

Opinions

The Banner

Editorial

Don't let me down

On a serious note

We know it happens. We also know it happens far more than we would like to think. But now the reality has hit close to home.

That a student at a university right down the road is suspected of killing her newborn child is a terrifying and saddening thought. A presumably rational, intelligent young woman felt that she had no choice available to her other than the alleged murder.

One would think that with the wide array of options and the great number of people who would potentially be willing to help — friends, family, counselors, doctors — that Christina Marie Fiske would have felt more supported.

The "sexual revolutions" of the past decades have been aimed at just such situations as Fiske faced. In fact, one of the main motivating factors of the movements was to bring the taboo issues of pregnancy, abortion and sexuality out from under the table, making them legitimate, discussable topics.

What great flaw do we still have in our system of sexual education and awareness that makes a college student feel so trapped as to supposedly commit a murder?

There are a million questions we want to ask. First and foremost, "why?" Did she feel alone? Did something specific happen that made her allegedly act so violently? Was there someone who could have stopped it? What was she thinking?

What we need to realize is that there is rarely a justification for the loss of a life. When Fiske supposedly committed this crime that we see as utterly heinous, she left the realm of rational thinking, and we will never be able to understand.

The question we need to ask is, "How can we keep this from happening again?"

There are numerous legally defined choices for a woman who finds herself in Fiske's position. What seems to be missing is the constant reinforcement that there will always be real-live people willing to help.

Women, talk to each other, and yourselves, about what you would do if faced with an unwanted pregnancy. Educate yourselves on your options, and make sure that you know people who will be unwaveringly supportive if the need should arise. There are few dead-end roads in life, and in this case there are always choices.

We are sure UNCA joins us as we mourn the death of this child. Let us, the university as a whole, make a great effort to ensure that every female here knows their power and ultimate right to choose their course of action.

American Dream

As millions of American sit down in front of their television, they find themselves bombarded with shows that do not even bother to disguise the immoral values that Americans find themselves slipping into on a daily basis. One of these is greed.

A recent show by this name, "Greed," exemplifies everything that humankind has been fighting since creation. Those base instincts are being exploited and given the connotation of an acceptable value. Where have we gone wrong?

At the beginning of a new millennium, the question of whether or not humankind has truly progressed remains debatable. When people lose the urge to fight and be aware of the world that subtly influences the ideology of our nation in the wrong direction, we have degraded ourselves and turned the evolutionary tables.

Big cheese

Three major auto corporations, Ford Motors Co., General Motors Corp. and DaimlerChrysler AG, said March 21 that they are considering modifying the future sport utility vehicles (SUV) to make them less dangerous to small, low-riding cars. Just a few words of response to the companies' kind considerations thanks so much, it's too kind and it's about time. Americans are obsessed with size. The bigger the better, in everything from buildings and homes to cars. This fascination with everything large is more prevalent on the roads than anywhere else.

Look around while driving down the highway and notice how many surrounding vehicles are trucks, vans and those oh-so-popular SUV's. Not surprisingly, a large vehicle is safer than a small one. The U.S. National Highway Traffic Association found that when trucks and cars collide, people in cars are three times more likely to die than those in trucks. Tough luck for the car drivers.

Until we get over our love affair with large, it's nice to know that soon, car drivers will not have to fear for their lives in the midst of the more well-endowed.

Your television is not to blame



Matthew Rossi
columnist

Lately, I've been thinking about the poor underdogs of our world. The people and things who, through no fault of their own, have found themselves the victims of persecution. Frankly, I can think of no single object in this world which has been given a worse label than that yelled at and ostracized device, the television.

That's right, ladies and gentlemen, your TV, your mind-rotter, your idiot box has been the subject of heinous insults for entirely too long, and it is high time someone ended the myth that televisions create stupidity.

Watching this season's "must see" TV, which included such gems as the prime-time crap fest we call "Friends," it becomes painfully easy to understand why people think of television as an idiot box. Indeed, the quality of prime-time TV is somewhere within the broad spectrum of "hideously unintelligent" and "full frontal and back lobotomy."

