

OPINION

THE BATTALION

Page 5 • Wednesday, July 7, 2004

Role models in need of reform

Athletes, celebrities should be expected to abide by same ethic codes as others

More and more often, Americans are taking magnifying glasses to the lives of public figures — meting out justice through detailed exposé, harsh public opinion and national ignominy. It may spell disaster, however, almost like a mischievous child spying a line of marching ants, because the unfortunate downside of magnifying glasses is always shortsightedness.

It's a case of missing the forest on account of the trees. Holding politicians to a standard of flawless perfection can be good, but there may be something greater at risk than electing an official who failed to pay a parking ticket 21 years ago. While this picking apart is done for the good of the country, the country's children watch, copy and idolize another group of public figures that somehow lead lives spattered by drug abuse, sexual proliferation, immorality and indecency that sit unnoticed by preoccupied scrutiny.

Here's an example: Regardless of political party or affiliation, most agree that former President Clinton's illicit White House roguery deserved publication and rebuke for the dishonor it brought to the nation's highest position. It was certainly such an exposé that cut short the hopes of former Senate candidate Jack Ryan.

This is how it should be, but here's something that is not: The lewd and promiscuous lifestyles of Hollywood's rich and famous put Clinton's and even Ryan's deviance to shame with apparent impunity.

If the actions of Jack Ryan are inexcusable and an utter embarrassment to the testament of America's standards for public office, what does this say about our standards for this other group of public figures? Americans may impeach lying presidents, but how do they deal with drug-abusing actors? They go watch their latest movie. Drug-abusing singers? They buy their CDs.

The actions of politicians like Jack Ryan are wrong, but how many teens look up to these men? How many fifth graders round up the other kids to play a rousing, neighborhood-wide game of "U.S. Senate?" Presidents certainly win the admiration of children, but children don't understand politics or C-SPAN coverage of an impeachment like they do an athlete being arrested and put on trial. Politicians do not become posters, and they scarcely can be said to develop the pop idol, superstar appeal that celebrities and athletes receive from all ages.

Here is the problem: America holds its public figures — all of its "performers," in a sense of the word — to entirely different standards, and that's costing the country more than anyone seems to know. The moral ruler is altered, its units changed; as a result, the two most potent cultural groups in society simply don't measure up.

Each alteration yields a new measuring device. For celebrities, it becomes the "It's OK, we love you" standard. Anything and everything they do short of murder is celebrated — hence, the name celebrity. Again, the infidelity example suffices. When Ben Affleck's romp to the strip club caused the sad fission of Bennifer into two separate individuals again, the American people did not share Jennifer Lopez's enmity or the burn-him-at-the-stake fervor

recently held toward Jack Ryan. They pitied him and let him know it was OK: "It's all right, Ben. We love you anyway!" Because of this loving support, no doubt, he found the courage to deal with J.Lo's revenge wedding, and to even reciprocate by marrying someone of his own.

Then, athletes get the "It's OK, we don't care" standard. Most people don't expect much from these guys — their job is to bounce, throw and kick balls. As long as they don't rape 19-year olds or hurl racial slurs in the subway, the limelight only shines

"MTV Cribs" watchers, most Americans don't know, or care, what goes on inside the homes of the stars whose every move is copied and memorized by their children and the nation's youth.

Even the soured curds of the athletic cream have no need for alarm. If Barry Bonds can rank, maybe garnering a weekly slap or two on the wrist from sports commentators admonishing his poor player-fan relationships or field etiquette, why shouldn't he act as he pleases. By his standard, this is success; he's doing what he wants, and most people are saying, "I don't care." Some are actually rooting for him.

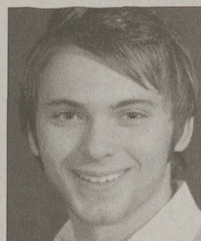
If one believes fans actually allow poor choices off court to affect their perception, look at merchandise sales. Allen Iverson's merchandise sales went through the roof after he was arrested for assault and criminal trespass in 2002. A fluke? No, sales of Kobe Bryant merchandise nearly doubled after charges were brought against him. And, guess who's buying Bryant's stuff? Women. A sports store owner interviewed in the *Houston Chronicle* after the allegations surfaced said he couldn't keep enough children's sizes in stock to feed the frenzy of women filing in to be outfitted in No. 8 paraphernalia.

Mark Cuban may have been a bit too bold for the NBA's liking when he said it, but it looks like the trial has done wonders for sales. Too bad the same can't be said for the nation and its youth.

Misuse of alcohol, drugs or medicine by politicians and pundits costs jobs, elections and sometimes years in prison. Talk-radio commentator Rush Limbaugh was deep fried for his pill popping, but steroid use by MLB players has stayed hushed for years. Only in the recent months, with the doping accusations circulating against Bonds, Jason Giambi and Gary Sheffield, has a crackdown come. For the big sluggers, the cost has been little, but the pay has been huge: new homerun records and supra-500 batting averages. And now, Lance Armstrong. With celerity, the public and the media came to his defense — and this was before he even issued a statement denying the allegations that he shot up with EPO. It's the standard: Fry politicians, but defend athletes because they're "one of us."

