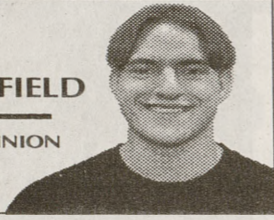


Street brawl blurs definition of personal responsibility

Many of us consider ourselves good citizens. It isn't until being a good citizen conflicts with our individual notions of right and wrong that we become aware of what we sacrifice to be good citizens.

KYLE LITTLEFIELD
ASST. OPINION EDITOR



perately pleaded for help.

It seemed like I was watching a "Cops" episode as the blood poured from his head.

I felt sick to my stomach watching it happen, so I ran back to call the police again - they still were nowhere to be found.

I waited for the police to arrive. But before they could get there, the guys who had started the first fight were approaching the area where I was standing.

So here I was with a moral dilemma on my hands.

The "bad guys" were getting away, and I - with all of my vigilante-esque thoughts - could stop them from escaping.

It was all of the things that are drilled into us during childhood: "The bad guys should never get away," "You should be a hero ... do something," "Only a coward would turn their back on what just happened - you have a responsibility."

As children, we are bombarded with images of superheroes foiling the bad guys.

Television shows like "Scooby Doo" taught us that average citizens could show the bad guys a thing or two. Books such as the "Hardy Boys Series" or "Encyclopedia Brown" implied that we could be vigilantes and take the law into our own hands. And with little consequence - television shows and books always had neat, happy endings.

These childhood memories forced the testosterone dream into my head of delivering a blow to one of the aggressors. You know - the kind of punch you have your whole body behind, the kind where the person who's been hit doesn't wake up for a while after.

The mere fact that I am a male and that society's view of the stereotypical male is one of strength, compounds the decision to do what is "right." I can hear some of my friends right now saying, "Man, you should have whooped some ass." It's easy to talk in retrospect about what you would have done. So many thoughts were blizzarding around in my head: anger, excitement, fear. I wasn't quite sure what was going to happen - I felt detached and out of control.

And then there was another voice in my head: "You've called the cops; you've done what is expected of you as a citizen." "Don't get involved; this isn't your problem."

I didn't take any impulsive swings or try to stop them in any way that night. I would have been fooling myself. I probably would have only gotten hurt if I had stepped in.

Sure, I might have been lauded as a hero if I had nabbed the bad guys. And I probably would have been arrested and chastised for being stupid if they had beat me up and escaped.

For the time being, I was satisfied with my minimal civilian efforts of calling the police. But shortly after, I regretted not decking one

of the guys as they passed me. I kept thinking of the helpless guy they were kicking in the head.

They had already shown their penchant for fighting unfairly. Even in junior high, when I saw a guy throw a combination lock into the face of another guy, spraying blood and teeth all over the locker room floor, I wasn't as sickened because it was one on one.

It can be argued that I did nothing wrong, have nothing to feel guilty about and, in fact, did everything the way I was supposed to do.

There were two wrongs that night - the cruel beatings that occurred and the fact that those responsible got away, which I feel was partially my fault.

It can be argued that, as a responsible citizen, I did nothing wrong, have nothing to feel guilty about and, in fact, did everything the way I was supposed to do. But being a slave to the strong influence of the attractive, fictional world, I feel that I should have done more.

Coming to terms with reality can sometimes be a real punch in the face.

Kyle Littlefield is a senior journalism major

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EDITORIAL

MANTLE'S EXAMPLE

Students should be aware of the effects of abusing alcohol.

Baseball legend Mickey Mantle's recent bout with liver cancer and subsequent organ transplant have succeeded in bringing badly-needed attention to the shortage of organ donors in our country. Perhaps more important to college students, though, is the reminder of the dangers of alcohol abuse.

Mantle's "four decades of drinking," which began in his early 20s, undoubtedly helped bring about the hepatitis C, cirrhosis and liver cancer he suffered from. Disturbingly, many college students are following in Mantle's footsteps.

More college students drink than people of the same age who do not attend college, and people who have had more than 12 years of education are twice as likely to be drinkers than others.

The degree of heavy alcohol consumption is shocking. In a recent survey conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, almost four percent of all college students said they would drink every single day next month.

A University of Iowa study reported that three percent of all 18- to 25-year-olds have experienced alcohol withdrawal symptoms, even though it usually

takes several years of drinking to develop such a tolerance and addiction to alcohol. Heavy alcohol consumption often leads to drunk-driving accidents and sexual assaults.

Obviously, most colleges, including Texas A&M University, have problems with alcohol, and the immediate risks usually do not appear as threatening as the eventual dangers.

Studies indicate that between 240,000 and 360,000 current college students will eventually die of alcohol-related causes. Most of these deaths are preventable, and responsible behavior now can ward off future problems.

Binge drinking and frequent drinking both can lead to chronic alcohol abuse or alcoholism. Students should be aware of these dangers and shape their behavior accordingly.

Mickey Mantle's lifelong struggle with alcohol should make everyone aware of the consequences of alcohol abuse, and he was one of the lucky ones.

Many others face a similar situation but are not given a second chance.

Hopefully, Mantle's example will prevent many others from making the same mistake.



MAIL CALL

Dole not the first to attack rap, movies

This is in response to Rob Clark's column and the editorial about Bob Dole's stance against the entertainment industry.

Clark begins by saying, "The censors are coming." May I remind Clark that Sen. Dole stated, "I am talking about citizenship not censorship."

Clark claims that Sen. Dole wouldn't last a minute in L.A. Maybe not, but he does live in Washington, D.C., the crime capital of the U.S. Also, Sen. Dole has probably never listened to rap music, but you don't have to smell garbage to know it's trash.

It is sad how some speech is considered obscene depending on who says it.

These groups can use lyrics filled with racial slurs, statements full of hatred and sexist language, and some consider it acceptable.

But others would be reviled and persecuted if they made such statements.

Rap artists are excused because they "are products of their environment."

Mr. Dole is not the first to make such an attack. Republicans and Democrats alike have been saying these same things for years.

Leaders such as Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, William Bennett and former Vice President Dan Quayle have all made similar attacks.

Heaven forbid that a presidential nominee say those things: he is just being judgmental and seeking political gain.

President Clinton has dis-

cussed the same things, but where was the backlash against him? There wasn't any, and nor should there have been.

Where is the NAACP in response to "gangsta" rap?

The editors of the Battalion are right - there is a double standard. But not by Sen. Bob Dole.

*Jason Frasier
Class of '96*

Ideas of McCarthy still plague society

This letter is in response to Rob Clark's column on June 8, "Dole's duel with entertainment is misguided."

It seems that Dole and his golf buddies' problems with rap music is deeper than simply disagreeing with songs about killing policemen and rejecting the law.

Obviously, Dole sees this voice from the depths of society as threatening the traditional, American way of life - not the American way of life that he wants us to associate with, but his American way of life, the way of life of the status quo.

Bob Dole, who has worked hard his entire life to inherit

his comfortable position in American society, is concerned that the members of the lower class are pulling their way up from the muck by speaking against America's so called "capitalist democracy."

Not too long ago, a senator by the name of Joseph McCarthy saw his cush position in America threatened by the murmur of communism - which proposed to elevate the working class to a similar status as the ruling rich.

In order to protect his way of life, he wanted to eliminate this idea from Americans.

Dole brilliantly echoes that with his insightful "think what I think you should" philosophy.

*Matthew T. Krueger
Class of '94*

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class, and phone number.

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