

# Over-kill

Media shames nation: embraces Simpson, ignores Clinton

Coming soon to pay-per-view: Clinton v. Simpson — This time they're playing for keeps.

Last Tuesday gave us both the State of the Union Address and the Simpson civil verdict, the State of Our Sorry-Ass Culture and follow-up in the "address," if you will.

Some people might have been perplexed about which to watch. But that problem was solved by the ever-thoughtful networks, who provided a split screen account of the two proceedings.

And in case you weren't watching television or were tuned instead to Elvis Week on VH1, here is how the two events compared. They both marked a return of sorts. The president was returning for his second term; Simpson was returning for his second verdict. Yet both were marked by change.

Clinton almost has an all-new cabinet report that said "this time around, and Simpson's nationally televised car-trip was all new as well. He was traveling toward the courthouse rather than away from the cops, he wasn't carrying a passport or disguise and this time he opted for a black Suburban rather than a white Bronco.

The two differed on the top-of-fund raising. Clinton, say is that we've seen the examination of the system since then."

Columnist



Mason Jackson  
 Senior marketing major

having secured the highest office in the land for the second time, now favors pushing ahead with campaign finance reform.

But Simpson needs more funding. He has to pay \$8.5 million in compensatory damages and \$25 million in punitive damages. Meanwhile his lawyers claim he is broke, which makes it all the more impressive he can still afford to pay for his maid, bodyguard, gardener, pool man, secretary, accountant, business lawyer, criminal lawyers, Bentley and \$24,000 a month mortgage payment on his estate.

This has caused Mr. Simpson to look for alternate forms of income, like applying for a trademark on his name. This would allow him to market something along the lines of "Little Simpson, the my first murderer doll — complete with full range stabbing motion and glee that don't fit (Kato Kaelin action figure sold separately)."

But if Simpson does find himself on welfare it would be a large setback to the President's aim of getting two million people off the program by the year 2000.

The president's main focus, both in this speech and for this term, is on education. He outlined ten principles in his "Call to Action for American Education."

The sixth principle is to teach character education in our schools. Simpson, on the other hand, most likely favors the current system of inflating the importance of high school athletes until they feel they are above the law.

Clinton also stressed the importance of the Internet; this was the first State of the Union Address offering a live video feed on the Internet. Simpson prefers not to trumpet the Internet and sites such as: Squeeze the Juice; The Search for the Real Killer; and The Unofficial Simpson Simpson is Really Guilty Site.

The president also wants to expand the Family and Medical leave law to allow parents to take off work for things like teacher conferences and a child's medical check-up. But he hasn't said if the law will be expanded to allow a father to take off time to console his children if he brutally murders their mother.

And so the battle continues. Two completely different agendas were represented on television last Tuesday.

On one side of the screen was the President of the United States, addressing Congress and the nation.

On the other side was one man who may or may not have been responsible for two of the 23,330 murders committed in 1994.

Yes, that split screen told us quite a bit about the state of our union.

# Death penalty fails to reduce crime rates

On Feb. 3, 1997, the American Bar Association made a landmark decision approving a call for a moratorium on executions in the United States.

The association, while not explicitly condemning the death penalty, will ensure mentally retarded individuals and juveniles under 18 years of age are exempt from the death penalty. It also establishes jurisdictions across the United States to assure due process of law to people charged with capital crimes.

This decision should spur a movement toward the abolition of the unjust and useless punishment known as the death penalty.

Opponents of the death penalty are — on a good day — labeled "crazies," "loonies" and an assortment of other colorful names.

The argument against the death penalty, however, has a sound and moral principle.

Criminals who murder deserve a punishment befitting the crime, but ultimately the death penalty solves nothing.

"Take the popular 'eye for an eye' theory many use to justify the death penalty: Murder another person, and your right to live ceases to exist.

Although this may sound good at first, nothing in our justice system supports the theory.

Victims do not get to rape the rapist, nor do they set the arsonist's house on fire. Instead, our justice system takes away the right to freedom when one is convicted of a crime.

The death penalty serves as retribution for a crime. It is a way of exacting revenge in a legal, but immoral way.

Another popular misconception concerning the death penalty is that it deters crime.

During the summer of 1987, eight executions took place in Louisiana. However, the murder rate in New Orleans actually went up 16.9 percent that year. Murderers are not frightened by the death penalty.

