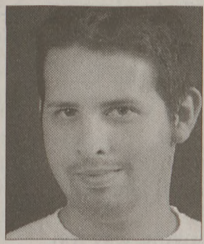


## The decline of values

Americans must hope that new democracies don't emulate U.S. pop culture

As a result of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, Americans began a campaign the purpose of which has been twofold: to seek out and destroy terrorism and to further protect against this threat by establishing democratic states that would aid in defeating terrorism within their own borders.



MIKE WALTERS

The first part is comparatively easy—America boasts the most advanced military and some of the bravest soldiers in human history. Instilling the values and practices of liberty and democracy to nations that have seen only tyranny throughout their past, however, is more problematic. Bringing Western thought into the Middle East means bringing in alien ideas—and some fear that those ideas are not all good.

“Some people in Muslim cultures identify democracy with the worst of Western popular culture and want no part of it,” President Bush said in a speech last week. “When I speak about the blessings of liberty, coarse videos...are not what I have in mind. There is nothing incompatible between democratic values and high standards of decency.”

But, that is not the kind of picture Americans have been painting for the world lately.

The New York Times reported last week that after Clear Channel Communications dropped Howard Stern from its stations, Stern vowed to “return to genital-centric humor once the furor had died down.”

Earlier this year, the Superbowl’s halftime show turned into a juvenile grab for attention when Justin Timberlake exposed one of Janet Jackson’s breasts to millions of viewers. Those who witnessed the national embarrassment doubtlessly found it hard to believe that two years ago the same halftime show featured a stirring tribute to American patriotism and the lives lost on Sept. 11. It’s ironic that the tribute came from U2, an Irish group.

The fact is, American culture has taken a downward slide in decades past. While there have been many positive societal steps forward, such as desegregation, the entertainment industry now shows a disturbing lack of decency and taste.

In a country where Cary Grant and Humphrey Bogart played roles displaying the epitome of class, men today aspire to the attitude and manner of Vin Diesel, while women drool over him as he

plays anti-heroes in film after film. Philosopher Ayn Rand once said, “Tell me what a man finds sexually attractive and I will tell you his entire philosophy of life.” If Americans are truly finding the portrayal of valueless criminals as ideals of sexiness and manliness, there is something very wrong with what U.S. society is idealizing right now.

The decline in the portrayals of heroic and suave men in the movie industry is not the only symptom. Turn on the radio and you’re likely to hear rappers glorifying the murder of police officers, drug dealing and a thug lifestyle in lyrics not fit to print. Recently, Bill Cosby has been speaking out against this type of music, but hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons rejected the notion that it has a coarsening effect, saying it “is the soundtrack that reflects the struggle” of young people today.

