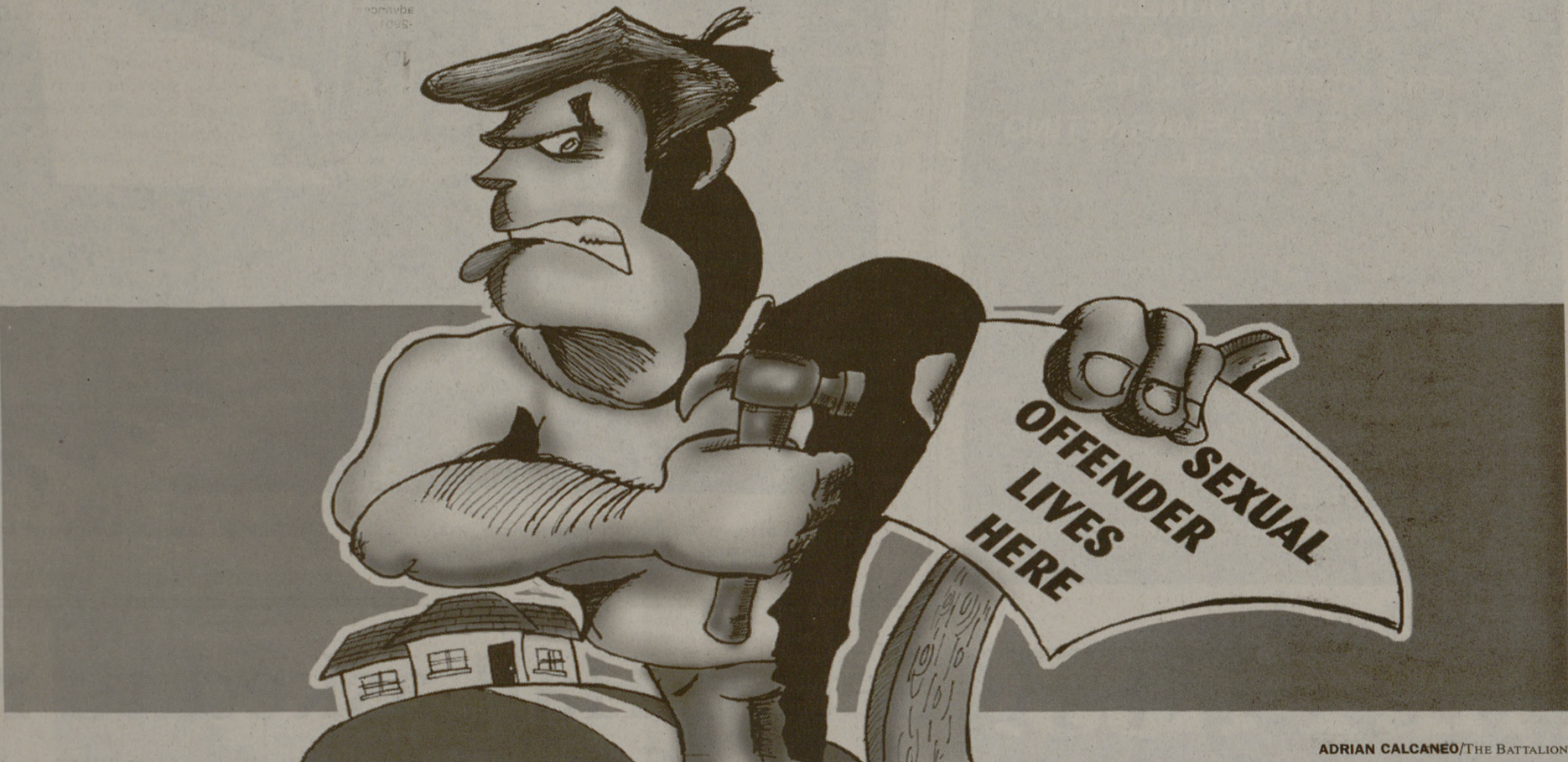


Back to the scarlet letter?

Judge was wrong to require signs in yards, on cars of sex offenders



J.J. TREVINO



ADRIAN CALCANELO/THE BATTALION

For most neighbors, the sign is a nuisance. The subdivisions are more than 30 across the area. The sign is a full-page advertisement for a house for sale or a garage sale. But in Corpus Christi, residents are being forced to deal with new signs ordered by District Judge Manuel Banales.

