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COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Don't censor songs because of attacks

Since the terrorist strikes occurred three weeks ago on the East Coast, the American people have become familiar with the art of attack. Terrorists attacked the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a plane that crashed in Pennsylvania; hatemongers have been attacking Muslims and citizens whose looks suggest Middle Eastern descent; and now the First Amendment is under attack by station directors employed by a media conglomerate called Clear Channel Communications.

Clear Channel owns approximately 1,170 radio stations in the United States and reaches more than 110 million listeners. The company was accused of censorship in the New York Times; however, the Clear Channel denies any First Amendment violations. According to Clear Channel, station directors sent to member stations a list of 150 songs they thought were inappropriate and could offend some listeners in the wake of the recent terrorist attacks. Other members of the me-

dia, including the Emerald editorial board, think this suggested blacklist smacks of overt censorship under the guise of sensitivity.

Some of the songs on the banned list were seemingly harmless tunes such as John Lennon's "Imagine," a song about world peace, and the Dave Matthews Band's "Crash Into Me," arguably a love song.

Music is interpretive by nature, and we teeter on dangerous ground as a society when we allow the infiltration of censorship even on the airwaves. Potentially any song that happened to be playing on the radio the morning of the attacks could bring back memories for listeners. It is absolutely ludicrous to censor based on content in any form, especially if the intent is to protect listeners from remembering the tragedy.

By blacklisting potentially offensive songs, station directors are also launching an attack on the intelligence of millions of listeners. After all, if a listener doesn't like the music, he or she can simply change the channel.

We need to respect right to dissent

Freedom of the press is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution, but apparently in this period of American history, members of the press may be taking their freedom for granted.

The Daily Courier, a Grants Pass newspaper, recently fired a columnist who criticized the actions of President Bush immediately following the attacks of Sept. 11. Dan Guthrie wrote that he believed President Bush was "hiding in a Nebraska hole" instead of returning to the White House after being informed of the terrorism. Guthrie further criticized the president, saying that once faced with real pressure, Bush succumbed to stress and "bolted."

After publishing the column, the Daily Courier received so many letters criticizing Guthrie that the publisher promptly fired him and then printed an editorial

apologizing for any undue anger the column may have provoked. The publisher claimed the dismissal was due to a "personnel problem."

Columnists are paid to share their opinions, despite the popularity or lack thereof of those opinions. Some may agree with Guthrie's assessment of President Bush's reaction to the terrorism, while others are welcome to disagree. However, when a newspaper begins firing columnists because the writer's ideas spark a negative backlash, the whole country's freedom of speech is under fire.

In this period of uncertainty, every voice deserves to be heard, and it is critical that dissenting voices be heard. The First Amendment is something we need to protect as a society, no matter your opinion of George W. Bush.

Editorial Policy

These editorials represent the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. The editorial board members are editor in chief Jessica Blanchard, managing editor Michael J. Kleckner, editorial editor Julie Lauderbaugh, assistant editorial editor Jacquelyn Lewis, community representative Gabe Shaughnessy. Responses can be sent to editor@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Please include contact information. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

Clarification

In the Monday, Sept. 24, edition of the Emerald, the little girl, Grace, pictured on page 3 with the article "Voters approve Broadway reopening," should have been identified as the daughter of both Angela Jaster and Tony Russell.



Steve Baggs Emerald

THUMBS UP to life alone before marriage

So we've come to college, that crazy place where choices hop upon our doorsteps in neatly wrapped packages with "try me" on their tags, all done up in tinsel and little bows. We look at these in delight and wear what we've come to find proudly on our foreheads or secretly in our closets, all the while singing, "Freedom!"

But alongside new things that are tried, there is always that inherent risk of how the outcome will affect us. And of the many fetishes we college kids like to partake of, one that is particularly prevalent involves living together with a boyfriend or girlfriend outside of marriage.

I must say it is quite the trend these days, almost as common as Starbucks coffee cups, and it seems as harmless. Thus the popular argument: A couple should live together before they get married to make sure they are really right for each other. Couples should have a trial run, or in other words, a chance to run away. Part of the reason for this widespread case of espousal phobia, fear of marriage, is the poor experiences young people have often had in their own family backgrounds. With the increased divorce rate, many young people are hesitant to make lasting commitments.

The term "wedlock" seems to embrace all its connotations. Who wants to be locked? But if marriage is ever a goal in the future,

then let me strongly suggest that cohabitation is not the best prerequisite. Although it seems like an advantageous way to test marital compatibility, based on my research on the topic, I believe cohabitation actually leads to a higher divorce rate.

One reason for a higher risk of divorce is that people willing to live together are more unconventional than other people and less committed to the idea of marriage. A 1997 longitudinal study conducted by demographers at Pennsylvania State University concluded that "cohabitation increased young people's acceptance of divorce" and "the more months of exposure to cohabitation that young people experienced, the less enthusiastic they were toward marriage and child bearing."

Serial cohabitation should be avoided because the experience of dissolving one relationship after another lessens a person's ability to deal with and resolve problems. Research done at Macquarie University in Australia found that couples who lived together before marriage "separated more often, sought counseling more often and regarded marriage as a less important part of their life than those who did not live together before marriage."

I think cohabitation also stems from the fact that people are more self-oriented these days. People know what they want, and they

don't want anyone coming between them and their goals. Marriage means giving a lot up — you have to be willing to center your life around and with another person. If you ask me, from my slightly feminist perspective, the only thing living together implies is sex without commitment and free housekeeping for the man. It is no wonder men are in favor of it; they get their cake and can eat it too!

People claim that you never really know what someone is like until you live with them, but that isn't true. Sure, people will learn strange things about their spouse once married, like they insist on dancing naked to Bob Marley, and sometimes while getting up in the middle of the night to cook spaghetti. But no matter who you marry, there are always going to be a few personal flaws; no one is perfect, and living together isn't going to prove that any more than spending good quality time with someone.

We don't need a preacher to tell us that marriage is good and living together is bad. We just need to look at the statistics of those who choose one option over the other. The facts speak for themselves. Now young people must choose and live with the consequences. As for me, I choose marriage.

Tara Debenham is a columnist for the Emerald. Her views do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald. She can be reached at taradebenham@dailyemerald.com