It is a valid point that politicians are entrusted with the welfare of the country, while the duties of celebrities and athletes matter little beyond the court or studio. But what is the welfare of the country? Ask the youth which is more important, who they look up to more, and the answer may be different than those who are upheld to high standards. See who sells more merchandise, or who gets more airtime on national television, coverage on the cable stations or articles in magazines and the answer may be alarming.

Politicians should be grilled—they have a degree of probity to uphold — but so do basketball players and so do movie stars and every citizen in the country. In combing the bark of these trees, the forest is going to burn down. The celebrity ruler and the athlete ruler need a swift exchange, or else the damage done to the country will remain immeasurable.



CLINT RAINEY



when they are on the field or court. Occasionally, when it casts its searching beam into the nasty dark corners of private life, everyone is surprised: "What? Kobe Bryant did what?" But, it subsides: "Oh well, if he did, it won't hurt his game. So I don't care." With the exception of religious

Clint Rainey is a sophomore general studies major. Graphic by Will Lloyd

Women's moral dilemma can be solved by men

Before World War II the woman's place was in the home.

But today, women are encouraged to earn degrees and be whatever they want to be. Yet, by the natural order of things, they somehow end up living a life serving people other than themselves.

This leads women to face one of the biggest moral dilemmas of all time: choosing between a life of career and self-improvement or a life of wife and motherhood. The hypocritical view of women in society today encourages them to seek self-fulfillment as well as to be great mothers and wives.

Achieving gender equality lies in the hands of men. Men must overcome gender-role attitudes and help their wives to fulfill their quests of becoming successful in more than just the household.

After the second wave of the feminist movement took place in the late 1970s, women emerged from the kitchens in hopes of gaining equal ground with men and seeking

more self-satisfying lives. What they didn't realize was that they were going to be in way over their heads.

Many women think they can juggle both career and family by becoming the ultimate multi-tasker, but with little help from husbands, many women resign to letting their success fall to the wayside.

It begins as a child—girls are taught to play with baby dolls, plastic food and Easy-Bake-Ovens that mold them into "little mommies." Then females are enlightened on gender equality and how they can do anything they want to do. So, they head off to college.

Women flock to universities to receive an education so that they can get good jobs in the future. But for what? Unless they choose to stay single and childless, their education will only be good for the sake of having it. Once their "baby factory" is in production, back to the home they go. This leads to time outside of work taking care of

children. Men take advantage of women's time off to climb up the career ladder.

Michelle Budig, a professor from the University of Arizona, found there to be a 7 percent wage penalty per child in a study called, "The Wage Penalty for Motherhood."

"The hypocritical view of women in society today encourages them to seek self-fulfillment as well as to be great mothers and wives."

After having children, many women hope to balance work and family by sharing the responsibilities with their spouses. Keep dreaming. Today's women have grown up watching their mothers come home from work and head straight to the housework, while they watched their fathers come home and head for the television.

An article in "Family Relations" by David Demo, said women do two to three times as much housework regardless of their employment status. This doesn't mean that the women's feet are less tired than the men's feet are. It just means that women have remained stuck in the airtight role of the female

gender.

These women have fallen victim to gender stereotypes, which are fixed, conventional ideas about how men and women ought to behave. Feminist Gloria Steinem said, "The first problem for all of us, men and women, is not to learn, but to unlearn."

Many women have watched this and said that they are not going to live this way. Unfortunately, they can rebel as much as they want and the only thing that will be accomplished is a dirty house. Demo's argument is not in favor of bra-burning, man-eating feminists, it is just an attempt to bring attention to the problem at hand.

Gender equality lies in the hands of men. Men must overcome these gender-role attitudes and help their wives to fulfill their quests of becoming successful in more than just the household.

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TORI FOSTER

MAIL CALL

The algorithm for evil

In response to a July 5 mail call:

Mr. Kemp's recent letter was an excellent example of the secular/materialist/socialist calculus for determining the source of the world's ills. The formula goes something like this:

Only matter and energy exist and man is merely an organic machine. Economics as a material enterprise is then the sole motivating factor in human affairs. Ideas and morality are irrelevant - unless they affect economics. All evils are then the result of some form of oppression by those with the money. The rich oppressor is then epitomized by the American, white, protestant, male stereotype. Given two conflicting par-

ties, the one furthest from this stereotype is then automatically the victim while the other is the aggressor.

It is little wonder why Western secularists like Mr. Kemp, so knowledgeable of Muslim theology, bend over backwards trying to convince everyone that Islam is a religion of peace and distance terrorists from it where precious few Muslims say such things. After all, their situations must somehow be the fault of their oppressors - Christianity to their Islam in this case - because that's the closest to the WASP stereotype. It's certainly not that ideas of Muslim theology have consequences.

Daniel Hirmas
Class of 1998

Executions are deserved

In response to Cody Sain's July 5 column:

I wonder if one thinks about the victims of these crimes by those on death row. Was their pain and suffering thought about before hand, did the person who murdered try to make his victim's passing easier? Before we consider how those on death row are put to death in a more "humane" way, we must consider the methods they used to take the lives of their victims. Perhaps, we could begin by making death row a little more painful. Maybe they should leave this earth in the same manner as their victims left. Then perhaps, there may be a reason to talk about "an inhumane death."

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