But kids, it doesn't have to be this way. The television is not, in and of itself, designed to be the temple of mindlessness. In fact, it can hold a very valid and instructional role in society.

For example, television played an incredibly important role in fostering the United States withdrawal from the Vietnam War. During

Vietnam, the United States found itself up against an enemy which was everywhere. The Vietnamese were plain-clothes guerrilla fighters. They could be anyone, anywhere, from the little old lady on the streets to the small child who you just innoculated. This, combined with the fact that the Vietnamese knew the jungle far better than any of the soldiers and had tunnels dug beneath the ground through which they could seemingly appear and disappear at will, led to an incredibly high loss of U.S. soldiers, many of them very young men.

And every night on the television during the news, lists of the dead would appear across the screen, long lists of names of whoever had died from that town.

We would enter hallways and slaughter men and women and children simply because they were suspected to be traitors. Essentially, faced with an enemy who refused to obey the standard rules of fighting a war, we stopped obeying our own rules of conduct, and performed all sorts of human rights violations.

We bombed the jungles with napalm, setting fire to anything in its path, whether it was a tree, an enemy, or a child. Along with the list after list of names that came into every home in America each night at dinner came pictures and footage

from the jungle. It was through these images that people began to see the hideous things that were happening because of this war, and because they could see practically firsthand, the public opinion turned against the war and people decided an outcry was necessary to end the war.

But what would the protest movement have been without the mass media coverage of the marches? To this day, we know that Vietnam was heavily protested, but we rarely hear about the protests which occurred in response to other wars, such as the Korean War and WWII, although they were often just as fervent as any protest against Vietnam.

The reason we remember Vietnam's protests is that they were widely covered on the television. It was a striking image every night to see, along with the bloody front line footage, students and adults marching and organizing against the very war which was costing these lives. Arguably, without the extensive coverage by the mass media, the Vietnam protests would not have been as successful as they were.

Also, along with being a force of information and political change, television has demonstrated that it can be used to bring events of high culture to people who would not otherwise be able to see them. PBS and the BBC are excellent examples of this. PBS frequently airs off-Broadway theatrical events on the television, providing a means for people who live nowhere near New York to see these productions. The BBC (British Broadcasting Company) also does this.

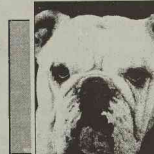
In addition, they also perform filmed productions of stage plays to be aired only through television,

and they sometimes even commission new plays to be written specifically for the airwaves. Playwrights like Tom Stoppard have found this sort of production very useful in furthering their names and careers. So if television is not inherently venal for the inanities of popular entertainment, then why do shows like "Friends" and "Dawson's Creek" seem to dominate the airwaves? It isn't because television is stupid, and it really isn't even because the people who come up with shows are stupid. It is because the viewing tastes of the general public are incredibly simplistic (which is a nice way of saying stupid).

You see, the people who come up with shows base their ideas of what will and will not work on what has and has not worked in the past. When "Friends" came out, the people who created it had based their ideas on surveyed tastes of people in the demographic range they were shooting for. That is how they structured their characters. Then, with the success of "Friends," they designed other shows based on that structure.

The point is that the inventors of TV shows do not exist in a vacuum. They work in direct response to what the American public asks for. And the way we ask for it is by watching one show and not another. If the American public watched only intelligently written, insightful shows, then the executives at the networks would have to respond by creating only intelligent, insightful shows. Otherwise they would not make any money, because nobody would be watching. In short, I place the weight of making popular entertainment smart in your hands. Stop berating your televisions, and if all that is in mindlessness, turn it off.

Seven-day procrastination therapy



Jennifer Ross
columnist

I will admit I procrastinate. Indeed, I am a pathological procrastinator. Every time this backfires, whether it is a poor grade or just an excess of stress, I vow to never procrastinate again. I've made a resolution, a proclamation to procrastinate no more. But by mid-week I have begun to slack off, and then by Sunday, I am yet again pulling an all night cram fest for a Monday morning exam again.

"Why, oh why, do I do this time and time again?" I ask myself. Unfortunately, I am only a pathological procrastinator, not a schizotypic, so there is no ready answer. My story would end here with me caught in this endless, vicious cycle.

