

Not standing for censorship

As a reader of this newspaper, you may not agree with the people we quote in our news stories or the pictures we print on our pages. You may not have the same feelings as some of the opinion writers on our staff. You may even demand we throw out certain articles based solely on the particular story's topic or opinion.

However, The Blue Banner editorial board does not censor topics or opinions based on a certain moral or religious agenda. Instead, we strive to present our readers with a balanced and complete array of opinions and topics to represent the variety of ideas and situations of our community, nation and world.

In an anonymous letter, a "very disappointed, even disgusted, parent" expressed feelings of shock over certain things published in The Blue Banner.

"I was extraordinarily disappointed with that newspaper," said the parent. "I hope parents and prospective students who were visiting the campus last weekend did not see it."

While we receive and value the comments of all our readers, we take our rights to express our opinions and those of others very seriously. The "marketplace of ideas" theorizes that, by allowing unrestricted expression of opinion, we arrive closer to determining the truth.

The First Amendment of our Constitution says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press."

The editorial board of a newspaper serves its public best by withholding personal judgments and opinions. In this way, we are truly standing by the promise to be a designated public forum, a place created by the government to be used for expressive activities, among other things, according to authors of Mass Media Law, Don Pember and Clay Calvert. An example of a designated public forum, according to the authors, is a student newspaper intended to be open for use by all students.

The parent, apparently disturbed by our choice to publish Emily Pomeranz's article, "Anti-drug plan stifles Asheville creativity," writes, "Placing this story at the top of the editorial page appears to give it greater validity than it deserves."

It is not the goal of The Blue Banner to provide readers with stories of a certain belief system. As journalists, our objective is to provide an unbiased place for writers to present news topic of value and a platform for individuals to express their opinion. We do not censor the content of our newspaper unless it includes something libelous or obscene.

"Legalizing drugs should not be a priority of the university," the parent wrote.

As a completely student-run newspaper, The Blue Banner does not represent the views of the university or administration. We stand by our goals as journalists to be objective, which means sometimes we print articles that go against the actions or opinions of the administration. At other times, the stories in The Blue Banner highlight or coincide with actions or opinions of the administration respectively. Either way, the beliefs of individual writers on the opinion page in no way directly represent the views of UNC Asheville.

"Although university newspapers should be written for students, they still have an obligation to represent universal standards and values," the parent said.

Because all our readers have different beliefs and opinions, we feel that it is biased for us to assume or represent any "universal" standard or value. Because the editorial board does not reject articles based on personal opinion, we will continue to receive feedback about published articles, and we will continue to print this feedback.

Also, last week, the company that prints The Blue Banner refused to print unless we removed a painting that won second-place in the Juried Student Art Show because, the printers said, they do not print nudity.

Because of deadlines, we cropped the nude portions of the photo and were only able to print about one-eighth of the original painting. While we do uphold certain standards, including excluding pornographic and libelous material from the paper, the photograph did not fall into either of these categories and was newsworthy content.

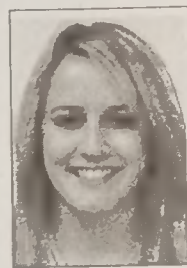
The Blue Banner welcomes comments and criticism of all types about anything published in the newspaper, and we want to publish any signed letter fitting the requirements stated under our masthead; however, we will not censor the opinions of some in fear of offending others.



Allie Haake
Editor in Chief

Abortion law takes away female rights

By Emily Pomeranz
POLITICAL SCIENCE STUDENT



Emily Pomeranz
Political Science Student

The abortion debate has now switched from women's rights to fetus rights, and women should take note.

The Supreme Court upheld the federal Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003 with a 5-4 vote last week. The act bans the medical procedure known as "intact dilation and extraction," which means removing the fetus from the uterus as a whole instead of aborting it while it is still inside.

This procedure is used starting from the 12th week of pregnancy, a fact that stirs up pro-life advocates. Pro-choice advocates are

"Pro-choice advocates are outraged and scared, as they should be."

outraged and scared, as they should be.

Abortion is a sensitive issue for everyone because it fundamentally demands a line to be drawn on where life begins. It does not seem right that a room full of

eight men and one woman have the right, or knowledge, to decide what women everywhere can and cannot do with their bodies. This most recent decision should be an eye-opener to women everywhere. These people are taking away our rights.

The partial-birth abortion method that was banned is extremely controversial, especially among religious groups and social conservatives. These groups claim it is the cruelest of abortion practices and display gross, graphic pictures to convince others of their opinions.

Another argument against the procedure states it is unnecessary and women choosing to abort a fetus that late in a pregnancy are only doing it for selfish reasons. These people are incorrect.

The intact dilation and extraction method has been used for various reasons, including saving the mother's health and removing a fetus that is not going to live after birth. Making this procedure illegal will have tremendous effects on women, and yet, only one woman had a say in the decision and she voted against the ban.

Shouldn't women have more of a say on what they can and cannot do concerning their bodies? Women have completely different health issues than men, and they need to be addressed by fellow women.

