

# OPINION

THE BATTALION

## Mail Call

### Disapproval of porn suggests censorship

In response to Carrilyn Baker's Nov. 8 Mail Call.  
It is interesting that Baker uses apocryphal horror stories of "porn parties" and "passerby's viewing through open doors" to justify government intrusion into people's personal lives.

Never mind that dorms have resident advisors to deal with the supposed disruptive behavior. University computers (and Internet connections) are paid for by the Student Computing Services Fee.

University funding also comes from state and federal sources. By these two fiats, censorship becomes a tricky issue.

It is already against University policy to look at such sites in computer labs or on a computer connection designated for work purposes.

It is also currently illegal to view illicit material such as child pornography. If Baker is offended by people visiting porn sites, what about people who are offended by individuals visiting sites for Aryan Nations, Greenpeace, Free Tibet or Right to Life?

While some may deem pornography wrong, it is a fact that students are legal adults with the ability (and the right) to decide what they shall view on the Internet and in the privacy of their residence.

Todd Hudson  
Graduate Student

### Bike riders to be held responsible for actions, not police

In response to Cayla Carr's Nov. 8 column.  
I just finished reading Cayla Carr's column about bicycle safety, and I must say I am shocked.

Carr seems to blame the officers for the bicycle riders' lack of common sense. She even quotes the three most ticketed offenses as being "failing to stop at a stop sign, riding the wrong direction on a one-way street and not having night bike lights."

Correct me if I am wrong, but we are talking about college students here — not the average 6-year-old. I rode a bike on campus while I attended classes.

When I made this decision, I made the choice to find out what the rules were. Not only does following the rules save your pocketbook, but they are also there to save the lives of the bicyclist or any innocent bystanders.

While I can agree that a bicycle safety class is a good idea, I do not see a lack of one as any kind of excuse to attack the officers who enforce the rules.

Scott Janish  
Class of '94

### Maroon Out support applauded; continue for OU football game

On behalf of Class Councils, the Maroon Out staff would like to thank the entire student body for its support of Maroon Out.

Over more than 40,000 T-shirts were sold to students, alumni, and faculty for the third annual Maroon Out game against Kansas State.

The current 3-0 record in Maroon Out games comes from the entire Twelfth Man's excitement and support during these games, which could be heard from everywhere in the city.

No one person caused our fans to be so loud, nor did one person create that enthusiasm. All of you did.

Further, the Maroon Out staff would like to encourage you to continue wearing maroon, and make this next game against OU a second unofficial Maroon Out game. Bring back that same enthusiasm from past Maroon Out games to Kyle Field this Sat-

urday; bring your Aggie spirit. Thank you for all your support. Without y'all we would never have had the success that we have had.

Randy Hanson  
Class of '00  
Accompanied by 12 signatures

### Disgruntled Student senator unsatisfied with The Battalion

In response to Chris Carlin's Nov. 6 Mail Call.

As a Student senator and co-author of the Texas Aggie Bonfire Resolution, I would like to respond to recent *Battalion* articles concerning Bonfire and the Senate's role in this divisive issue.

The first article, written by Andrew Stevenson and published Oct. 6, said that the Student Senate did not represent the student body's opinion of off-campus Bonfire.

The humor of the article is that he used only the opinion of the KTFB members as support.

Such an argument would not hold up in kindergarten, much less any valid public arena.

The truth is that the senators who authored the resolution consulted many students concerning the issue and found the majority of students opposed to off-campus bonfire.

No one is working harder for student input than Student Body President Forrest Lane.

Since he took office last March, he has fought daily to ensure that future Bonfires will be student-oriented, making Andy Hancock's accusation two weeks ago that, "The Senate is not doing its job ... nor is Lane," completely unfounded.

He must have flunked the same research class as Stevenson.

Lane is doing an excellent job as student body president. Period.

Even those who supported his opponents in the spring election cannot but admire how hard he is fighting for students, especially concerning Bonfire.

As for the Student Senate, our job is to formulate student opinion and interests and represent them before the administration.

Before its passage, the Texas Aggie Bonfire Resolution was made public at the MSC and received nothing but good feedback from the student body.

