

PERSPECTIVES

Clinic attacks show militance and cowardice

Last week, two innocent employees at the New Woman All men Health Care clinic, the abortion clinic in Birmingham, Ala., became victims of an all-too-familiar of violence. One of the injured was a se whose serious condition included the loss of an eye. The other person, a security officer named Robert person, lost his life.



MANDY CATER
opinion editor

These incidents were not accidents. They are the result of militant violence that hits our country far too often. Whether the targets are workers in an abortion clinic or federal employ-innocent people are falling prey to unmerciful killers. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reported it gave a letter from the "Army of God," claim-responsibility for the heinous act. The letters, postmarked from Birmingham hours after the bombing, proclaim "those who work in the murder mills around the nation" be "targeted without quarter — you are not immune from retaliation — your commissar's in-shington can't protect you!"

If the name Army of God sounds familiar, it could. This is the same organization that claimed responsibility for a similar bombing in an Atlanta gay nightclub last year. They also perpetrated attacks on two Florida clinics in 1982, including the kidnapping of one of the doctors and his wife from their Virginia home.

The FBI is currently investigating the letter. If the group is found responsible, it would be no surprise.

The Army of God is a group of anti-abortion activists whose maneuvers include "circulating a manual that contains information on how to make bombs," said the *Journal-Constitution* article. Unfortunately, though, the group is not alone in its militance. Many groups such as "the Army" believe it is their right to use violent means to achieve their political agendas.

This kind of behavior is not only frightening, it is completely unacceptable. Violence against innocent victims is not anyone's right, no matter at one's beliefs may be.

However, organizations such as Planned Parenthood take threats from groups such as the Army of God very seriously. Susan Nenney of Planned Parenthood in Austin said it is difficult to count all the tactics these groups use.

"We get everything from protesters screaming at clients to bomb threats to arson attacks," Nenney said. Planned Parenthood makes numerous non- preventive actions against anti-abortion actions. They equip their facilities with special glass and sometimes even bulletproof glass.

They train their employees to beware of suspicious events and packages, and keep up ongoing dialogues with law enforcement officials.

Nenney finds the ploys of radical activists ironic. "They hide behind this 'we want to stop abortion blanket.' But, our main service is birth control. By scaring people away, they are preventing people from getting birth control that would prevent the need for abortions. They also prevent things like Pap smears, which keep mothers healthy," Nenney said.

Whether anyone likes it or not, laws are laws. Since 1973's *Roe v. Wade*, abortion has been legal.

So, abortion clinics, their workers and patients are not acting outside the guidelines of the law. Whether one agrees with abortion is a null issue in cases such as this one. The real issue is legality. The United States is a democracy; a government and by the people. There are governmental checks and balances which are in place to ensure that laws are representative of the people. There are also mechanisms embedded into the system allowing for laws to be amended if the need arises.

In the case of abortion, for example, if one feels laws granting freedom of choice are somehow contrary to the greater good of American society, a logical step is not to create a nail bomb that will kill anyone affiliated with the practice.

The correct progression would be for people to associate with others who share their beliefs. Lobby for those interests. Contact local and state representatives.

In essence, people should campaign for their beliefs; do something to bring about change. Even participation in nonviolent protests is viable. It is when those protests move from assembly to endangering others' lives that a group becomes problematic.

Instead of admirably championing their cause, groups such as the Army of God act as cowards. They advocate the murders of people who simply trying to make a living. They use Christianity as a crutch to promote hate and insurrection, not only defiling their government, but also very religion they claim to be upholding.

These dangerous, fringe groups do nothing to promote their causes; if anything, the opposite is true. They are the real criminals, not the doctors, nurses, security guards they massacre.

Mandy Cater is a senior psychology major.

PERSPECTIVES

Alternative sentencing benefits society

It was a shotgun wedding of sorts on January 17, when Darrell Meadows and Angela Whaley said their "I do's" in a Kentucky chapel. It wasn't, however, the barrel of a father's gun, but rather, the strong arm of the law forcing the unplanned nuptials.



JENNIFER JONES
columnist

Meadows married Whaley, the girlfriend he had threatened to kill during a dispute while vacationing in Georgia, as part of a sentence handed down by State Court Judge Clyde Gober for misdemeanor disorderly conduct charges. Gober rationalized his disturbing sentence, which not surprisingly drew heavy criticism from both civil liberties and domestic violence activists, by claiming that marriage would obligate Meadows to support the child he and Whaley had out of wedlock.

Gober's ruling is an unfortunate example of a judge abusing the flexibility of the judicial system and using the bench as a pulpit for his moral agenda. By pushing his morals onto a couple, who were obviously unprepared for the commitment of marriage, he has compromised the safety of both Whaley and the child he was claiming to protect.

Fortunately for the American justice system, Gober is the exception rather than the rule when it comes to unusual sentencing. Some judges have come to realize that fines and jail time are not always the answer and have started using more creative measures to ensure justice. More and more, judges are taking advantage of their judicial freedom and punishing criminals in ways that are anything but standard.

