

Censorship has media concerned

Media censorship should be closely monitored, enforced



Jeff Sorensen
THE CLACKAMAS PRINT

If the ill-accountable media insists that sex and lies are the only way to sell their product, then the censorship of that media is needed now more than ever.

Recent events have practically caused a riot at the offices of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as they've attempted to "crack down" on generally offensive content in the media. Meanwhile, Conan O'Brien is still confused on what his guests can and can't say on his "Late Nite" show; comedians Robin Williams and Chris Rock, who rely heavily on profanity, are all but banned from television; and lonely young men can still have beautiful women to "talk" to for \$2.95 a minute. Bottom line: the FCC's efforts are too little, too late.

Censorship in the media has long been an outstanding and controversial issue, but the fact is, the media has a responsibility of fairness to the public if for no other reason than that the public doesn't have access to mass media as a free forum. Sure, they censor some things (even Jerry Springer won't let just anyone on TV), but the only thing that's really censored in the media anymore is the content that could potentially eliminate viewers.

But people in general should be smart enough to protect themselves from outside influence, right? We are disabled from creating an informed thought, opinion or idea, thanks to the lack of information provided by the media. They use their right to "free speech" and their right to "remain silent" in concert to create a world surrounded with what they feel will make for the best ratings, rather than the highest national intelligence quotient as they use the same two basic rights to protect their ability to prevent any negative publicity that might seep through their airwave-tight filters. This holds true for television, radio, and newspaper alike, all of which have become nothing more than a free-range playing field for some of our nation's most ruthless and financially demanding salespeople.

It's in the interest of sales that the

media has run rampant with their lying and misleading marketing campaigns. And are they wrong about? Here's a short list: we don't need a leggy blonde on the weather channel to tell us it's raining; there doesn't have to be a murder "in our neighborhood" just so we'll watch the news; Faith Ford and Kelly Ripa are not funny, especially together; beer doesn't really help guys get women; magic pills don't enlarge any body parts or cause immediate weight loss; and there is yet to be a "low-carb solution" that doesn't taste like fresh cardboard.

It doesn't matter what the forum is—TV, radio, newspapers or magazines—they've all sold out to advertising and sub-par programming in a world driven by business and money-grubbing. The children of our nation are growing up to believe that having sex, drinking beer, treating women like objects and disrespecting their parents is how they become "cool." The fact is, the media is the reason we're self-destructing, and something needs to be done.

Media censorship violates public's right to complete truth



Hilliary Ferguson
THE CLACKAMAS PRINT

It's funny to think that one word and one boob can bring about a cultural revolution bent on revoking our First Amendment rights, but that's exactly what's happened, and now the media world is caught in limbo, attempting to balance somewhere between edgy media that sells and increasing fines from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

In the 1978 case of FCC v. "Pacifica," the FCC declared any material deemed "patently offensive" (any depiction or description of sexual or excretory activities or organs) would be banned from the airwaves. This was well and good, because for the most part TV and radio stations stayed within the line of common decency. Then came Janet Jackson's right boob and the FCC decided to take more of a literal (not contextual) meaning to "patently offensive."

What's more, the Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act (BDEA) of 2004 is meant to increase fines for violations. Currently, the highest fine allowed is \$27,500 per offense. The BDEA would raise fines to \$275,000 per offense and up to 3 million for repeat offenders.

For major communication companies, these are often absorbed as a cost of doing business. For independent—and almost always controversial—media sources, these fines could potentially cause bankruptcy.

"What might be the cost of doing business for Infinity Broadcasting could spell death for a college station that plays records with edgy lyrics, or a low-power community station that airs serious discussions about sex and health," said Jesse Walker, author of "Rebels on the Air."

Under the literal meaning of "patently offensive," educational shows and health magazines are also in jeopardy. The popular call-in show "Love Line" would clearly be in violation, as most or all of its subject matter concerns sexual activities and organs. The FCC is ignoring the value of a show like this. So many of today's youth have no alternative means of accessing reliable and competent information on the topic. We cannot refuse free sex education to the public, and the FCC is trying to take it away, claiming indecency.

This, in turn, leads the public to believe that our bodies are taboo and that sex is unnatural and immoral. The FCC is creating a society where we make up stories about storks and babies because we're too embarrassed to explain the truth to our children. The FCC is trying to unlearn us.

In the end, the FCC v. "Pacifica" case determined that material with provocative content is better played late at night, when children are less likely to watch. This solution is so simple, it has somehow escaped the FCC, and they are now trying to remove all questionable material from free public access.

People want to be able to watch or listen to shows that deal with real, everyday topics. Life isn't censored, and every day we well identify with a TV show that is. Radio's allure is that the personalities continually scream in the face of controversy, exploring every side of the issue. Without these facets, modern media is boring at best. If controversy is the spice of life, censorship is unsweetened corn puffs.

