

## EDITORIAL

### CORPS PHOTO WAS NEWSWORTHY

Recently, there have been questions raised regarding the motives and validity of *The Battalion's* decision to publish a photograph with the June 18 story "UPD investigates possible hazing."

The photo showed a naked person, whose arms and legs were duct taped together, being carried by two people.

The decision to run the photo was not made because of any preconceived notions, decisions or biases against the persons or actions depicted in the photos or because of any sensationalistic desires of the editorial staff.

Although it is run by students, *The Battalion* is a working newspaper. Its first and foremost mission is to provide its readers with fair, accurate and unbiased reporting. The decision to run the photo was made because the editorial staff of *The Battalion* felt the photograph was the best way for its readers to be provided with all sides of the story.

For *The Battalion* to have described the photos without running them would have robbed its readership of the opportunity to fully understand both the photographs in question and the administration's subsequent reactions.

*The Battalion* was also careful in selecting the least offensive photograph of the six it received. As a whole, the collection of photographs was of a highly graphic nature, and it was only after much debate that the decision was made to publish that particular photo with the faces of the individuals blurred to ensure their privacy.

Although the faces of those persons shown in the photo were blurred, *The Battalion* still felt running the photo provided its readers with the whole story and allowed them to develop their own opinions regarding the incident.

While *The Battalion*, just like any other newspaper, gladly welcomes feedback and criticism, it stands by its decision to put the photograph into print and will continue to provide its readers with fair and comprehensive reporting.

## THE BATTALION

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*The Battalion* encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 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 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters also may be mailed to: 014 Reed McDonald, MS 1111, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Fax: (979) 845-2647 Email: mailcall@thebatt.com

### MAIL CALL

#### Coalition for Life reducing tensions

In response to Richard Bray's June 19 column:

Thank you Richard Bray for your thoughtful and timely editorial, "Local Abortion Debate is Ridiculous."

You are absolutely right with your premise: there is a tremendous amount of name-calling and misinformation spreading throughout our community surrounding the abortion debate. It is regrettable that some individuals have attempted to take matters into their own hands by resorting to the tactics you mentioned.

It is for this reason that the Coalition for Life has taken proactive steps to reduce the heightened tension that both sides of this issue have recognized in recent weeks. Last Tuesday, our organization held a news conference in front of Planned Parenthood's controversial abortion clinic to issue an official statement regarding the very issues you described. Though no one from *The Battalion* attended, KBTX-TV 3 and KRHD-TV 34 accurately reported that the Coalition for Life took a strong stance condemning all forms of violence, and announced a new policy to ensure that those acting on behalf of our organization will only respond to the violence of abortion with peaceful and legal means. We also challenged Planned Parenthood to adhere to equally strict standards among their own ranks.

Additionally, a video security camera now records everything that happens in front of the clinic for the protection of our volunteers. Since this practice began, many of the false accusations and name-calling incidents have dissipated.

Finally, as you stated, it is difficult to sort out the truth surrounding the abortion debate in

this community. Even the media gets it wrong sometimes. On June 5, Christy Ruth wrote a scathing criticism of our organization in *The Battalion*. Unfortunately, her entire premise was based on incorrect information and she never contacted our office to verify her claims. While we were disappointed, we chose not to respond. If the Coalition for Life spent all of its time responding to the misinformation which is rampant in our community, we would never have time to do our work: saving children's lives.

David Bereit  
Executive Director  
Coalition for Life

#### Corps photo was inappropriate

Your decision to publish a photo on the front page of *The Battalion* depicting supposed hazing in the Corps, more specifically in the band, was very immature judgment on your part. Your whole story on the matter was a poor attempt at sensationalism. *The Eagle*, at least, had the decency of not displaying such a crude photo in its paper. I can think of only one reason that you would choose to make such a decision, and that is to discredit the entire Corps of Cadets. I happen to work with these cadets, and while I think that their conduct was unbecoming of cadets, I'm confident that you do not have all of the pertinent facts regarding the case. Rather than waiting to see what the outcome of the District Attorney's decision would be, you chose to publish your own version of the truth, including the photo.

It is my hope that responsible parties at *The Battalion* will be held accountable for their poor decision, just as the cadets will be for theirs.

Michael E. Caudle  
Cadet Training Officer

# Maintaining the faith

## Students should not abandon religion in time of crisis

With the recent events that have occurred in the religious community, including Catholic priests accused of child molestation and a prominent Southern Baptist leader's ethnic attacks on the Muslim religion, it is no wonder that young people in the United States are discouraged by the disorganization surrounding organized religion. Instead, many of America's youth are opting to worship a superior being on their own.



JENNIFER LOZANO

However, just because a few bad individuals have made it into leadership positions in the Catholic and Southern Baptist churches, it should not be reason enough to abandon a faith that has developed over thousands of years. In fact, despite its numerous shortcomings, one should carefully examine the intricate issues surrounding organized religion before hastily condemning and abandoning it.

For years, adolescents and young adults have chosen to rebel against the standard of organized religion in an attempt to discover their own spirituality. According to a national study of youth and religion, one of the main reasons young people abandon organized religion is because they feel it is fraught with hypocrisies. Another common attack on organized religion is to hold it responsible for the many controversies and problems that differing religious beliefs are at the heart of. One simply has to look at our world history, which has had innumerable religious wars since the beginning of time. Even now, Americans are fighting a war with radical religious beliefs at the center of it.