The Corps of Cadets, RHA, all class councils and even TMC, composed of almost all former Bonfire leaders, also supported it.

Had Stevenson and Hancock read the Texas Aggie Bonfire Resolution before writing about it, they would have noticed this overwhelming support.

As I recall, it was *The Battalion* that constantly bashed Bonfire over the last few years, so the sudden change of heart is obviously due to sensationalism.

It is easy to attract attention using such sensitive issues.

Thus, if you want people to read your articles, you can either learn to use good grammar, research your topics well and write a logical, flowing argument concerning your opinion.

Or, if you are incapable of doing so, then take the easy road and just write about Bonfire.

KTFB board members and disgruntled supporters can continue to whine to *The Battalion* they are not being represented, but when only a few hundred people at a campus of more than 43,000 students support a movement, the student body obviously is not in favor of it.

The Student Senate and President Forrest Lane will continue to represent the opinions of the student body regardless of the media circus that results.

Last time I checked, nobody elected *The Battalion* to represent his or her concerns.

Micah Belden  
Class of '02

# An honest mistake ...

## Premature 'calling' of Florida by press an accident

Few questions sum up the events of the past three days better than, "How did we ever get into this mess?"

The president-elect is still undetermined. Both candidates are a hair short of the 270 electoral college votes needed to claim the presidency.

All eyes are on Florida, the last unclaimed state in the election.

Although Gov. George W. Bush has what looks like the slimmest of wins in Florida, the pending recount of votes and the potential influx of absentee ballots from abroad has made the race too close to call.

Too close to call? It did not seem that way early Tuesday evening, when virtually all the major television news networks projected a win in Florida for Vice President Al Gore.

By 9 p.m., a hasty about-face was called.

"We don't entirely trust the information that we have," said CNN anchor Judy Woodruff.

CBS anchorman Dan Rather repeatedly apologized to viewers, saying, "Clearly, we were wrong in calling [Florida] as early as we did."

Obviously, this mistake has given the public more reason to resent the media.

However, it must be made clear that the public must not rush to judgment of the media. In a race so tight and unpredictable, most news outlets did the best they could with the available information.

Due to the high cost of previous Election Day operations, ABC, CNN, NBC and CBS established the Voter News Service (VNS) in 1990. The data compiled by the VNS is interpreted by the networks individually, and each makes its own decisions before "calling" a state on the air.

Sandy Genelius, a CBS News spokes-

woman, said the network acted responsibly. "When the [VNS] information came in, there was no reason to believe that any of it was bad," Genelius said.

"As the information continued to be analyzed and interpreted, it became aware to all the networks that there was some bad information included in the data. We pulled the call back, which was the responsible thing to do. No system is 100 percent foolproof. This one has worked awfully well for a really long time. There is an amazing success rate in calling races

dates were quick to the trigger in lambasting the press.

Soon after the initial projection of a Gore win in Florida, Karl Rove, campaign director for Bush, appeared on NBC to scold anchor Tom Brokaw, saying that it was "irresponsible" in awarding Florida.

On CNN later in the evening, Rove said, "You all called Florida before Florida called its polls," referring to the fact that some portions of the state had later closing times than others.

It was made clear that all of the networks made their Florida projections before 7 p.m.

Former education secretary and conservative commentator William Bennett voiced his criticism, as well.

"You don't call a state like Florida and take it off the board," Bennett said. "This should not happen. You don't have to tell us something that you're not reasonably sure of."

On the Internet, rumors tell of a "liberal media" conspiracy — that pro-Gore news outlets were motivated to award the state prematurely.

It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that this unsupported accusation is utter nonsense.

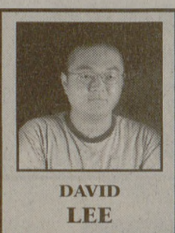
In the midst of this criticism, the fact that many news outlets went out of their way to apologize and rectify the mistake went largely unnoticed.

Nearing the end of the election night broadcast on CNN, a round table of anchors spent a segment discussing the mistake and its ramifications.

