

# Opinion

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THE BATTALION

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## Freedoms vs. safety

In the wake of the historically horrific events of Sept. 11, the United States has been faced with a question—that defines the character of our nation: Is the U.S. willing to sell freedom for safety? While the images of terror, fear and rage remain fresh within the minds of Americans, it is important to take a deep breath, collect thoughts and remain steadfast in the defense of the liberties that have allowed our country to become great.

However, this is not what is happening. Instead, Congress is considering laws that will infringe on our rights. And the citizens of America seem more apathetic regarding this issue than ever. In this time of trial, citizens must not succumb to any hastily composed acts of government that would require a reduction in the amount of freedoms.

In the government's attempt to legislate an end to terrorism, the Anti-Terrorists Act of 2001 is being pushed through Congress. This is an interesting legislative idea. How does one pass laws that will prohibit military extremists that are willing to sacrifice their own lives for their cause? While one can argue that most of the legislation contained within the Anti-Terrorism Act does not infringe upon American civil liberties, there are some notable instances that do—a substantial liberation of wiretapping regulations, the expansion of governmental ability to conduct secret searches (searches conducted without notifying the citizens whose possessions are being searched), the ability to indefinitely imprison foreigners residing within the country legally without a trial, and allowing the government to seize the assets of people accused and not yet convicted of a crime.

If these newly found governmental powers were only used to catch the bad guys they would be great. But these new powers would not be applied in a blanket fashion to all residing in America.

While the preservation of liberties would have been at least a conscious thought in most minds, a recent poll conducted by the *Dallas Morning News* reported that 37 percent of Texans would "forego a lot" of their personal freedoms and 41 percent would curb some of their free-

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doms" for increased safety. What happened to the rugged individualistic Texan—the Texan that defended their freedom so vehemently when phrases like "You can take my gun when you pry it from my cold, dead hands" defined the majority view?

The numbers get worse as we look at a national level. *USA Today* reported that 78 percent of Americans find it acceptable to videotape public places and 71 percent want a new national ID system based on fingerprints and retinal scans. Why even make these changes? At what point would retinal scans over photo ID's or cameras recording our movements in public places halt the hijacking of four jetliners? They would not. So why stop there? If Americans want real safety, why not allow the government to put Orwellian telescreens in our homes and chips in our heads? Of course, there would have to be a chip insertion station at Ellis Island to catch all those immigrating in. The quote at the base of the Statue of Liberty would have read "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning for something kinda sorta like freedom."

This vision seems inevitable under the current apathy of the American people. President Bush said the state of our nation is strong. He is correct if the strength of our nation is correlated to the number of flags we buy and the willingness of citizens are to immediately dispose of the fundamental values that made our nation great.

The protection of civil liberties has never been easy. To uphold such liberties means that a guilty man may go free over the imprisonment of an innocent one, that expressions of free speech might offend or that society may not be as safe as other more totalitarian states.

But upholding such liberties guarantees that Americans will remain a free people. And that is the defining characteristic of this nation that makes people proud to be American.

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## Rec Center blues

### Women should have a separate area for working out

Maybe because it is the first half of the semester, or the first round of tests have just hit the student body, or maybe because there is a new crop of freshmen with an interest in staying healthy, but the Student Recreation Center is experiencing overcrowding. It is not unusual to be at the Rec Center at 9 p.m. and have a 10 to 15-minute wait for cardio machines, and there is rarely a time when the freeweight area is not completely packed.

Every Texas A&M student pays a \$78 per semester fee for the Rec Center and all it has to offer, including the 14,000-square-foot weight room. Around 7,500 people visit the Rec center each day at the beginning of a semester and this number falls off to around 5,500 per day in the later weeks of school, said Drew McMillen, assistant director for facilities.

The problem with overcrowding, however, lies within the gender of the crowd that dominates the weight room and intimidation for the other sex. It is a common phenomenon for women, feeling less than confident, to be intimidated to work out at the Rec Center. Not everyone has faith in their body, their ability on a stationary bike or their weight-lifting prowess, which creates a problem for those who wish to work out in a relaxed atmosphere.

