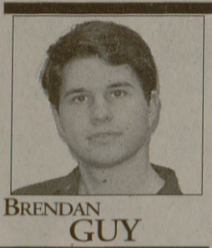


## Think about the children

Parents groups seeking to change laws to protect children should worry about their own first



BRENDAN GUY

Most Americans would agree that democracy is a pretty good thing. After all it puts the people in charge of the government and guarantees that the government will do what they want. At least that is how it is supposed to work.

In reality the citizens are generally so apathetic and lazy that they never bother to make their views known to the government ends up being controlled by narrowly-focused special interest groups. This leads to poor, elected officials being endlessly badgered by greedy corporations, shifty labor unions, zed religious fanatics and even environmentalists.

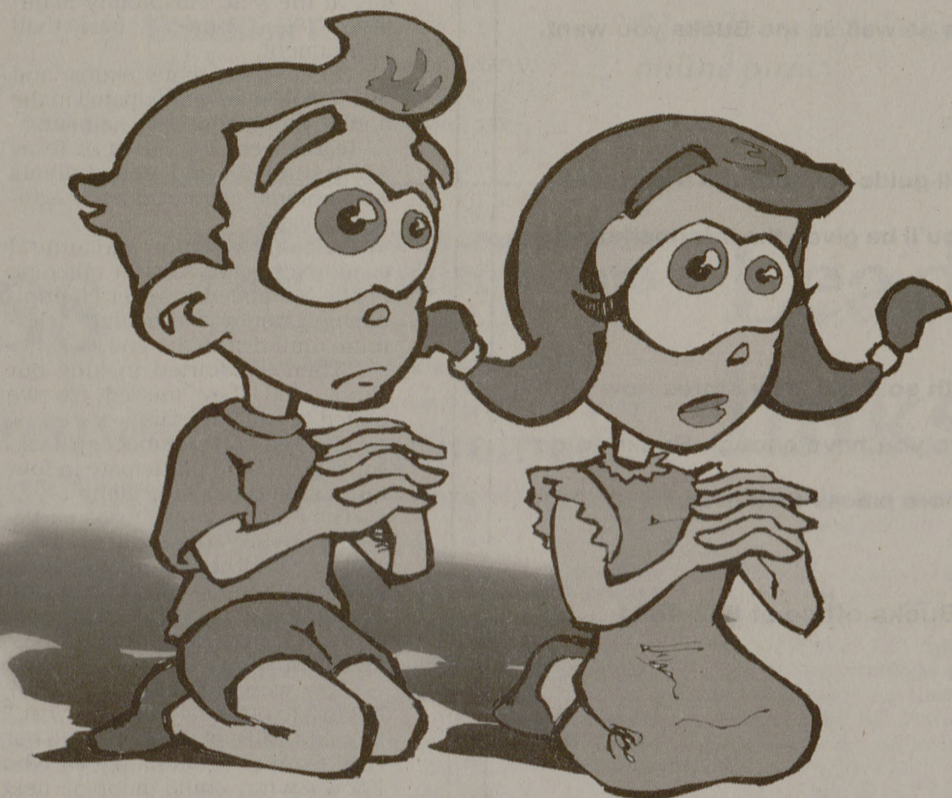
For the most part, there is nothing wrong with us. If the people do not make their views known to their leaders, then they deserve what they get. We can hardly blame the corporations and the unions for lobbying the government; they are just trying to squeeze money out of it, a respectable goal we can all understand. The Bible thumpers and eco-freaks are not so easily forgiven since they are not out for money but instead for freaky things like trying to save our souls and giving us clean air and water, but we will deal with them another day.

However, there is one special interest group that is clearly unacceptable — an obnoxious clique of special fascists that poses a grave threat to our great country. Of course, I refer to the "for the children" groups.

These groups have been proliferating wildly in the last couple of years. Their mantra is a dead-end one that almost sounds reasonable at first: children need to be protected from the evils of the world. Unfortunately, to go about this laudable goal, they are perfectly willing to trample all over the rights of adults.

Their loathsome presence can already be felt throughout our society. They have already tried to pose censorship on the Internet with the atrocious Communications Decency Act, which was thankfully struck down by the Supreme Court. They have placed ratings on television shows, warning labels on rap music CDs and are working to get v-chips inside televisions.

They are waging total war against the tobacco companies and have coerced the government into



ROBERT HYNCEK/THE BATTALION

spending billions on anti-drug commercials. They rave about the evils of television violence, sex, profanity and drugs and call for government action against these things, ostensibly to protect the children. But in reality, these people are control freaks who simply want to dominate the lives of their fellow citizens.

