

# The dogma pushers

Conservative moral crusading in American society pointless, puritanical



MICHELLE VOSS  
assistant  
opinion editor

America is slowly becoming convinced that we should be frightened by individualism. We find ourselves in the midst of, in the words of Milan Kundera, "totalitarianism." We are informed daily by our conservative friends that America is Satan's lair of iniquity. Living in a neo-puritanical America, we are experiencing an alarming upsurge of political clamor from groups such as the Christian Coalition and the Southern Baptists Convention. Whining for a return to "family values" while hugging each other and preaching that "abstinence is the only safe sex," champions of conservative agencies attempt to convince America that our culture is decaying.

Well, it's getting annoying and old and boring. From the comfort of their luxury family sedans and cushioned church pews, conservatives criticize the life decisions of others as immoral and sinful. So, let's just take a glimpse at a couple of popular issues currently being debated by moral crusaders of the day.

**Gratuitous Violence**  
The battle cry of right-wingers today is that violence in the media is destroying the mores and intelligence of our culture. Hmmm, let's just take a look at literary history for a moment. Shakespeare, for example, could never end a play with less than eight corpses. Just think of *Hamlet*, *Richard III* or *MacBeth* with their piles of dead bodies by Act V. Or, the Grecian playwright Aeschylus — his *Orestian* is a blood-bath. How about Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*? It is just plain kinky violence. And the classic from Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* — a brilliant work, sheer genius, but awfully messy. Then, there's the Bible with Cain killing Able, King David having Bathsheba's husband knocked off (then sleeping with her), rivers turning to blood, locust invading, a flood destroying the entire world and John the Baptist's head on a platter. C'mon right-wingers; according to

Solomon in Ecclesiastes, "There is nothing new under the sun." This whole violence thing has been done before and taken around the block a few times. The difference is the media sensationalizes three isolated incidents around the nation for ratings

world is now on CNN. Let's just think rationally — if gratuitous violence is such a problem in the media, sell your TV set and stop paying \$7 for tickets to *Godzilla*. Perhaps the most alarming piece of irony here is that most of the trucks with those JesusWhoop! stickers have a National Rifle Association sticker right next to it.

**Sexuality**  
The conservative-chic-bourgeoisie morality of the '90s is based largely on the herd instinct to repress, repress, repress — at least, that is, until marriage. Fine. Whatever works best for you is just fine.

But, you know, the constant push for "Abstinence Across America" is becoming rather tiresome and trite. Whatever mores sound nice bouncing off the back walls of church auditoriums do not always have the same,

melodious ring when said in school rooms or on senate floors. This conservative-pipe dream that we can herd American youth onto the Mayflower in hopes that they will revert back to puritanism is absurd. The point is, this campaign for abstinence is noble, but pointless. Someone, somewhere is having sex no matter regardless of what they have learned at home, at school or in Bible class.

**Freedom is a good thing, no?**  
This is not to say America is yea-happy-loopy-Frutopia great, but America is not as bad as the conservatives pretend it is. They're just giving themselves brain aneurisms for no good reason. Conservatives only use the words individualism and freedom on July the Fourth or in speeches about tobacco and owning assault rifles. Otherwise, conservatives are trying their best to squelch individualism with their 24-carat-puritan-morality crusade.

Rather than keep a note pad of which souls are in jeopardy of winning a one-way ticket to Hades, maybe the conservative troops should redirect their misguided angst and plant some flowers to relieve stress. We are on the edge of the 21st century and we cannot fantasize about the '50s or attempt to stuff ourselves into the corsets and high-collars of stale 19th-century Victorian morality. More importantly, what we need to realize is that America never was perfect, never will be perfect and if it ever is perfect it sure will not be the likes of Pat Buchanan who leads us onto victory.

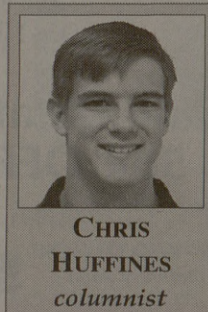
Michelle Voss is a junior English major.



and box-office dollars. In fact, if it were not for the 10 o'clock news, conservatives would never have anything to be so huffy about. The world has not changed much over the last 2000 years, it is just that the

## Euthanasia viable option for elderly

When the average reader thinks of euthanasia, he or she either thinks of a helpless, voiceless senior citizen being 'put under' by their greedy, heartless children, or he or she thinks of the opposite: a senior citizen in terrible pain, slowly dying and unable to find release before the pain and drugs take away everything that is human.