Sometimes a bit of creativity by judges can accomplish what regular sentencing cannot. For example, Florence Nyemitei, a 71-year-old landlady, did not feel obligated to pay the electric bill for the apartment building she rented in New York, nor did

she feel it her responsibility to see to repairs for the heating and hot water system that failed in early January. When ordered by the court to pay hefty fines for building violations and building repairs, she apparently did not feel obligated to pay those bills either. In response to Nyemitei's lack of concern for her tenants' well-being, Judge JoAnn Friia sentenced the landlady to spend four days a week in the building she had refused to repair. According to an Associated Press report, Nyemitei said she feels like she is living in a "prison," something her tenants have probably felt for quite some time. Friia hopes that Nyemitei will "get a taste of her own medicine" and by doing so will be more apt to see to the repairs if forced to live in the same substandard conditions as that of her tenants.

Creative sentencing can also provide a more appropriate punishment than typical sentencing. Community panels are springing up across the country as an alternative to regular sentencing by the courts. Members of the community are left to create a meaningful punishment after a person has gone before a judge and been convicted.

In Vermont, a woman convicted of misdemeanor retail theft was ordered by a community panel to attend a course on decision-making, apologize to the manager of the store that she stole from, visit the state women's prison and do 35 hours of community service.

While some have accused this system of letting criminals off the hook, it is more effective when one considers that part of the reason society punishes criminals is to make them aware of the consequences of their actions. If a person convicted of stealing merchandise is ordered to pay a fine, the only time they ever have to consider their actions is when they write the check. If, however, a person is required to attend workshops, perform community service and apologize to their victims, he or she is forced on several occasions to think about the repercussions of the crime.

Sometimes unusual sentencing can provide a so-

lution to a problem that normal sentencing cannot. A man convicted 18 times on drunken driving charges was sentenced to live within walking distance of a liquor store. This seemingly questionable sentence was handed down by Judge James Hapner who has watched the man, Dennis Cayse, come through his courtroom several times. Running out of ideas to keep Cayse from driving drunk, Hapner hopes that by ordering the man to move close to a liquor store, he will walk rather than drive. In an AP story, Hapner said that it is his "hope that he'll (Cayse) walk to get his beer and wine rather than drive. Whether it will work or not, I don't know." Obviously the courts have not been able to keep Cayse off the streets, so perhaps Hapner's sentence, while not changing Cayse's drinking habits, will keep him from injuring other drivers.

Creative sentencing can also give victims of crimes a feeling of satisfaction and justice that cannot always be accomplished by fines or jail sentencing. By sentencing a drunken driver who has injured a person to serve as an attendant for or a witness to physical therapy sessions with the person whom they injured, they are forced to constantly witness the effects of their carelessness. In one case where a drunken driver killed a person, conditions for his probation included carrying a photograph in his wallet of the deceased individual to remind him of the consequences of his recklessness. The victim's family was allowed input into the sentencing and approved of the judge's decision. The family was pleased to know that a day would not go by when the man would not remember what he had done.

Sentencing today often falls short of justice. Too many people fall through the system's cracks and repeat their crimes with no sense of remorse. A few weeks of jail time or a fine hardly seem compensatory to crimes like manslaughter. Judges should employ creative sentencing more often to ensure that justice is served.

Jennifer Jones is a senior psychology major.

VOICE FROM THE CROWD

Yearbooks serve as forum for debating issues

They were good stories. The issues were timely, relevant and well-written. One dealt with teenage pregnancy, the other concerned the effects of divorce on students.



AMBER BENSON
guest columnist

They were a far cry from most high school newspaper stories. These student journalists went beyond complaining about the atrocities of cafeteria food and reported intelligently about real-world subjects that affected their readership.

They were good stories. But they never ran in Hazelwood East High School's newspaper. Hazelwood East's principal pulled the articles citing that their "frank talk" was too intense for the school's freshmen.

The stories saw print later in the *St. Louis Dispatch*, where they ran verbatim, but only after the Supreme Court decided five to three that the principal did indeed have the right to censor the stories.

That decision, *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, essentially killed high school journalism. School boards,

and administrations across the country began to pull stories from papers under the guise of "pedagogical concern." University publications, who had always been afforded a liberal amount of First Amendment protection, began to watch their back.

The dagger fell on November 17, 1997, when a federal judge in Kentucky ruled that, in some cases, prior review is allowable in the university setting. In *Kincaid v. Gibson*, students at Kentucky State University filed suit after the administration refused to distribute the yearbook because they did not like the content of the book or the color of its cover.

Citing *Hazelwood*, the judge said that he could not conclude that the yearbook was a public forum or even a limited public forum, thus removing it from the protection of the First Amendment.