There is nothing wrong with parents trying to protect their own children from these things. If they want to take the ostrich approach and try to protect their children from reality, that is their business.

But is it too much to ask these parents to stick to screwing up their own kids' lives and leave everyone else alone? There is absolutely no legitimate reason to get the government involved in these matters.

Most governments are really only good at two things: killing people and spending money — skills that are generally not needed in the proper raising of children. Who in the government can be trusted to make the proper decisions on how to protect children?

Think about it. If you are a conservative, would you trust Bill Clinton with your kids; if you are a liberal, would you trust Trent Lott? Besides, the government already has control over the education system to warp the minds of children, there is really no need to get the government further involved.

Parents — not schools, not churches, not the media — are the dominant force in any child's life. The "for the children" crowd should stop harassing politicians and get back to taking care of their own kids.

Maybe if they did that, then they would not have to worry so much about their children getting seduced by the dark side of rap music and Joe Camel.

And if they really are so incapable of raising their children without massive government assistance, then maybe these people should not be having children in the first place.

Perhaps in some African tribal society it really does take a village to raise a child, but here in the United States, where so many of us have neighbors who cannot even keep their lawns mowed, it is best for individual parents to raise their own children and keep the village out of it — to say nothing of the government.

Brendan Guy is a senior political science and history major.

## CNN should not have turned Colorado school shooting into circus



ZACH HALL

The horrific incident that occurred at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., this past week was a serious reminder of the erosion of our culture, moral and love for our country. CNN's coverage of the tragedy was a blatant reminder of the erosion of media standards and ethics.

Not to downplay the utter severity of the shootings, but CNN turned a terrible situation into a national spectacle. "The Jerry Springer Show" has been known to show more class.

For most of an afternoon, the country was bombarded by live, up-to-the-second coverage of every action that unfolded in Littleton. The public was allowed first-hand, unedited, un-

screened calls from students who were lucky to escape alive.

Unfortunately, too many of the interviews seemed overly dramatic, and some eyewitness' stories did not even stay consistent within the same interview.

It was almost as if CNN was waiting for a student to come out and say "Yeah, I was right there, and there were shots, and then my best friend's head just exploded there right in front of me."

As if they had not made enough bad decisions, CNN then proceeded to put an 800 number on the screen for parents to call and check on their kids. Ten minutes later they asked the public to discontinue use of the number because it was the wrong one and because there had been a flood of calls into it.

One has to ask why John Doe in Caledonia, Miss., needs to have access

to that 800 number. Did CNN think that parents and relatives of the Denver area would not be watching their local news coverage instead of CNN's?

The question raised in a circumstance such as this asks where the line must be drawn between responsible journalism and news stations' thirst for higher ratings.

There is no doubt that the Columbine shootings were national news or that it would draw national interest, but it was not a national tragedy. Therefore, CNN's decision to broadcast live, unedited and un-researched news was irresponsible.

Simply put, this was a tragic happening that could have occurred in any town of any state in America, just like rape, murder, theft or freak accidents happen every day in some community across the country.

The difference here is that CNN's excessive coverage turned this incident

into a national media circus. The big three news stations were certainly not going to be outdone by CNN.

The discouraging thing about this whole mess is that the public sat back and watched with morbid curiosity. However, what is more disheartening is that when such tragedies hit close to home, that same public becomes appalled at the lack of sensitivity portrayed by the media.

For instance, I have not heard a single person exclaim about how insensitive it was for CNN to show pictures of children with bullet wounds, or broadcast supposed eyewitness accounts of friends being blown away.

Some might argue that incidents such as these should not be given so much coverage because it encourages copycat crimes.

While this is not a valid reason to cover-up news, one does have to wonder about the rash of copycat crimes

that have occurred just since last week's shootings. CNN should be glad to know that their ratings were high among the copycat criminal demographic.

This is not a suggestion that the media should be in the business of deciding what the public should and should not know; CNN had a responsibility to inform the nation of this tragedy. But in precious few circumstances should local tragedies be escalated to the level of a national media circus and certainly not to the extent that CNN took this situation.

Ironically, this is not the first time CNN has been accused of irresponsible journalism. Hopefully, the public has not become as desperate for shock and entertainment as some media organizations.

Zach Hall is a senior political science major.

### MAIL CALL

#### Size not basis for amount of coverage

In response to Nathan Hoffinger's Apr. 15 mail call.

You said in your letter that *The Battalion* should not give Gay Awareness Week so much attention or "front page news" because homosexuals only represent a minority of people on campus.