Those who claim the death penalty deters crime also must think that cancer causes smoking.

Moreover, race plays a factor in determining who receives the death penalty.

Columnist



Jon Appgar  
 Junior journalism major

Of the 232 executions carried out in the United States since 1977, only one white individual has been put to death for killing an African-American.

Studies have shown African-Americans to be three to four times as likely to receive the death penalty as white individuals convicted of the same crime.

Perhaps the most frightening aspect of the death penalty is the possibility of innocent people being convicted of and sentenced to die for crimes they did not commit.

In 1976, Randall Adams was convicted of killing a Dallas police officer and was sentenced to death.

During the trial, however, prosecutors suppressed evidence and used perjured testimony. In fact, the key witness against Adams turned out to be the real killer. Adams came within 72 hours of being executed for a crime he did not commit.

An article in the Stanford Law Review stated there have been 350 capital convictions this century in which the conviction was later overturned. In total, 25 innocent individuals have been wrongly executed. Twenty-five people in the last 97 years may not seem like a significant number, but one innocent life taken is one too many.

When murder rates are on the rise and innocent people are put on death row, citizens of sound mind should question the effectiveness of the system.

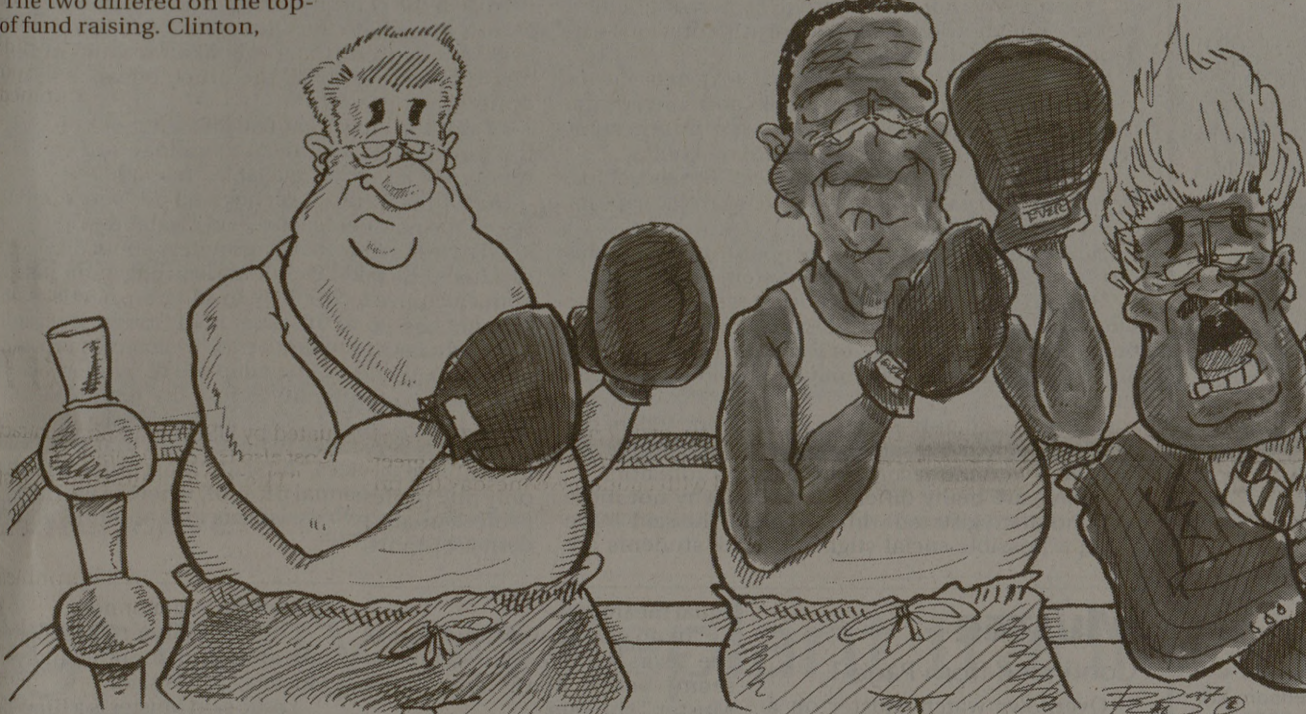
Life in prison without the possibility of parole seems an appropriate punishment for those who commit acts of murder.