Twenty-one sex offenders in Corpus Christi, who are on probation, have been wrongfully required to place a large sign in front of their homes that reads "Danger, Registered Sex Offender Lives Here" and replace a bumper sticker on their car with a similar warning.

The ordinance also banned the offenders from frequenting bars or using the Internet, which unfairly tramples on their rights as citizens.

Since the order, one of the offenders has attempted suicide, two have been evicted from their homes, several have had property vandalized and an offender's father has had his life threatened.

The judge's ruling centers these scarlet-letter clad offenders in the public spotlight. Banales' order blatantly disregarded nearby residents and has spawned numerous interview requests from media around the world. By labeling the offenders as social outcasts, the ruling in no way provides them with the necessary rehabilitation.

Under current Texas law, judges possess the right to

modify probation conditions at any time during the term. However, the changes must be deemed reasonable.

"It is a return to the days of the scarlet letter. I think this is just madness," said Gerald Rogen, president of the Corpus Christi Criminal Defense Lawyers' Organization, who, along with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), has mounted a legal challenge that seeks reversal of the order by a higher court.

Rogen and the ACLU say this order is cruel and unusual

punishment and a violation of the offenders' right to privacy.

The effects the order will have on the hundreds of residents who live near, or with, these violators has also caused opposition. Property values for those living nearby are expected to plummet.

"It won't help me sell a house in that neighborhood," said real estate agent Gene Gurensey.

Banales' order has repercussions that are not fair to the offenders' neighbors, and places everyone involved in a

position to deal with possible unwarranted violence.

In fact, since the order has been taken place, there have been several reports of harassment to the offenders and many family members fear for their lives. "I'm the one on probation, not my wife," said Gilbert Canales, who received 10 years probation for aggravated sexual assault of a child in 1992.

Banales' motivation in passing the order does prove to be somewhat justifiable, because increasing public awareness of sex offenders is crucial in pre-

venting further violations.

However, the prior terms of their probation have proven to be suitable and appropriate. To comply with the Sexual Offender Registration Act, all sexual offenders are required to register with local law enforcement agencies and have their names and photos placed on an Internet database.

In addition, in more severe cases, the Department of Public Safety sends a postcard to neighboring residents in the area notifying them of the offender's presence. These pun-

ishments adequately notify the public in the immediate vicinity while leaving the offender's right to privacy intact.

Issuing this order without giving these offenders the proper means to negotiate the requirement in a courtroom will prove to be a backfire for Banales. In the meantime, these offenders can do nothing more but wait, until a higher court can terminate Banales' order.

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Get your Z's

Everyone needs regular sleep

As school starts back up in universities around the nation, a collective sigh is breathed as college students once again give up the hope of regular sleep until the next break. Many students see the grueling schedule of classes, studying and often a full-time job as just paying their dues. However, this theory is beginning to be questioned. A group of medical students are petitioning the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to put limits on their work hours. Many people are concerned that the long hours of medical residents makes them more prone to make mistakes that could threaten the lives of patients. Many other groups of people, such as airline pilots, have also come under recent scrutiny for potential poor performance because of a lack of sleep. As studies have repeatedly shown, not getting enough sleep causes long and short-term health problems.

Of course, it is often impossible for people, especially college students, to stick to a semi-regular sleeping schedule. But an effort should still be made. According to CNN report, lack of sleep is America's number one health problem. CNN also states that the National Commission on Sleep Disorders estimates that sleep deprivation costs \$150 billion per year in higher stress and reduced workplace productivity.

It is well known that sleep deprivation causes a higher likelihood of traffic accidents and on-the-job injuries. However, many people do not realize the personal health and mental problems that can be caused by a lack of sleep.

A recent study by the University of Chicago Medical Center showed chronic sleep loss can reduce the body's capacity to perform basic metabolic functions like processing and storing carbohydrates or

regulating hormone secretion. The study cut down the nightly amount of sleep from eight hours to four, and these unwanted bodily changes were observed in less than one week.

"We suspect that chronic sleep loss may not only hasten the onset but could also increase the severity of age-related ailments such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity and memory loss," said Dr. Eve Van Cauter, director of the study and professor of medicine at the University of Chicago.

