

Patriotism vs. Freedom of Speech

Americans should honor our country in a united stance

Americans should continue to speak up for what they believe



Cyndee Mady
Opinion Editor

The definition of a patriot, according to Webster's Dictionary, is "One who shows love and loyalty for his or her country."

While I don't doubt that the thousands of protesters who have been inundating Portland's downtown streets love their country, I do question their loyalty to the men and women in combat who are willing to give up their lives in warfare to protect their fellow Americans.

Recently I saw a large American flag flowing upright in the back of a pick-up truck, reminding me of the scores of flags and flyers adorning vehicles following the tragic events of 9/11 like "United we stand," and "Proud to be an American."

Natalie Maines of the Dixie Chicks made headlines when she denounced President Bush at a London concert stating, "We're ashamed the President of the United States is from Texas." Seattle's own Pearl Jam toured Japan and Australia parading a mask of George Bush, which lead singer Eddie Vedder would fling to the ground and promptly stomp on.

Where is our patriotic spirit now? Or are we so fair-weathered that we can only come together when there is an imminent threat to our country as a whole?

Well I've got news for you. Our country is at risk, and when these so-called Americans defame our government, especially to other countries, it enables our adversaries to collect ammunition for enemy press and in turn empower the opposition into a "divided we fall" mentality.

Protestors are monopolizing law enforcement agencies whose efforts would be better utilized in defense of terrorist activity. Downtown businesses that may already be in jeopardy of closing their doors are losing valuable income due to consumers avoiding these high traffic areas congested with people "rallying for peace." These obstructions also make it difficult for emergency vehicles to reach their destinations, which could prove fatal.

When peace marching has adverse effects on our community, it's time to redirect that energy into a more positive outlet. Candlelight vigils in appropriate locations that honor our troops who have died, and those who remain in harm's way is one method of upholding individual beliefs while honoring our country. Another way is to spend the hours normally expended in protest in volunteer work that aids in making our community a better place to live.

I don't think anyone can honestly say they are in favor of war, but the issue here is not whether one agrees with the war, it is about expressing support to our men and women in uniform by exhibiting loyalty to our government regardless of personal convictions.

So resurrect those flags and flyers and let's show support in a united stance for the spirit of America.



Bekah Finch
Staff Writer

"A fictitious war...set up by a fictitious president," said Michael Moore at this year's Academy Awards; his words will not soon be forgotten.

Statements by The Dixie Chicks, Martin Sheen, and Susan Sarandon's prominent peace sign flashed to the camera will also be remembered. How dare they speak against our president when it is so important for us to be united? They only get away with such things because they are famous, and only in America.

Imagine such a statement had been made in Iraq. Michael Moore wouldn't have made it off that stage. Although American people are angered by the acts of these celebrities and protestors across the nation, all of these people are expressing the same thing that makes this country great: freedom.

FREEDOM, my fellow Americans, freedom of speech, freedom to protest-FREEDOM. What are we fighting for if not freedom? What did terrorists attack on September 11? Freedom. That is what this country is built on; that's what we are trying to instill in Iraq and all over the world. Americans have the right to say what they feel and think no matter how "wrong" it might seem to others.

Since American forces bombed Iraq, there has been much outrage and anger throughout the world, especially in America. People are panicking, and they have a right to. American is sending young soldiers to a foreign land where they may die.

These are difficult, scary conditions, and people are scared! Fear is the most horrible of emotions, and people want to talk about it; they want to stop it.

The United States is a democracy. There isn't just one person who makes decisions. People are against war. People are for war. All these people have the right to express their opinions. People are not against the US; they are against war and because they are American citizens they have the beautiful opportunity to express that opinion.

Americans are encouraged to be independent and unique and show their differences. If someone passionately feels war is wrong it's his or her right to express it. I love that about America. It's unfortunate that many others take it the wrong way, just as it is unfortunate that some take their freedom to a negative level like being hateful or harmful.

Taking the good with the bad is part of living in a country where we are truly free. I'd much rather go to bed at night knowing people are speaking their minds for peace than live in a world where I fear someone hearing my opinion.

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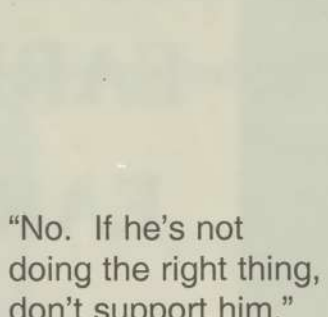
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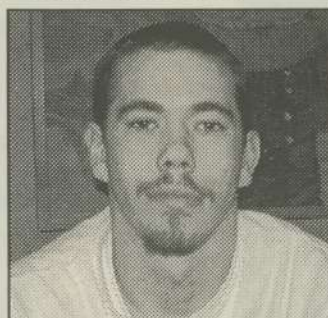
Do you think Americans should support our president regardless of their beliefs?



"Yes. Stand behind your government. They won't do anything horrible for America. They're seeking our best interests."
- Anna Cronin



"No. If he's not doing the right thing, don't support him."
- Nick Newton



"Yes, I may not agree personally, but we made the decision on Bush as a country. As for this war, I stand behind Bush."
- Chris Bland

"It's his decision, I can only pray for wisdom."
- Melissa Summerton



Do you have something to shout about?
Letters to the editor are always welcome.
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