

# OPINION

THE BATTALION

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## RIGHT TO PRIVACY

### Name of Bryant's alleged sexual assault victim shouldn't have been released



Crime makes headlines. It is a simple, time-tested formula for a popular story. A high-profile case involving a crime and a big-name star will garner ratings, readership and dollars, while sensationalizing events. But just because something's sensationalized does not mean the names involved are more important than what took place.

Crime is a matter of public record, and it should remain so. Citizens have a right to know the threats that could assail them and what is happening in their community. The United States was formed to protect its citizens and their interests, but there must be a line drawn between actions for sensationalism and public, or perhaps private, good.

The recent naming of the alleged sexual assault victim in the Kobe Bryant case is a prime example. What rational interest was served in releasing the woman's name on nationally-syndicated talk radio, besides grabbing a larger Nielsen rating? The only thing that gave the radio host the right to announce her name was the lack of legislation protecting her and punishing him.

The release of the name of a victim of sexual assault without consent is a violation of privacy and stands to victimize the person all over again. The Federal Communications

Commission fines media organizations for cursing, and people sue media outlets for libel, but no law exists connecting an individual's inalienable right to privacy in his position as a victim of sexual assault.

The "rape shield laws" exist to prevent the defense from air-



WILL KNOUS

ing private, unrelated details of the accuser's sexual past or mental health history in court arguments, setting a precedent for laws protecting the damaged rights of the victim. In Texas and other states, there are laws on the books protecting the victims of sexual assaults and minors. The nationalization of these laws is necessary. The drafting of further legislation to protect the victim — not from undue attacks in the courtroom, but in the public view — seems perfunctory.

**“What rational interest was served in releasing the woman's name on nationally-syndicated talk radio, besides grabbing a larger Nielsen rating? The only thing that gave the radio host the right to announce her name was the lack of legislation protecting her and punishing him.”**

There does exist, in most news organizations or firms, in-house policies and rules disallowing the announcement of rape or sexual assault victims' names. These professional ethic guidelines are well-meaning, but vary from organization to organization and are simply not as effective as they should be. If, for example, an on-air personality violates his

employer's standards and practices policies, he could be dismissed, but the damage has been done. A DJ might have to find a new job, but the victim's most personal matters have been irrevocably aired. These in-house policies have an effect to some extent, but without formal legislation there seems to be no serious punishment for this behavior and subsequently, no foreseeable end to the suffering these violations cause.

One could make the argument that the victims' stories should be told. Their experiences and survival could help others prevent or deal with similar situations. Their voices could be some of the most powerful in combatting the heinous crimes they suffer. That is completely valid. Their potential influence is immeasurable. But there must be a judgment made between the nature of these so-called "personal" crimes and others in regard to a victim's privacy.

The most important idea behind a former victim's possible impact is his choice to come forward — an effective way to invoke the constitutional right to confront your assailant in a far-reaching way. But there must be that consent given by the victims themselves — not by radio, television or any other source looking to get attention with no regard for the irreparable damage done. Neither the media nor the government should have the right to make these lives and terribly private matters public or make a martyr out of someone on the evening news.

Will Knous is a junior journalism major. Graphic by Seth Freeman

## Times' new public editor unnecessary

### Though meant to appease public and restore credibility, position won't work

To refurbish The New York Times' tarnished reputation, newly-appointed Editor in Chief Bill Keller announced July 30 that a "public editor" would be appointed to represent the interests and opinions of the readers, according to The Times.

While it is apparent and commendable that Keller is attempting to appease the public and return credibility to the reputation that was tarnished by multiple accounts of plagiarism earlier this year by Jayson Blair, this meager attempt at credibility is not the solution.

The public editor will be expected to write about internal issues at The Times, comment on the coverage of any story and have them published in The Times' pages, serving to shed light to any instances or suspicions of bias.

Basically, this public editor will have the freedom to criticize other writers in any way he sees fit, being only accountable to the editor in chief, according to The Times. He will be an educated journalist who can publish letters to the editor in the guise of a column, while being paid to do it.

Perhaps instead of paying someone to publicly evaluate other writers' works, they could hire editors and reporters who



SARA FOLEY

do their job ethically. The fabrications of a reporter are embarrassing and ridiculous, but even worse is a chain of command of editors who ignore the discrepancies or who are too oblivious to require a reporter's sources be thorough.

The job description requires the individual in question to be a representative of the public. However, the paper should already represent the public and cater to its needs. If a paper only represents the public in a single column, there are much larger issues to deal with. Reporters and editors should be responsible to represent the opinions of at least a portion of their readers, and if there was a true need for this position, it would deserve more space than just a single column.