But thankfully, the procrastinator's best friend, the Internet, holds knowledge about all things, including procrastination. Even better, it is operational 24-7 for late-night, frantic paper-writing ideas. The first site I'm off to belongs to the University of Guelph (<http://www.uoguelph.ca/csrd/learning/procras.htm>). According to this site, students are the number one rated procrastinators. This is due to three reasons. The first is that there is always a tremendous amount of work to do. Regardless of how much time a student spends studying, they are never really "finished." Second, most students spend only a small number of hours each day in class or lab. The majority of their time is unstructured.

And third, particularly in residence halls, the numerous activities (such as work, sports, hobbies, etc.) compete for a student's limited number of hours in a week. Studying is often pushed to a low priority.

But besides mentioning the three main superficial reasons why students are more prone to procrastinate, the University of Guelph site has some theories about the inner workings of a procrastinator. Apparently, it is sometimes a form of perfectionism.

When nothing less than an "A" will do, many students create an emotional out by procrastinating on assignments. Then when the marks are not up to their standard, they can blame it on the fact that they did the assignment in a hurry and the low grade does not really reflect their ability. In this way, procrastination saves face.

According to the University of Guelph, there are some temporary cures to procrastination, but understanding why you really procrastinate is essential for a long-term cure.

So now that I am convinced I need years of therapy simply because I procrastinate, I have decided it is time to move on to another site. Let's check out a more upbeat sounding page called "Procrastination: Ten Ways To Do It Now!" (<http://www.ucc.vt.edu/study/procrast.html>). This site discusses how procrastination results

in wasted time, missed opportunities, poor performance, self-deprecation. For example, if you have a next analysis, this site relates procrastination to physics' law of inertia (in which greater forces are required to start change than to sustain change, and a mass at rest tends to stay at rest). Another way of viewing this is help end procrastination. The page gives a task only makes it harder to get things going. I have to say this is about the only thing I found of use on this web page, however, because after this the theme breaks into a kind of Stuart Smiley "I'm good enough, smart enough, and doggone it, people like me," thing as a cure all for procrastination.

So, it's quickly (very quickly) off to one more site, so I am heading to the "Seven Day Procrastination Plan" (<http://www.sl.ca.berkeley.edu/CAREN/procras.htm>). This page gives a relatively simple seven-day cure to procrastination. So, until we can all afford the years of therapy that the University of Guelph site recommends, this will just have to do.

This program employs seven tactics for seven days to help end procrastination. On Monday, one lists the tasks they have been avoiding and the benefits of completing these tasks, being specific about the payoffs and rewards.

On Tuesday, the large jobs are broken into smaller, manageable pieces that can be accomplished in 15 minutes or less. For example, if a long reading assignment intimidates you, break it into two- or three-page sections, list the sections, and cross them off as you complete them. This way you give yourself the visual experience of getting something done.

On Wednesday (I warn you — this one sounds a bit lame), you write an intention statement on a

3-by-5 card and post it in your study area where you can see it every day. For example, if you have a term paper you cannot seem to start, write yourself an intention statement that says, "I intend to write a list of at least ten possible topics for my term paper by 9 p.m. I will reward myself with an hour of my favorite recreational reading."

On Thursday, tell everyone. Tell your friends, spouse and roommates. This is a pretty good way to ensure that you are going to carry through with your course of action.

On Friday, find a reward. Don't pick something that you were planning on doing anyway, because a reward must be something that you would genuinely withhold from yourself if you did not earn it. Whether it is movies, clothes, or an hour reading the latest *New York Times* best seller, you will find it is more enjoyable since you've earned it.

On Saturday, the minute you procrastinate into the task you still need to do. The site gives the good analogy of leaving into a chill mountain lake instead of gradually immersing yourself by freezing step by step. Then you're not procrastinating, and you don't have to carry around the baggage of an undone task.

Now, I am not sure if these ideas will really work, but in writing this article, I gained the fresh resolve of an smoker who just bought a pack of nicotine gum. I'm going to quit procrastinating. But not tonight — it is four in the morning and I am exhausted.