beholder."

The depiction of nudity in the work of art may not always fall in the categories of erotica and pornography. Artists often use nudity as a form of expression of self which can evoke feelings ranging from amusement to disgust. Even the most perverse people cannot get aroused by the photographs in our exhibit in the MSC. Although there are no absolute criteria for judging art and its value, anybody can distinguish between Madonna's book "Sex" and the images created by

Michaelangelo or Picasso. Some people do not consider photography as a form of art, but I am rather sure Michaelangelo would have loved to shoot photos if he had a nice Japanese camera.

The school has the right to relocate or remove any work of art that may be disruptive to the educational process, in violation of laws or hazardous to the health and safety of viewers or participants. The University is a public investment in research and teaching that should be free from political pressures or religious fanaticism.

The purpose of education is not a dictation of codified set of scriptures from teacher to student but to provide a laboratory environment where ideas and issues can be debated in an atmosphere of academic freedom.

The MSC Visual Arts Committee is a student committee that aims to make art a part of education and it should not be appropriated for political causes. Like all the other student committees, its purpose is to enlighten and explore rather than shock people.

At a juncture of sexual and moral confusion where the family values are sandwiched between gay/lesbian rights and the feminist movement, let the artist be one who can provide the public a mirror for self-exploration and examination and let the universities be free from hypocrisy.

I know that our University with all its good intentions wants Aggies to be the best. However, I sincerely wish that our teachers and advisors would give up their paternalistic attitude and let us grow up on our own. This strict quality control may lead to a line of Aggie-brand products made in Aggieland with no individuality or creativity.

Well Ags, we are free to express our opinions on this topic and visit the gallery. You are welcome to attend a reception and discussion in the MSC Visual Art Gallery, Room 289 on July 23 at 8:00 p.m.

Mukul Goel is a civil engineering graduate student and a member of the MSC Visual Arts Committee

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