CHRIS HUFFINES  
columnist

In America today, the number of senior citizens is increasing, bringing the problem of whether euthanasia should be legalized to a larger place in the national spotlight. While there is no "right to die," euthanasia should be legalized.

Euthanasia is either suicide or assisted suicide in some form. Not taking necessary medication and other similar measures is suicide.

Euthanasia does not come in any other form than someone taking his or her own life or being helped to take his or her own life. Suicide is illegal, and for good reason. Suicide is an irreversible act. Death has this eerie permanence to it that should stop hasty decisions.

What may be unendurable today may be cured tomorrow. Or an answer may never be found. Suicide is too easy to allow without checks and balances. The opportunity for the choice to be made should not occur without there being a way to prevent irrational decisions.

Assisted suicide is killing another human being, plain and simple. To help someone die is to directly cause his death, whether or not the victim opened the IV or whatever single switch or mechanism saves the consciences of the assistants. Without the helper, there would not be death.

There may be extenuating circumstances that make it legal or maybe even seem right, but win-

dow dressing the issue will not do when a human life is at stake. Assisted suicide is killing.

As anyone who has ever passed the first grade knows, the Declaration of Independence grants Americans rights including "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

The pursuit of happiness does not include reaching happiness, just trying to get a hold of it. From the Bill of Rights and various Supreme Court rulings, Americans are granted other rights, with the condition placed that the exercising of these rights cannot infringe, or in any way interfere, with others' rights.

When an elderly individual has reached the point where he or she can no longer pursue happiness, be it because of illness or just the infirmity of old age, euthanasia should be an option. And that point, and no other, may a life be taken.

At that point, it is cruel for others to impose a longer life on an individual who will merely suffer through it.

Some have the character that will require them to live off the hope of another day, and some will choose to die.

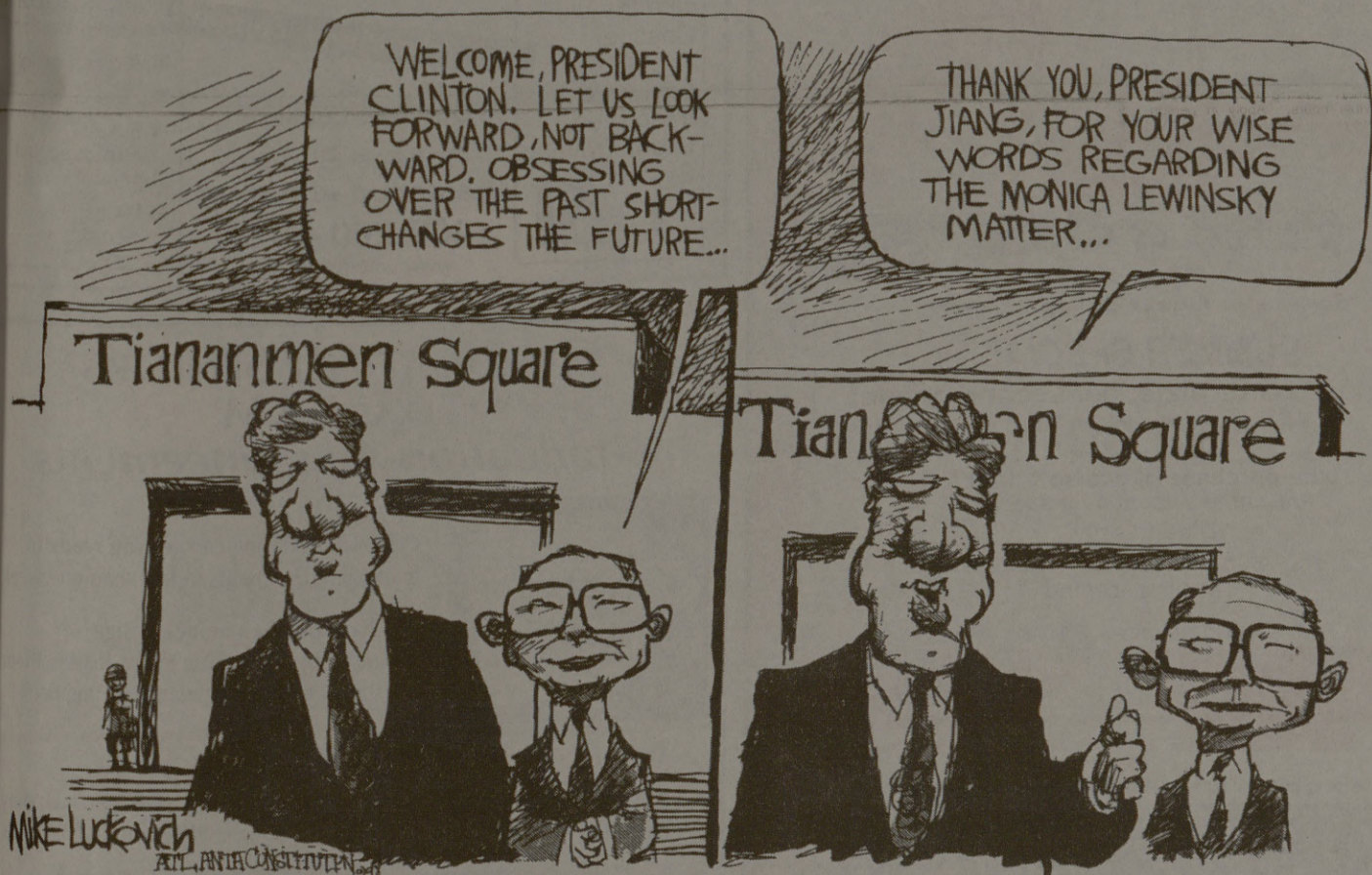
An individual will obviously be able to make the choice before reaching that crossroads — wills and other legal documents exist to fill that role.