However, long-term health problems are usually not the first thing on one's mind when trying to pass finals and finish several projects in a short time span. In this case, there are also short-term drawbacks to lack of sleep that might motivate students to at least take a nap. Losing sleep for one night slows down one's thinking skills the next day, according to a study from the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC). The UPMC study also showed that the body's need for sleep may also slow down thinking processes at night.

Therefore, pulling an all-nighter may not be the best study method, because one's body may be too tired to retain and process the important information anyway. Those people who leave the study group and go home to bed at 2 a.m. may not be lazy after all — they might have the right idea.

All the studies in the world will probably not convince someone to sleep when they have to learn a semester's worth of information in one night. But when the situation is looking especially hopeless, the value of sleep is important. With one's mind working clearly, eliminating wrong answers on a "multiple guess" test may be a lot easier.

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Disney changes the past

Politically correct was originally a phrase developed by members of Vladimir Lenin's Bolshevik Party during the early days of the Soviet Union. While the U.S.S.R. may no longer exist, political correctness is thriving in the United States. Many people believe it is wrong to insult or defame anyone for anything they have ever done.

It seems that political correctness has reached its highest point, while common sense has reached a new low. It is sad that such a blow against truth and history would appear in the blockbuster *Pearl Harbor*.

This new movie, produced by Jerry Bruckheimer and directed by Michael Bay, has been released by the Walt Disney Corporation. The surprise attack by Japan, which prompted the United States to enter World War II, takes place about halfway through a shallow love story involving Kate Beckinsale and Ben Affleck.

After the Japanese are done devastating most of the U.S. Pacific fleet, Affleck leaves Beckinsale behind to wreak havoc on the U.S.'s foe with the aid of General Jimmy Doolittle, played by Alec Baldwin. At the end of the movie, Beckinsale has a monologue in which she notes that the United States has bounced back from the dastardly attack on Pearl Harbor not to only defeat the Japanese but to help the Allies triumph over Nazi Germany as well.

At least, that is what American audiences will see. In a pathetic display of profit over pride and decency, Disney has changed the ending of the movie for release in Japan and Germany. Such actions may be common practice for Hollywood, but this instance is an insult to the 400,000 men who lost their lives in American uniforms during World War II.

It is time for the American public to stand up for the truth, which is something those men gave their lives to save.

Disney said that it made the decision after they "canvassed people worldwide to see if anyone would be offended." A Disney official said that the Japanese "fear the film will be seen as a historical document with them as the baddies."

It may not be nice to say, but his statement is true. Led by a corrupt and sadistic military junta that hid behind the throne of Emperor Hirohito, the Japanese committed scores of atrocities during World War II. Pearl Harbor was just one of many crimes committed by this government, which included

killing millions of Chinese by Japanese occupation, the horror of the Bataan Death March and the suffering of millions of Filipina and Korean women who were used as sex slaves by Japanese troops.

It is important that the world remembers this. Japan has already attempted to hide this truth either by omitting the attack on Pearl Harbor from their history books or claiming the attack was part of a large American scheme to draw them into war.

And what of the Nazis? Will they be forgotten as well? Their crimes are common knowledge in the United States and Great Britain, but what about the rest of the world? If the world is to forget names like Auschwitz and Bataan, does that not bring us closer to a repeat performance?

It seems odd that Disney would cater to the feelings of those nations, who committed gross acts of naked aggression against the country where Disney was founded. But there is a baser motive to Disney's move besides trying to get everyone to kiss and make up: money.

Japan is a very large movie market and accounted for 20 percent of the profits from the ship-beats-man classic *Titanic*. As a result, Disney has, according to an official, "tried very hard not to portray the Japanese in a very bad light."

So there it is. In order to make another quick buck, Disney has sold out its home nation and those who died to keep it free. *Pearl Harbor* made \$75.1 million in its first weekend and will be a massive box office hit, yet Disney could not contain its greed. This is reprehensible.

Disney has tried to claim that *Pearl Harbor* is based on history. In their attempt to coddle former Axis nations by acting like the United States should feel sorry for winning World War II, they have made it a fantasy. In trying to make Japan and Germany feel better about their roles in this horrible conflict, Disney has insulted America, England and Russia. Doing so to increase their profit margin should be insulting to everyone, regardless of their nationality.

The Disney corporation made its reputation by making great flights of fantasy that could entertain the whole family. *Pearl Harbor* is their latest fantasy, but it insults the sacrifice made by men buried from the Philippines to North Africa — as well as those who have no resting place.

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