The internal workings of The Times are not a subject that is consistently newsworthy, making The Times' slogan "All the news that's fit to print" questionable. The only instance that would be worthy of attention or coverage would be another round of plagiarism and dramatic resignations.

The Times should hope this does not happen again. However, the mere existence of a public editor does not assure that. The hiring of quality journalists and the monitoring and

accountability of those reporters would.

Problems of newsroom management are at the heart of a reporter who gets away with repeated accounts of falsehood. While the problem is unquestionably one that overrides one editor's mistakes or one reporter's lies, the solution will certainly not be found in a commentary that few will undoubtedly bother to read.

The revival of the reputation of The Times is something that will take time, dedication and persistence and the solution will only be found in a dedication to excellence. The hiring of someone to comment on problems implies that they are still present and will continue.

While Keller has created additional positions for senior-level editors to supervise compliance with internal procedures, according to The New York Times Company's Web site, which is a definite step in the right direction, the creation of this position is nothing but a worthless appointment and a waste of space on the page.

Sara Foley is a junior journalism major.

### MAIL CALL

#### College Station police have wrong priorities

The fact that the College Station Police Department is foiled by car break-ins should not come as a surprise to any reader. CSPD is controlled by one focus: alcohol. The department spends so much time and effort trying to crack down on underage drinking and other alcohol violations that they lose track of other crimes being committed in the city. When my roommates and I

returned from Christmas break two years ago, we realized our apartment had been burglarized. We filed a report late that night, and we received a letter in the mail two days later stating that the case was closed due to lack of evidence. Despite numerous fingerprints and various other pieces of evidence taken from our apartment, they could find nothing. We later came to find out that six other apartments and numerous cars in our complex had also been burglarized. Bang-up job, CSPD! I bet if we had been residents over

the age of 25 they would have put in a little more effort. Maybe they were busy solving the city's underage drinking problems.

Police and city officials seem to think that busting parties is one way to curb drinking violations. I can attest, as I'm sure many others can, that this simply leads to further complications.

How many times have you been at a party when the cops show up and you drive home, or to another party, instead of taking CARPOOL or catching a ride with a designated driver?

The police department should seriously consider making some changes to rectify this embarrassing situation.

James Morrow  
Class of 2002

#### Republicans also broke quorum when a minority

In response to David Shoemaker's assertion that the Republicans did not flee and break quorum when they were the minority party in Texas, it should be noted that they did just that in 1993.

The particulars of the Republicans breaking the quorum can be seen on

The New York Times Web site, www.nytimes.com (The New York Times, 8-5-03).

When it comes down to it, both quorum-breaking parties are using their rights as elected officials to carry out the procedures of the state government. Even though they were the minority, they still saw need to make changes and not give in due to their lack of majority power.

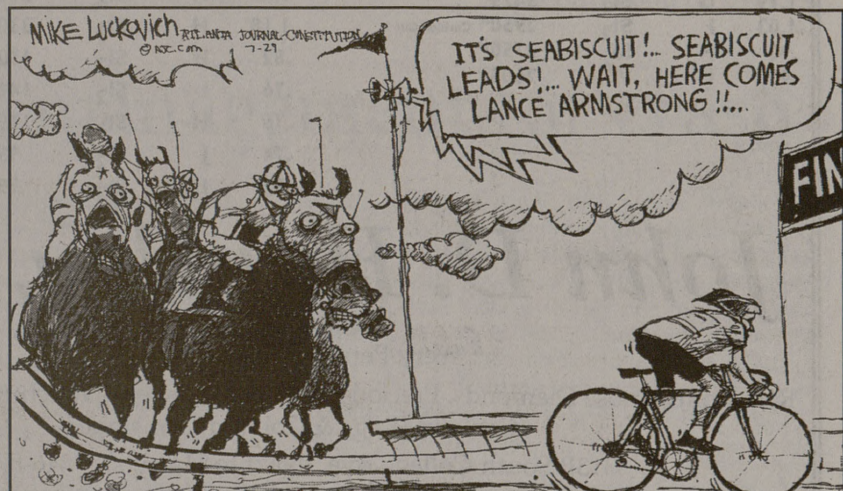
Instead of growing up and realizing that "they cannot rule forever, nor can they win them all," the Democrats are simply following a

Republican precedent.

Politics are politics, the minority party will do what it can to have some semblance of power over the majority.

The people of Texas should be proud. Democrats are acting like democrats and Republicans are being Republicans. In addition to that, they might be witnessing the inception of another "... unalterable Senate tradition."

Michael Connolly  
Class of 2004



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