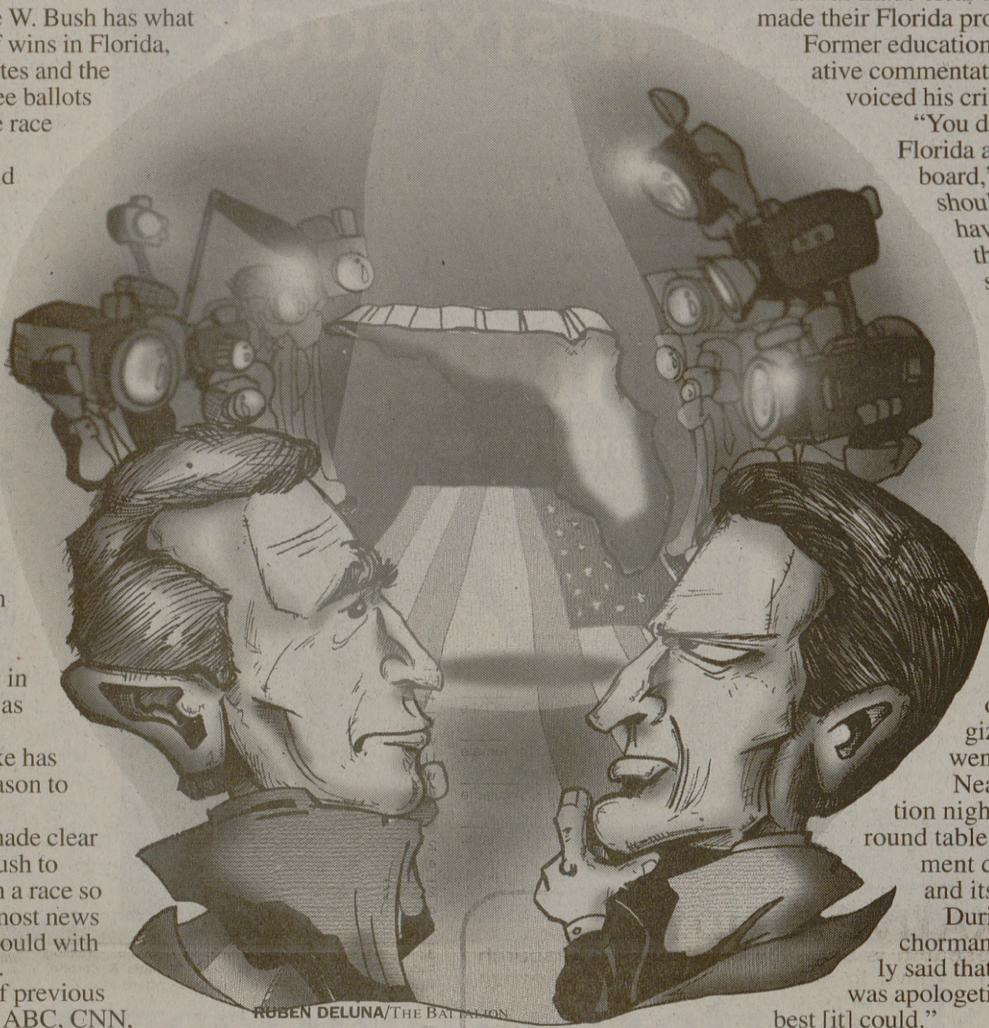
During the exchange, anchorman Bernard Shaw repeatedly said that the network was at fault, was apologetic and "was doing the best [it] could."

It was an honest mistake — nothing more. Whether the public is capable of accepting that fact has yet to be determined.

David Lee is a senior economics and journalism major.



DAVID LEE



ROBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

with all the networks, us included."

Calls to VNS by The Dallas Morning News seeking comment were not immediately returned.

Of course, supporters of both major candi-

# Justice served

## Harsh verdict against Aryan Nation justified because crimes committed were hate motivated

In Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, another victory in the fight against hate has been won.



BRIENNE PORTER

The Aryan Nations, the group's leader Richard Butler and some members of its members were found negligent in a lawsuit brought by Victoria and Jason Keenan.