Unfortunately, humanity's problems are not this simple. Humans go to war because of innate differences, not because a religious doctrine tells them to. According to an article written by Orson Scott Card in *The Daily Rhinoceros*, a study conducted with chimpanzees showed that a few chimps inevitably separated from the group to form their own tribe and were later murdered by the majority chimps. In an astonishingly similar nature, humans attack their deviant brothers over invariable differences when we go to war. However, according to Card, when human beings succumb to evil, in order to justify their cruel and evil acts, they play the religion card and claim to be doing it for their God or another superior being.

If organized religion is at the root of all grand acts of violence, how can one even attempt to explain the horrific atrocities that were committed without religion as a primary motivating force? According to Card, many historians have also come up with conclusive evidence that in the course of history, organized religion has actually done a commendable job of keeping humans from acting out on these impulses. Card gives the example of the relatively large number of Indians still living in Spain instead of England as a direct result of the Catholic priests' influence over the blood-thirsty conquistadors.

In organized religion, individuals who occupy leadership positions are more inclined to obey the rules of God and are thus more likely to follow the rules of a civilized society and better serve the common people in their religious community. These individuals are usually honest, good people whose friendship and



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guidance can help others overcome life's obstacles and achieve a closer relationship with their God. This provides an irreplaceable and unique support system for those who participate in it.

If organized religion were abolished, humans who wish to oppress and destroy would still do so and find a way to make it look virtuous. Therefore, despite its numerous flaws, organized religion should be appreciated for the good it contributes and should be discarded with more discretion and consideration than is often used. Organized religion is not the enemy. If anything, it seems to be a mere catalyst to a negative reaction for which

Jennifer Lozano is a senior English major.

# U.N. must stop foreign sex trade

Irina came to Italy in order to fill an ad for a waitress, but upon arrival, was instead forced into slavery. Olga was kidnapped by a human-goods smuggler, and brought to a tiny town called Velesta, where her saga of dehumanization and degradation began. Their destination: a life of forced promiscuity, obligatory participation in sexual acts, and physical abuse from their "owners" and clients — a life of sexual slavery. The tales told by Irina and Olga are the testimonies of two women who were brave enough to relay their accounts to MSNBC, but they are not alone. It is estimated that more than 800,000 girls and women are trafficked worldwide each year. Due to the appalling violation of multitudes of innocent girls, the United Nations (U.N.) must help ease the burden of these young women and demand stricter enforcement of existing legislation.



LINDSYE FORSON

Many of the young girls tell a strikingly similar story. Economic deprivation and lack of education left them desperate for work, making them extremely vulnerable to believing the hollow promises of a "new beginning," told by smooth talking traders of women. The country of Moldova became suddenly destitute after the fall of the Soviet Union, and MSNBC cites that approximately 10 percent of the women forced into prostitution come from this country. Some of the women were kidnapped through the use of physical force and smuggled into bondage against their will.

The individuals involved in the sex trade developed highly successful tactics to keep these women caged. Human traffickers pay for the voyage of the women who leave their homes by choice. Once these women reach their destination and there are no jobs waiting or available, they have no way to pay back their debt and are forced to become an "indentured servant" via the sex market. Other owners of sex

slaves either threaten or use grotesque physical violence to intimidate the defenseless women.

Ultimately, the most widespread, successful tactic and by-product of long-term sexual slavery is dehumanization. Olga related her owner's methods of dehumanization to MSNBC. Her owner, Meti, raped and beat 19-year old Olga regularly until she completely submitted herself to him, and further degraded her by making her clean the inside of a toilet with her tongue, and perform obscene sexual acts with other women for his entertainment.

MSNBC's report focuses on the flourishing sex trade in Eastern Europe and specifically, the city of Velesta in Macedonia and its neighboring country, Albania. The enormous demand for sex slaves generates massive revenue, leaving the owners and operators of the sex trade with resources that underpaid local police simply cannot match. While the smugglers have state-of-the-art electronics and equipment, police lack even the basics, such as flashlights and handcuffs. And since they cannot beat them, many officers and politicians join them. On April 18, Albania admitted that due to their immense powers, criminal organizations are able to establish links with even top government officials, according to MSNBC. The U.S. State Department also acknowledged the occurrence of bribery in several countries' political systems in its 2001 article on human rights, and conceded that "instances of corruption and involvement of police in trafficking in persons occurred at the local level."

But contrary to the assumptions of many, the incidence of human trafficking and sexual enslavement is not limited to Eastern Europe, or restricted solely to impoverished countries. MSNBC reports that approximately half of the women taken from countries like Moldova eventually work as prostitutes in Western Europe,

and one quarter of the slaves are eventually sent to the United States. In addition to the fact that indigent countries do not have the resources to deal with this underground operation, the involvement of developed countries like those of Western Europe and the United States make it clear that it is the role of the U.N. to help deal with this problem.

The U.N. has taken some action against the trafficking of women, such as its 1949 convention to deal with this problem. Recently, the U.N. created Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (OHCHR) on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, a document which vaguely outlines a plan for dealing with this problem. This document is obviously well-intentioned and sets an excellent precedent for U.N. involvement in this problem; in the OHCHR, the U.N. lists among the reasons for its creation being "gravely concerned at the significant and increasing international traffic in children for the purpose of the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography."

However, the U.N. and the OHCHR fall short of the measures necessary to eradicate this problem, as the document does not have any enforcement powers. In addition to this, the U.N. should consider the sex trade an international — not isolated — occurrence, and should therefore delineate specific protocol for dealing with sex traffickers as international offenders. The practice of forcing young women to have sex against their will is the most severe kind of violation and must be dealt with immediately. The countries that are founded upon freedom and personal liberties and are blessed with ample resources must be the ones to take a stand to put an end to this grotesque and dehumanizing practice.

Lindsay Forson is a sophomore journalism major.