President Bush's "culture of life" extends only to fetuses, cor-

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rupt politicians, oil companies and evangelicals. It does not include the soldier who died in combat or the poor child who died from malnutrition. It does not include the elderly who can't afford prescriptions and now, it

does not include a pregnant woman who is concerned for her life. Hypocrisy runs rampant at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, and it has spread to the Supreme Court.

Roe v. Wade was a landmark decision for women's rights and the right to privacy. Now 24 years later, we have regressed as a society and conformed to the conservative and bigoted opinions of five chosen judges who use their positions to advocate religious convictions.

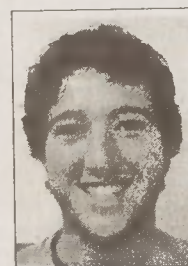
Why isn't this country in an uproar? News about Anna Nicole Smith and Britney Spears might be more interesting and entertaining, but this decision will affect a lot of women, perhaps even you or someone you know.

The decision made last week will only further the plans of Bush and other social and cultural conservatives to completely eliminate all types of abortion and leave women with no options. Old, white men have nothing to lose from the decision they made.

They are satisfied and confident in taking away the rights of women. They are content with overturning one of the most important court decisions of the 20th century. Who knows what right will be taken away next?

Administration should announce threats immediately

By Trevor Worden
STAFF WRITER



Trevor Worden
Staff Writer

After UNC Asheville experienced a potential threat to campus security Thursday, administration did not alert students of the situation until it had been controlled and the police detained the individual.

A resident of The Grove Apartments called a local broadcasting station and said he wanted to die and made references to the shootings at Virginia Tech and Columbine High School.

"The student said something to the effect of he admired the Virginia Tech shootings, and this alerted campus authorities due to

"Waiting to alert students until the situation was under control made students vulnerable to other attacks."

the proximity of The Grove to UNC Asheville," said Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Bill Haggard.

A few days earlier, Virginia Tech experienced two shootings two hours apart.

Public information officers at the university felt as though the first shooting was too minimal to alert students or for classes to be cancelled.

This simple mistake made students vulnerable to other attacks. Campus police excused their actions by saying they were going to alert students after the first situation was under control.

Obviously we did not learn from other's mistakes. Campus Police only notified UNC

Asheville students after the situation was under control. This sort of censoring could have led to another Virginia Tech catastrophe.

We know that after catastrophes like Virginia Tech, there are always more people out there who want to catch the wave of idiocy.

After 9/11, there were many scares, and the same happened after Columbine and West Paducah High School in Kentucky. The incident dealt with another mentally ill individual who seems to hold some gripe against students.

As a university, it should be the administration's first priority to ensure the safety of students. As soon as there is a verified threat on or near campus, it is important for students to have immediate knowledge of the threat.

The sooner students know about potential threats, the sooner they are able to take the right precautions.

The incident at Virginia Tech was a truly horrifying event. We can sympathize with such a loss because this could have been any of us. College campuses are very accessible, making it easy for an

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attacker to make a move.

The killings in Virginia affected each of us, and we grieve with everyone affected, but we cannot

let this happen again. We have to be proactive about these sorts of violent crimes and our first defense is campus police.

Administration should notify us

"It is time we call for a heightened sense of security officers on campus, an active lookout for criminal activity and an intelligent protection of student's security."

of safety issues on campus as soon as possible. It is our right to know what threats we could face. Knowledge is the only way to arm ourselves against future threats.

Violence is a crime that can only be stopped once people know about it and can act against it, and we cannot wait until a situation is under control before the administration e-mails every student.

Homicide is ranked as the highest cause of death for the 10 to 24 age range, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Crimes at school affect 73,000

students, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. This is opposed to the 61,000 students that are affected by crimes outside of school areas.

Teenagers and young adults experience the highest rate of violent crimes, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

With this sort of knowledge, we have to be better prepared. The crimes that happened at Virginia Tech are not as rare as we would like to think.

On the contrary, we are targets of crime, and we have to prepare ourselves for this sort of victimization.

Colleges and high schools have to take a proactive stance in crime against their students. We have to act intelligently against school threats or campus violence.

It is time we call for a heightened sense of security officers on campus, an active lookout for criminal activity and an intelligent protection of student's security.

This may mean we need more than one tired, lonely resident assistant sitting in a dorm at 3 a.m. keeping watch over an empty dorm.

We may need officers to sit in these spots instead, in order to ensure our safety. This may mean we need more officers on campus to survey campus buildings and suspicious activity.

It is time to take a different approach against violence on our campuses. It is time for us to arm ourselves with knowledge.

We will not stand for any more random acts of violence against our college campuses. Instead, we will combat violence and prepare ourselves for the future. It is time for change.

The BLUE BANNER Editorial Board

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The Banner is UNC Asheville's student newspaper. We publish each Thursday except during summer sessions, finals week and holiday breaks. Our office is located in Karpen Hall, 017.

The Banner is a designated public forum and welcomes letters to the editor and articles, considering them on a basis of interest, space and timeliness. Letters and articles should be e-mailed to banner@unca.edu and limited to 300 words. They should be signed with the writer's name, followed by the year in school, major or other relationship to UNC Asheville. Include a telephone number to aid in verification. All articles submitted are subject to editing.

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