

The GUILFORDIAN

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Cambodia reevaluation needed

Chris Ward
Perspectives Editor

In November, I wrote of the return of Prince Norodom Sihanouk to Cambodia. At that point, many Western observers, including myself, thought that the reinstatement of the Cambodian monarch would bring much-needed stability and political order to Cambodia, which has seen much conflict recently. Ever since Vietnamese communists used Cambodia as a staging ground against American forces in the 1960's Vietnam War, Cambodia has been overthrown by the radical Khmer Rouge in 1975, invaded by the Vietnamese in 1979, and has experienced a new round of political oppression in 1992.

Instead of creating a stable base for democratic reforms in Cambodia, the return of Prince Sihanouk has sparked police violence against those in the capital city of Phnom Penh who violate the 10 p.m. curfew. In addition, there was an attempted assassination of the most outspoken opponent of the government, transportation Minister Oung Phan. Mr. Phan, the leading political dissident in Cambodia, was seriously wounded when gunmen opened fire on him after he announced the formation of a rival political party, the Free Democratic Society.

Since Sihanouk's return, a struggle for the Cambodian political leadership has arisen between Prime Minister Hun Sen, a man whom Sihanouk once supported, and Chea Sim, the leader of the ruling People's Party. Recently, Mr. Sim has

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Letters to the editor

Free speech is vital

To the editor:

So, again, the Guilford community has decided to face another issue, the pros and cons of free speech. Returning from a semester abroad in China, I have only one thing to say: I really don't give a damn about how freedom of speech erodes *any* aspect of our society: it is one of the most important rights that we as humans can have.

I have recently left a country where people are afraid to say anything but superficial chatter to those who are not intimate friends. I have seen people beaten by the police for being rude. I have seen the new tiles in Tianamen Square that have replaced the tank damaged and bloodstained ones. I have been detained by the paranoid Beijing police for 8 hours because I took a picture of a piece of written material in that same square (it was the name of a friend's bank, for promotional purposes).

"Harm outweighs the value of 'free speech'"—*The Guilfordian*, 1/24/92. This statement, although an oversimplification of the following editorial response, strikes fear into my soul. If we outlaw pornography, could that set a precedent for the elimination of other "harmful" things such as opposition to the law, opposition to the government or speech against the government? We have a problem in this country, and it can be expressed by one of my more lucid journal observations about China: "The United States and China have many of the same governmental and leadership problems which stem from one thing: a lack of participation by the people. Americans don't give a shit, the Chinese aren't allowed to give a

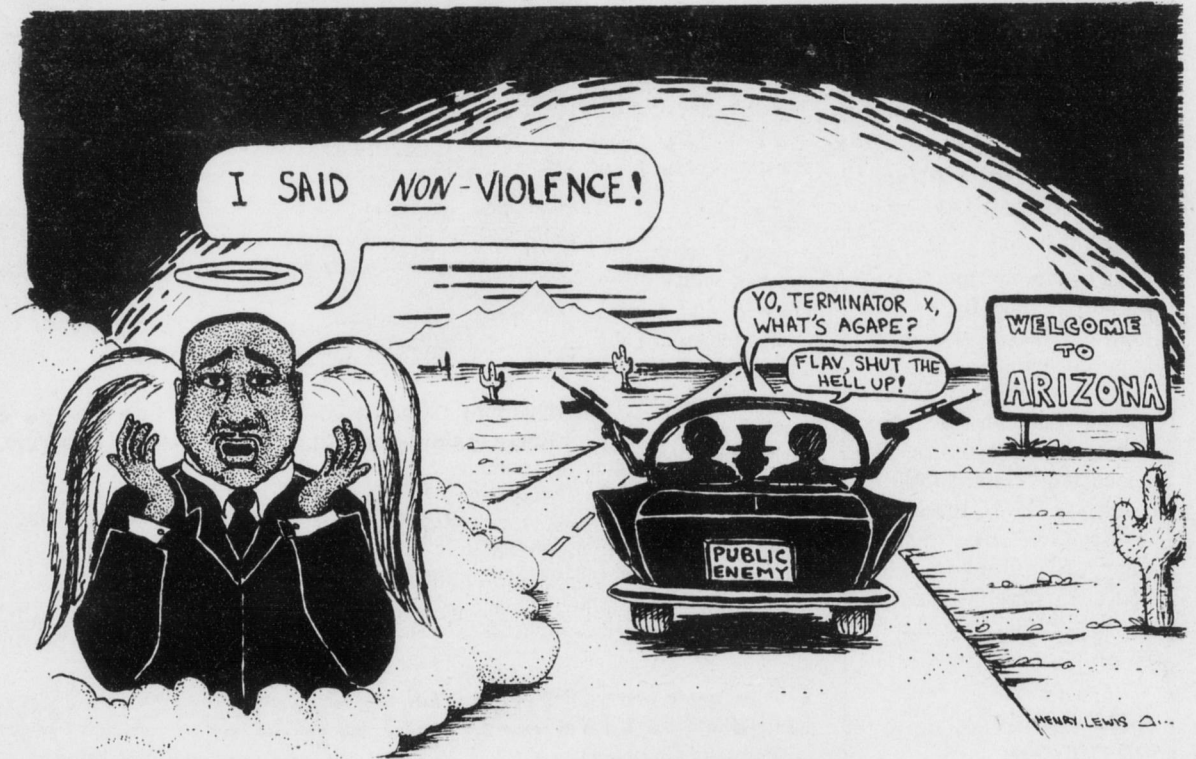
shit."

We worry about the little things which affect our sensibilities and fancies and don't realize that we are sitting safely under the protection of one of the best governments ever constructed. Of course we have our problems, but we can fight them with the tools that the Constitution gives us, such as free speech. To put limitations on these tools, even for the most noble of purposes, is dangerous as a precedent as well as most probably ineffective. *We need to look at the big picture!* Let's not chip away at any constitutional rights because the precedents that such cases set can, once acceptance sets in, become so bloated and idiotic that they become the bridge for more radical, unconstitutional legislature that fixes one small problem but robs us of our ability to fix larger, more important things.

As for pornography, laws against it will simply force it into the unregulatable underground where the horrors will double or triple. There is a demand, so there will always be a supply. We need to face the fact that the solution to such a problem is usually at least as complicated as the cause, and our American penchant for passing quick-fix laws leaves the causes of a problem alone and only treats the symptoms, usually in an election year.

Free speech is a gift that does not discriminate. The rights that people such as the KKK, the neo-Nazis and the publishers of pornography are given in order to publish pornography, spread anti-semitic views and slander minorities are protected under the same umbrella which allows feminists, angry college students and homosexuals to have peace rallies, discuss homosexuality and condemn the abuse of power in our society. Outlawing an industry

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Submissions

The Guilfordian is the student newspaper of Guilford College, Greensboro, NC. Staff meetings are held Thursday nights at 8 p.m. in the Commons, Founders Hall. Submitted articles are welcome. Please address all mail to: The Guilfordian, Box 17717, Greensboro, NC 27410.