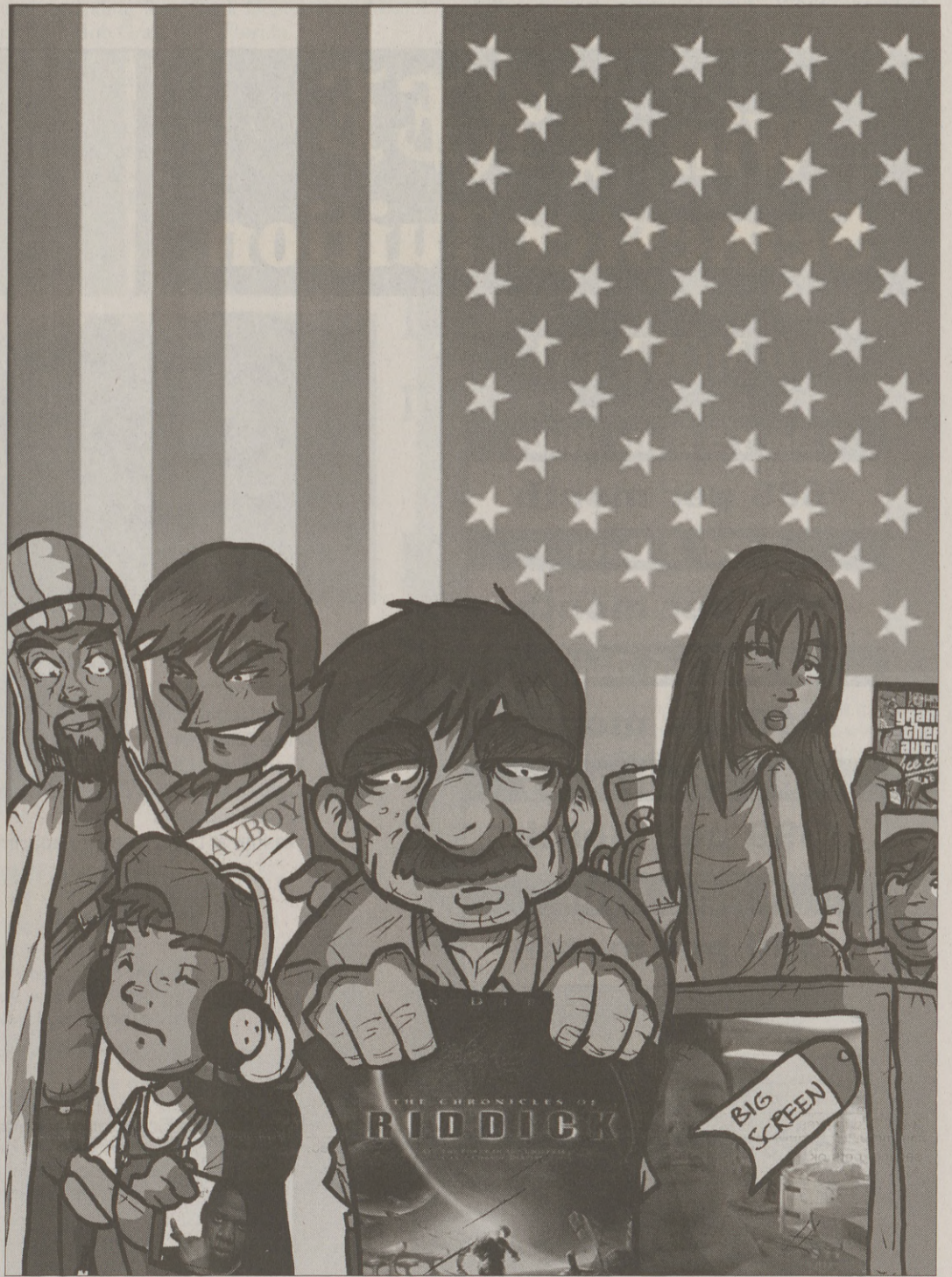
Simmons seems to forget the words of Martin Luther King Jr. when he said “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” The music of Simmons’ Def Jam Records does not portray a conquering spirit over the adversities man may face, but glorifies the hardships and falls far short of any measure of the greatness man is capable of.

And rather than recognizing and stopping this, it seems that parents are letting it seep down to their children. Teachers in Massachusetts are putting the late rapper Tupac Shakur’s book of “poetry” on summer reading lists.

Given the state of American society and the War on Terror which children are likely to inherit in coming generations, they would be better served reading the works of American founders like Thomas Paine. Surely if they can decipher the twisted English of popular rappers, they can sort out lines like “The real man smiles in trouble, gathers strength from distress and grows brave by reflection.” Perhaps then they’d realize that wallowing in a “street life” is not the highest state possible to them.

Americans today must recognize this problem and reclaim a sense of class. We must reject a sense of the mediocre. Criminals and anti-heroes should not be looked to as role models, but instead we should embody and portray men and women who stand for all that is good in life, for those are the true American values which we should proudly lift up for ourselves and the world to see.

Mike Walters is a senior psychology major. Graphic by Will Lloyd



### MAIL CALL

#### Bush was right to detain terror suspects

In response to Jonathan Smith’s July 5 column:

The contention surrounding the issue of detainees being held in Guantanamo Bay is a sticky issue that deservedly merits our attention. At some point we have to accept that the international and American law concerning the detention of such individuals is outdated at best. Since information obtained from these individuals could mean the difference between life and death for American citizens I can understand the rationale that led to the Bush administration to characterize the detainees as enemy combatants rather than POWs, which under the Geneva conventions, only have to give their name and rank, whereas enemy combatants can be interrogated.