The Keenans were shot at and chased outside the Aryan Nations' compound when the mother and son stopped to pick up a dropped wallet.

The ruling stated that the defendants were negligent when selecting and overseeing the guards who assaulted the Keenans.

The verdict awards the Keenans \$6.3 million, the group's compound and the rights to the name "Aryan Nations."

First District Judge Charles Hosack denied the Aryan Nations a new trial and declined to reduce the amount of the settlement.

The verdict is fair because the group's message of hate was carried to the extreme.

A group's right to free speech does not include the right to endanger lives.

Butler has been advocating the message of white supremacy and anti-Semitism in Idaho for three decades, and, with this decision, that message will be less pronounced.

Critics of the verdict say the settlement was too harsh.

Yet as juror Judy Jacobson said of the jurors, "They wanted to get the Aryan Nations out of the country."

Many feel that these types of racist groups will fade away if they have to declare bankruptcy after these extravagant settlements.

But the experts do not share the opinion of the jurors and much of the nation.

According to Brian Levin, a

professor at California State University who has researched and studied hate groups, "Legal moves have damaged the groups, but their strong ideology has proved as vital as funding."

This means that, even though the Aryan Nations' leader has declared bankruptcy, it will take more than a lack of funding to end the Aryan Nations' message of hate.

Even though the verdict will

most likely not end the reign of hate in the Aryan Nations, it did send a message.

This kind of expression of hatred and violence should not be tolerated.

When the guards got in a truck to chase, assault and beat the Keenans, they went beyond legal limits.

The verdict also says that the group, its leaders and its corporate entity will be held accountable for what their guards do.

The jury used the law to help curb this hatred that has been a part of Idaho for the past three decades.

By using the law in this way, it paves the way for other states and other trials to have similar results.

The jurors in Idaho tried to make a dent in the disease of hatred that has been plaguing the United States for centuries.

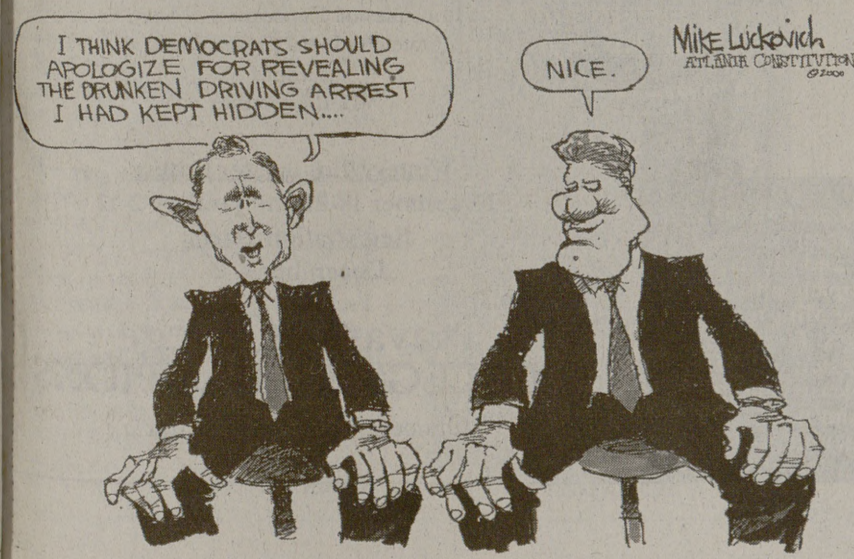
While groups like the Aryan Nations are still spreading the seeds of hate, America cannot move forward and cannot become what it should be.

The real solution to hate crimes is not causing the groups to go bankrupt, but preventing the next generation from being swept into that cesspool of hate.

If parents and schools work together to teach tolerance and acceptance of all races and cultures, the message of hatred will have a long-awaited death.

By teaching acceptance and tolerance while respecting freedom of speech, these groups can be stopped in ways that the law cannot.

Brienne Porter is a sophomore chemical engineering major.



MIKE LICKOVICH  
ARTIST CONSULTANT



ADRIAN CALCANO/THE BATTALION