

Editorial: Censorship

by Traci Latta

Limits. What is the definition of limit? Well, according to *The American Heritage Dictionary*, a limit is "the point, edge, or line beyond which something cannot or may not proceed." When we think of limits, we usually are thinking about the speed limit or how long we can go without sleep. Monday morning at the Founders' Day convocation another type of limit was discussed. It was the limit at which we, as American citizens, have the right to expand our minds through art, literature and self-expression. We're talking about the big C - censorship.

The controversy over censorship had seemed to die down over the past two years, we really haven't heard much from Tipper or Jesse in a while, but with the advent of *Beavis and Butt-head* and gangster rap, the C word has once again become a hotbed of conversation. The "limits," it seems, have been pushed to the extreme lately according to censors, and morally, as a

country, we are going to (excuse me) hell in a hand basket.

Being a journalist, now and in the future, I'm sure I'm going to come up against the issue of censorship, and I'll be the one who is censored. It's a sad fact that the words and thoughts that are guaranteed to us in the US Constitution under the First Amendment are taken away from us because a select few find them objectionable or obscene. Who can say that my desire to read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* can't be fulfilled because the terminology in it is found to be racist or obscene?

It seems to me that when people such as Jesse Helms or school boards get together to ban books or pieces of artwork that they find objectionable, they aren't taking into account that someone's inner feelings went into that work or that it is a reflection of what is going on in history at the time. It is not the desire of an artist or author to inflame censors, and if it is, it is their prerogative to do so and to express

themselves. If censors want to look for someone to blame for the terminology in *Huck Finn* then I say look back to the time when it was written and thank their ancestors for supplying the language. If Helms wants to stop the funding of the NEA for artists who express themselves in other ways besides painting pictures of flowers and fruit, let his close-minded self do it, but there is such a thing as the private sector that will fund controversial artists without the help of the government.

My feeling on censorship, if you haven't picked up on it already, is this—if you don't want to see it, read it or hear it, close your eyes, don't watch it, buy it or go where there is the possibility it will be there. Don't take away my God given right to read, listen or view what I want just because it's objectionable to a small group of people.

Those who censor are usually scared of what is being censored. They don't take the time to find out what others think about what they are censoring and they go on a rampage and do foolish things like ban classic literature. I don't find everything on television today tasteful or fit for certain viewing audiences, but I don't go on a witch hunt and have the television show taken off the air. I simply do not watch it.

There will be opponents of my opinion that say that by letting these shows stay on the air, these books on the shelves and this music on the air that the evils of the day will continue to run rampant. Well, there were evils in this country long before *N.Y.P.D. Blue*, *Alice in Wonderland* and Snoop Doggy Dog, and I dare say that there will be evil after they are long gone. And unfortunately there will always be censorship.

MEA wants to apologize to ABA and the student body for not showing *What's Love Got to Do With It* last Friday night. We fell short on our responsibilities and only hope we did not inconvenience too many people. This type of behavior will not be exhibited by MEA again.

Sincerely,
Alicia Morris, MEA President

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