This distinction can rightly be made since the al-Qaida terrorists are not characterized by the Geneva convention’s definition of someone who could be a POW, that is “having a fixed distinctive sign recognizable at a distance . . . of carrying arms openly . . . of conducting their operations in accordance with the laws and customs of war.” The detainees have been treated in line with the spirit of the Geneva convention, have been accommodated humanly, and in such instances that they were not, court marshals were given to the perpetrators. As to whether the detainees are entitled to a trial, most are not U.S. citizens and it should be noted that

there is a provision within the Constitution (Section 9 Clause 2) that “The Privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion the public Safety may require it.”

Bush is not the first war-time president to evoke this clause; Abraham Lincoln did so also during the Civil War. As for those detainees who are American citizens such as John Walker Lindh, the American Taliban member, who was caught aiding and abetting the enemy, he is a traitor and should be treated as such. It is true that the suspension of habeas corpus is a power delegated to Congress, and Americans like Jose Padilla are being held in breach of the 5th Amendment.

I’m willing to give Bush the benefit of the doubt; at least he’s doing something about terrorism, unlike the previous administration that did next to nothing in the face of the Cole bombing, 1993 WTC attack, African embassy bombings and the Khobar tower bombings, though he was able to incinerate David Koresh, pass up a deal to get Bin Laden and allow the Gorelick memo to hamper the flow of intelligence through the FBI pre 9-11.

Kevin Sewell  
Class of 2007

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 Email: mailcall@thebattalion.net

## Naturalizing immigrants solves security problems

For once the Democratic and

Republican parties have agreed upon something: There is a need for immigration policy reform. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., is leading the way in making immigration policy reform a bipartisan effort in order to solve the problems plaguing the illegal immigrant population of America.

Illegal immigrants often risk their lives to come to the United States, and it should not be this way.

Last March the issue was brought to national attention when 18 people died in a truck full of smuggled immigrants in Victoria, Texas. The attempts to cross the border often end in tragedies like this for those who are looking for opportunities that the United States offers.

Despite an increase in the number of border patrol agents from 3,600 to 10,000 during the 1990s, illegal immigration has increased by an estimated 5.5 million immigrants. The border patrol’s best efforts have been to try and stop the smugglers who take advantage of would-be immigrants, but many immigration experts make it clear that this is merely treating the symptom and not the problem. The illegal mass immigration won’t stop until the demand for cheap labor is satisfied.

The solution is to give these people an opportunity to be naturalized. If they were to become citizens it would solve problems on both sides. The government would know who and where these people are, and have the ability to

collect taxes. As citizens, they would have a right to fair wages and basic human rights that are sometimes difficult to come by when illegally living in a country.

The unemployment rate among citizens would suggest that immigrants are hurting

Americans’ chances to find work, but this is not the case. The illegal immigrants are doing the jobs that Americans would rather starve than do.

It is clear that there is a need for the labor that immigrants fulfill. Their illegal status poses

several problems for themselves and the government. Even if they arrive in the United States alive and well, they certainly are not home free. Although their status means they will live their lives in poverty and fear, it is still preferable to them than the life in their home countries.

It is not only an issue of economics, but one of national security. It has long been an issue that if laborers can cross the Mexican-American border to benefit themselves, it may only be a matter of time before terrorists do as well. McCain’s plan addresses all these issues. In a statement to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he outlines the need to plan for the future workers who want to come into the United States as well as the undocumented workers who are already working within the bor-

ders. He dismissed the idea of limiting immigration to only a certain number of people from each country because if this policy was followed, a labor shortage would result.

The implementation of his plan would also connect employers with employees, easing the labor shortage. McCain addresses the need to prevent these workers from permanently becoming the new underclass. The laborers must be able to transfer from one job to another and be put on the right track to citizenship if they so desire. The point is to give them an opportunity to better themselves.

With the cooperation of the border states and the U.S. and Mexican governments, a plan of this nature is possible. Not only does it make sense for the government, it will prevent many future tragedies from occurring.

The United States has long been a land of opportunity, and it must continue to be so. The immigrants trying to get to the United States illegally are only looking for that opportunity. It makes no sense for the government to keep laws that are ineffective and hurting people looking for a better life. To solve this, a plan for naturalization must be enacted.

Kristina Butler is a senior journalism major.