Does this also mean that you prefer they don't report on the African Students Association or the Texas Aggie Democrats? These organizations represent a majority of the school population. Obviously you don't prefer it because you are prejudiced.

As the editor of *The Battalion* recently wrote himself, their job is to report the news, nothing less and nothing more.

For you to suggest that *The Battalion* not report the activities of the gay student organization to satisfy your intolerance and conservatism is ridiculous. The news media will not stop reporting something just because you think it is wrong.

Open up your eyes, Nathan. We live in a world where this kind of thing exists, yes, even in Aggie land. Attempting to sweep it under the carpet does not make it go away.

Michelle Cochran  
Class of '00

#### Corps members not superior to others

In response to Ronnie H. Kirschner's Apr. 19 mail call.

The last time I checked, A&M was a University open to all races, religions, backgrounds and ethnicities. But, most of all, it is open to individuals who have one characteristic in common. That is freedom. Notice that I used the word freedom.

If I am not mistaken, I do not think that you have sacrificed any of your heart, soul, sweat or blood for that freedom that we all share. Well, just to let you know ... I have.

And if anyone has a right to be yell leader, I think that I am a prime candidate. I am not saying that I am running for yell leader, but if sacrifice is what it takes, then I have done more than my fair share.

While you were in detention in high school and chasing girls through the halls, I was serving this country, upholding the freedom that has allowed ignorant, narrow-minded individuals such as yourself to even have the right to call yourself an Aggie.

And now I am proud to say that I am a member of this institution that allows me the same right as everyone else. And that is to call myself an Aggie.

Everyone on this campus has

#### Gun control not answer to violence

In response to Caleb McDaniel's Apr. 24 opinion column.

I cannot understand how Mc-

#### Eric Ferguson Class of '01

just as much right as any Corps member to represent this fine school as a yell leader. If the Corps would just stop hazing, wake up during class and look around, they would see that this school is no longer all Corps. We cannot live in the past anymore.

And if you want things to be like they used to be, then let us start by getting rid of the all non-reg championship football team that gave everyone on this campus a reason to yell.

Let us get rid of all the women on campus, and let us downsize the school to 60 or 70 students. Also, if I am not mistaken, the office of student body president was invented by a white man. Does that mean that Will Hurd does not have the right to hold that position just because he is not the same type of person that the founder of that position was? I think not.

Join the military, grow up, and come back and look at this University through the eyes of a mature adult like I have.

I can guarantee, you will not see things the same.

Eric Ferguson  
Class of '01

#### Leslie Hull Class of '01

Daniel believes the solution to ending school shootings is more stringent gun laws.

It is a tragedy that our children are not even safe at school anymore, but taking away our right to bear arms will not solve the problem.

Children will get ahold of guns illegally, if that is their intent. Laws restricting citizens rights will not solve the problem of shootings, they will only lead more people obtaining weapons illegally.

If anyone is responsible for stopping the shootings, it is the parents. In the case of Columbine High School, how could the parents of the two alleged gunmen not know that their children had multiple guns and bombs in their rooms?

They had to have noticed that their children were acting abnormally. I cannot fathom not knowing what is going on with your children, not knowing what they are doing in their rooms; my parents always knew what I was doing, whether I wanted them to or not.

The parents are ultimately responsible for their children's actions, not the government. Stripping the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens is not the solution to ending these senseless shootings.

Leslie Hull  
Class of '01

#### Travis Bernsen Class of '00

This recent atrocity against humanity in Colorado will no doubt give rise once again to the debate for more completely useless gun control laws.

The argument for gun control has noble roots, but is inherently flawed. None of the laws since 1932, 1968 or 1996 has had any appreciable effect on crime. Do you remember the "save all" Brady Bill of 1996, do you feel any safer?

The problem with gun control laws is that they are only laws. They are laws to prevent the criminal use of guns. Criminals do not abide by laws, that is why we label them criminals.

In the first place, how many criminals go down to their favorite retail store and fill out the blue sheets to legally buy a firearm. Not many. Most guns are obtained illegally, through theft or bought from back-alley dealers.

The two morally degraded psychopaths from Colorado are prime examples of criminal disregard for laws.

One of them was 17 years old; legally he was only to be in possession of any kind of firearm in the presence of an adult guardian. Also, both of them built and utilized pipe bombs and other incendiary devices, both of which are strictly forbidden by current legislation.

Do you think they thought, "Hey, wait, we can't be in pos-

The *Battalion* encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

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