As taxpayers, people may save a few dollars if we execute criminals instead of placing them in jail for three consecutive life sentences.

However, economic factors should play no part in the argument over the death penalty. Those individuals who argue the economic benefits of legalized murder are putting a price on human life.

It is extremely ironic that our government condemns those who murder and then proceeds to kill human beings under the guise of justice. The death penalty needs to be abolished and replaced with a system of justice that will balance punishment with morality.

IF THE GLOVE DON'T FIT... YOU MUST ACQUIT.



# Senate considers parental notification for abortions

Last Wednesday, the Senate Health and Human Services Committee

voted to send a bill to the full Senate which could affect many Texans. It would require doctors to notify parents by certified mail or telephone within 48 hours of receiving a minor's request for an abortion. The girl would only be able to avoid her parents by seeking a judge's approval.

It is insane that there is even a debate over this issue. The bill does not require parents to give permission for the procedure, just to be notified.

While a minor cannot be given aspirin in school without parental permission as the law stands now, the same child can have an invasive surgical procedure performed without the parents knowing, much less giving permission. This is ludicrous.

One study suggests nearly 4000 teenagers in Texas seek abortions every year

without their parents' knowledge. The bill seeks to address this problem.

Opponents of the bill say it will lead to more "back alley" abortions. They fear teens who are afraid their parents will find out are going to perform the abortion themselves, resulting in an increase in "coat hanger" abortions. They also worry these girls will refuse to seek proper prenatal care, with unhealthy consequences for mother and child.

There have been cases in which girls have been abused after revealing their pregnancy to parents. To protect them, the bill should be defeated.

These cases are indeed heartbreaking. I have no doubt some girls could be, and are, abused by their parents, but most aren't. What about the girls who, in a time of great emotional distress, misjudge their parents' reactions? They are frightened over a situation which may never materialize.

If a pregnant girl is being abused, by a parent or anybody else, this bill would force her to talk to someone about it. A 1992 Washington state study found 62 percent of 535 teenage mothers had been raped or molested before their

But even the opponents are not united. Sara Suniga, secretary for the Texas A&M chapter of NOW, said she was not personally against the bill, as long as girls still had the choice to abort.

"I don't see anything wrong with it,"

**"I don't see anything wrong with [the bill]. Girls that young shouldn't be making that kind of decision (whether to have an abortion) by themselves"**

Sara Suniga, secretary, Texas A&M chapter of NOW

with are the harmful side-effects of an abortion, which can include intense pain, bleeding and infection. If parents are expected to be understanding and supportive when these things happen to their daughters, they must be allowed into the decision process from the very beginning. There can be emotional problems as well, such as guilt, depression, eating disorders and nightmares. Parents want to protect their children from pain. But if they don't know what is going on, they cannot help.

Some opponents feel requiring notification is the same as requiring consent. They see this bill as an attack on abortion rights. But it is a bill designed to protect young girls and get help for them before it is too late. We all know a problem is much worse when it is hidden. Only when we recognize the problem and seek the aid of others can we properly deal with it. We need this bill to show girls there are people who can and want to provide relief and support, but they have to ask.



MAIL CALL

Americans. To claim this isn't needed or isn't important not only describes the typical Republican stereotype, but makes a sad case for America.

This nation is rich because of diversity and the Democratic Party is the party and always will be the party of diversity and tolerance. The Democratic Party does not condemn someone for believing differently. The Democratic party wishes to extend equal opportunity to everyone regardless of color, gender, orientation or religion. The Democratic Party has worked hard for all individuals regardless of the political ideology as well. The Democratic Party's doors have always been welcome to all walks of life, and will never be shut the doors of opportunity to anyone.

Misty A. Hataway  
 Class of '98

## Minorities should look to democrats

In response to Donny Ferguson's Feb. 10 column, "Grand Old Party embraces causes of minorities, women."

It is particularly amusing when a conservative columnist can not only misinterpret statistics but mislead the public. The party of Lincoln isn't the same party the GOP is today. Ideologies and beliefs have changed and the Repub-

lican Party of the Civil War that fought to protect the rights of slaves isn't the same party that today cuts services to legal immigrants and boasts of not being "racially exclusive." Of the voting population, minorities vote for the party that represents their values, and protects their rights, and that party isn't the Republican Party.

Democrats work to add diversity to our communities, campuses, and lives. Multiculturalism is an important advantage we, as