This may not be true only for women. The Rec Center can be an intimidating place for men who do not list lifting weights as a hobby and do not follow a weekly workout schedule.

No one should feel too intimidated to take full advantage of a facility that they have paid for and are entitled to the full use of.

It would not be unreasonable to ask for a section of the facility, an unused racquetball court or part of a parking lot to be turned into

a women's wing, where women are free to work out and lift weights without the intimidation of the crowds found in the main weight room. This is what attracts many women to purchase memberships at other gyms and workout facilities in the community that are far less crowded.

The Rec Center must not deny the problem, and it instituted the Women on Weights program last year. Jerod Wilson, weight room and personal training coordinator, said this program was designed to "teach women the proper techniques of weight lifting, thus giving them more confidence when working out."

Women on Weights is a free service that takes women through the weight room on a not-so-crowded Saturday morning once a semester with a staff of personal trainers who familiarize the women with the weight machines and cardio machines, and teach weight-lifting techniques in the free-weight area.

The services and facilities the Rec Center offers A&M are some of the best in the nation, and a positive addition to our campus. The Rec Center should be elated about its obvious popularity among students, and should be worried if they did not have large numbers of students working out everyday.

But the Rec Center should attempt to grow with the changing face of A&M, and as uses increase, so should the facility.

As one of the most-used facilities on campus, the Rec Center should increase its facilities to continue accommodating for the A&M community by providing for women who simply want to work out undeterred.

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SHARMILA BADKAR • THE BATTALION



## People should pay attention to the sad facts of the Andrea Yates case and her depression

Andrea Yates is not a common topic of conversation. The names Noah, John, Paul, Luke and Mary Yates may not sound familiar either, until one realizes that they are the names of five children drowned in a bathtub by their mother, Andrea. In the days following the murders, pictures of the Yates family were on nearly every newspaper and magazine across the country.

Then, time passed and other news became top story. Many forgot about the case and the woman who has been sitting in jail since June. But the trial is beginning and it is important for people to start paying attention to her and the factors involved in this extraordinary and sad crime.

The case became news again when Yates was deemed mentally fit to stand trial. Some may believe that Yates is insane and should be admitted to a facility that can help her and not serve traditional jail time. Others may believe that she committed cold-blooded murder and should receive the death penalty, not even life in prison.

This incident is going to force society to look deeper into diseases that plague many women each year, such as postpartum depression, and also take a serious look at the growing number of children dying with only their mothers to blame.

No one should deny that Andrea Yates is sick. She drowned all five of her children, one by one in a bathtub, then laid their corpses under sheets in the master bedroom. There is undoubtedly something wrong with her. The problem is that there is not just one disease that has symptoms of "drowning one's children." And because there is not one simple disease, there is not a simple treatment or even specific warning signs.

It is believed that Andrea Yates suffered from postpartum depression, but there is so

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little known about this disease that it is hard to understand how it could have affected her so drastically.

This trial will look deeper into what this disease is about and people must start paying attention so that there can be a better understanding of it.

Maybe the disease can be better treated with drugs in the future or maybe people who are diagnosed with having postpartum depression will be discouraged from having more children. This case could help further research other diseases that are associated with postpartum depression.

This case is about more than finding what was wrong with Andrea Yates. It is about finding what is wrong with any mother who injures or kills her own child. It is also about finding a way to punish people who think killing a child will go unnoticed.

Not all people who suffer from postpartum depression kill their children, and, more importantly, not all the people that are killing children are suffering from any disease at all. In the last few years, it seems a growing number of stories have surfaced of mothers playing a purposive role in the death of their child. Unexplained deaths blamed on shaken-baby syndrome or infants being left in automobiles and dying because of high temperatures are common. Sadly, there are mothers who see murder as a way out of tough times with their children.

For the judge and jury involved in the trial of Andrea Yates, their focus should be solely on her and the deaths of her five children. But for everyone else, it is time to focus on this issue as a current problem in this country.

This trial will uncover new understandings for diseases and new laws that hopefully will make the problems underlying this case not as frequent in the news. People must pay attention as the details of this trial unfold and realize that there are great lessons to be learned from it.

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