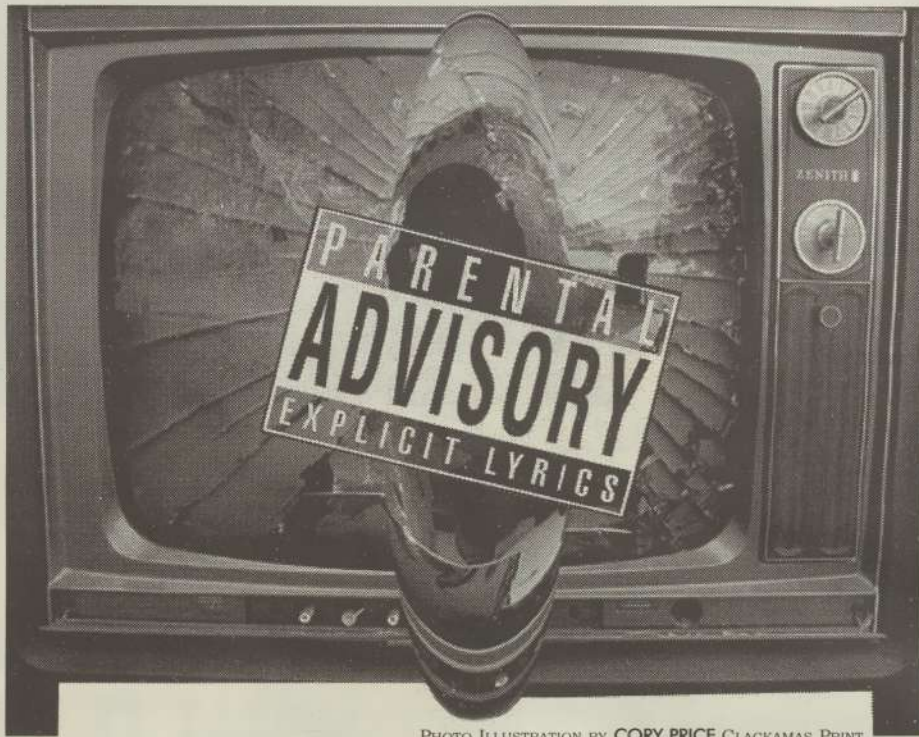


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CORY PRICE CLACKAMAS PRINT

Kucinich brings old message, new enthusiasm to northwest

Ben Maras
OPINION EDITOR

On the afternoon of March 26 in Portland's own Saturday Market, Dennis J. Kucinich, called by many "the man who won't be our next president" appeared to speak to a crowd of die hard supporters.

Dressed in a dark suit and tie (quite the contrast to the usual Saturday Market goer), Kucinich is much shorter than the average candidate (I would guess about five foot eight), and seems nearly a caricature of himself, with his short stature and almost goofy appearance.

It is hard to imagine that this 58-year-old vegan is running for President, but the second he opens his mouth, all doubt of his validity as a candidate disappears. His speeches are passionate and powerful.

"I want to say that it is so important that the Democratic Party begin to take a stand for peace," Kucinich began. "We need to insist on a new direction for this country, we need to work with the world community, we need to bring the UN in and we need to bring our troops home."

He barely finished the sentence before being interrupted by cheers and applause

throughout the audience.

Kucinich then mentioned the plan that has been on his website (www.kucinich.us) for months detailing exactly how he would do so.

"This is an opportunity for us to come together in a shared vision of a world where it's possible to have peace and a world where it's possible that we can all stand for principles of social and economic justice. Oregon is going to help send America in a new direction, and this campaign is going to give you a basis to do it," he said.

With a cheer and a wave, Kucinich finished his speech and was ascended upon by the crowd of fans. Making his way over to the famous "silver statue" (i.e., the human statue most Portlanders are familiar with), Kucinich donated a dollar and in return received a juggling act that nearly stole the show—nearly.

My attempt to penetrate the crowd and get close enough to ask him a question and have him sign something took some time; in fact, it took until he was away from the group, with only a few people remaining.

"We have to go ... now," his body-

guard grumbled to anyone in earshot, but Kucinich's attention was immediately turned to me. I asked him how he (a Congressman for Ohio) felt about H.R. 163, the infamous draft bill.

"I am completely opposed to it, and I promise you that I will do everything in my power to stop it," he responded.

I shook his hand and thanked him, to which he replied, "You're the one who makes it possible." With that, he was whisked off to his car by his campaign managers and driven off to his next destination.

Kucinich may not be the next president, or the one after that, but he speaks with enough energy and passion that it is hard to believe that he won't make a difference, or that someday he won't be President. Although the candidate representing the Democratic Party may be a

forgone conclusion, Kucinich's message remains the same: "Let fear end, and hope begin."



PHOTO COURTESY OF WWW.KUCINICH.US

Ex-Presidential hopeful Dennis J. Kucinich poses with the Portland landmark "Silver Statue" at Saturday Market during a campaign stop.

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