However, it should be the choice of the individual. At no time should rights to family or society interfere with a patient's right to life or their decision to die after they can no longer pursue happiness.

Euthanasia is a viable option for those who realize, at some point, it is better to die than to continue in a parody of living. They should be legally allowed that right.

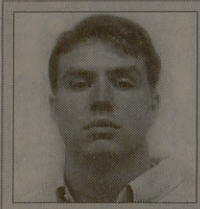
Not the right to die, a PC attempt to get around the issue if ever there was one, but because if someone cannot live life and pursue the happiness that makes life worthwhile, what do they have to look forward to besides eking out their remaining years in grim anticipation of death?

Chris Huffines is a junior speech communications major.



## America lacks civic participation

Americans have always maintained a proud tradition of complaining. Our very existence because of the fact that 222 years ago, a group of 56 men felt they were being poorly treated and resolved to send a formal complaint to the King of England (for those readers who went to a high school where the football coach also taught American History, this is a reference to the Declaration of Independence).



STEVEN GYESZLY  
columnist

Since then, Americans have been willing to fight wars and shed blood for the inalienable right to complain about anything we damn well please. Yet in the past, those who did the complaining were also willing to work to make things better. New political parties, new religions and new laws were created because somewhere in the United States people did not like the way things were going and actually wanted to do something about it.

Times have changed. Americans still moan and groan about everything from

federal taxes to how badly the local sports team is playing, but the only action people take nowadays is changing the channel on their remotes. Sadly, complaining is no longer a path to improvement, but rather a hobby.

A recent report by the bipartisan National Commission on Civic Renewal discovered a "quarter-century decline in organizational memberships, political participation and trust in government." Yet, at the same time, the American culture of cynicism and complaining about everything remains. In essence, they talk more but do less.

Statistical evidence of this phenomenon can be seen in the abysmally low voter turnout rate and the plummeting membership of both political and civic organizations. Yet the reality can be measured on a much more personal level. Try and think of the last action you took that represents what you believe in. Buying Budweiser because of brand loyalty does not count.

Lack of civic action in the United States is so widespread that Americans tend to look down on others who actually do something about their beliefs. From the comfort of their own soapboxes, people criticize activists, whether they chain them-

selves to a tree or an abortion clinic. Whether people support their actions or not, those few who actually do something about their beliefs are the ones shaping the future, while others who do nothing can only sit and think of the past.

Everyone thinks they could improve government if they had a chance. They do. It is called voting. But even if the thought of personally choosing an elected representative does not seem very exhilarating, there is bound to be an issue that does.

Civic participation in America is remarkable because there are so many options, from issues of international significance to topics discussed over fried chicken and potato salad at the local community center.

Civic action is not about draping oneself in the American flag and proclaiming the superiority of one's belief over the rights of others. It is about supporting what you believe in by actions, not poorly-written letters to the editor. Complaint coupled with public action is a belief.

Complaint coupled with inactivity is merely a euphemism for whining. After all, there is very little difference between an apathetic citizen and a pathetic citizen.

Steven Gyeszly is a junior finance major.