In his summation, the judge reiterated the statement made in a previous case that a yearbook was no more than "a compilation of photographs." He went on to state that "[Yearbooks] are not usually vehicles for the expression of views, or for robust debate about societal issues and they have never been."

Tell that to the journalists at Indiana University who in their yearbook, the *Arbutus*, tackled the increase of drug

abuse on their campus, or the students at Kansas State who reported on the relationship between their growing homosexual community and the rest of their campus, or even the 1995 Aggeland, whose controversial opening pages explored the problems of alcohol abuse and racism on our own campus. University yearbooks have a long history of reporting, not just recording, the stories that happen on their campuses. And as the products of student journalists, that is their job.

Just as it is important for a student newspaper to report the news of the year, so is it with the yearbook. But unlike a newspaper that is simply thrown away, a yearbook remains and can reignite debate of the issues found between its covers every time someone pulls it off the shelf.

Those who support prior review would say that the purpose of a yearbook is to record only the good happenings at the school, or at least to put the university in the best light possible. But that isn't journalism, it's public relations. Imagine recording the year 1963 without mentioning the assassination of JFK, or claiming that World War II was only a skirmish. It may make for a better memory, but it leaves history incomplete and prevents people from learning from their pasts.

Already, A&M's counterparts in the University of Texas System have been threatened by censorship. Defending the system's prior review policy in a letter to the College Media Advisors, Chancellor William Cunningham stated that the policy did not constitute illegal censorship, neither did it violate First Amendment rights.

This blatant censorship only cripples student publications, causing them to censor themselves. A frightening proposition for students, as the university newspaper and yearbook are often the only outlets for issues specifically concerning them.

That is why it is imperative that students continue to support the First Amendment rights of student publications. Although the students may not always agree with what they print, as students they have that right, as well as the right to write that Mail Call or rip out the pages of their yearbooks and leave them on the editors' desks. But when people allow the voices of their fellow students to be censored, the loss is their own. People will benefit much more by the "robust debate of societal issues" than looking through just a "compilation of photographs."

Amber Benson is a junior journalism major and editor of the Aggeland.



MAIL CALL

Hypocrisy often result of wearing bracelets

While I applaud those who wear What Would Jesus Do bracelets in their attempts to truly not "fall short of the mark," I find it morally reprehensible that many of these people who wear W.W.J.D. bracelets are people who do not live by moderation, who drink excessively, and often, who blatantly exploit women and condemn other Christians (of any denomination) in their hypocrisy.

In an accident I recently saw caused by a drunk driver, a W.W.J.D. bracelet adorned the drunken male's wrist.

At Texas A&M, we seem to have a breeding ground for these type of

people; like a marriage ring, the bracelet comes off when the weekend begins, whether literally or figuratively. While their wrists sing of goodness, moderation, and praise, their hearts are rotten-to-the-core.

*Lucas Wagner
Class of '99*

Emphasis on exercise appropriate in America

With regards to Michelle Voss' Feb. 5 column, all I can say is: Whew! She must be feeling really guilty about the extra few pounds she put on over the holidays. She's got it completely backwards.

Before criticizing the people in the gym as being "holier-than-thou" and "obsessed with superficiality," remember that Americans in general, and our generation in particular, have rather unhealthy habits.

We eat too much, party too much, sleep too little, and get nowhere near enough exercise. Sure, a few of the people in the gym are there just to show off their bods or scope out the babes — so what?

Most of us, myself included, are there because we're trying to lead a healthier life. Come and join us!

*Alex Croy
Class of '99*

Chivalry, politeness prove important for people skills

In response to Mickey Saloma's Feb. 3 column:

I just wanted to voice my total agreement with Saloma on the topic of manners and politeness in every day living. Like Saloma, I grew up in a family that stressed treating people at least as well as you would like to be treated. This "training" has allowed me certain advantages that people who do not employ good manners and politeness will never have.

The primary advantage being one that Saloma touched very lightly on: likeableness (if there is such a word). I have found that being polite to people results in them, if not liking you, then at least treating you civilly.

In my job and as a student, I have found a huge array of people and personalities to deal with, some very pleasant and some not so pleasant. Being polite to them all and treating them all well has garnered many friends, has helped to avoid some verbally hostile situations and has even helped me to land a job.

In closing, I'd like to thank Saloma for once again reminding us of one of the most basic allowances that we owe to our fellow people: common courtesy.

*Ross W. Jarvis
Class of '95*

Virginia Military cadet commends Silver Taps

As a senior at the Virginia Military Institute, I have witnessed my share of emotional experiences. However, this Tuesday night, I was both proud and honored to take part in Silver Taps, a truly inspiring moment.

Although I am graduating from an Institute soaked to the bone in tradition, I will always remember the Silver Taps and hold this memory dearly close to me. I salute all Aggies on your fine tradition where many gather to show respect for fellow Aggies and to share in their loved ones' grief. Thank you for allowing me to experience this wonderful tradition.

*Ralph E. Ohland
Class of '98
Virginia Military Institute*

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