E-Scriptor
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This journal of student writing is a collection of essays written for College Writing II classes at Marist College for the 2007-2008 academic year. Each teacher of College Writing II was asked to submit an outstanding essay from his/her class. Two editors then reviewed the essays, and works were chosen from each semester to be included in this volume.
Jayne Helfrick won first place with her essay, “Themes Behind Art Vandalism” written for Lynne Koch’s College Writing II class. Jayne is a junior from Atlanta, Georgia. She is majoring in English Writing with a minor in Creative Writing and Art History. She plans to do graduate work in Art History.

Brian Smith won Second Place for his essay, “The Sitcom Evolution” prepared for Peggy Hach’s College Writing II class.

Allyson Molloy won Third place with her essay “The Patriot Act and Government Surveillance: A Denial of Basic Constitutional Rights” written for Gloria Brownstein’s College Writing II class. Allyson Leigh Molloy says most people know her as “Ally.” She is from the Poughkeepsie area and has lived here all of her life. She graduated from Arlington High School in LaGrangeville, where she played the oboe and was accepted into American Honor Bands, where she performed several concerts while touring Europe. Her parents are both teachers in local school districts, and she is the second of four children; two of her brothers attend college and the other is in seventh grade. Allyson enjoys reading, outdoor activities, exercising and watching various television programs including the New York Giants football games. She is an English major with a Spanish minor, and her ultimate goal is to become a high school English teacher.

Sean Antoniewicz won Fourth place with his essay “Vehicles Powered by Alternate Fuel” written for Amanda Vladick’s College Writing II class. Sean is a 19-year-old sophomore at Marist from Chester, New Jersey. He attended West Morris Mendham High
School where he played four years of Lacrosse. In his spare time he likes to hang out with friends and watch sports.

**Spring 2008**

Lindsay Moreau won First Place with her essay “Nothing to Eat? Who’s to Blame?” written for Angela Laflen’s College Writing II class. Lindsay Moreau is the daughter of Bill and Cheryl and grew up in LaGrangeville, NY. She is currently a senior, and will graduate with a Marketing degree and a minor in Advertising. She is a member of the Marist Track and Field team and the Marist College Dance Club, and works in the Undergraduate Admissions Office. Lindsay would like to thank Professor Laflen for submitting her paper to the contest.

Nick Sweeney won Second Place for his essay, “Heroes and Liars: The Story of Yates the Futurist” written for Donna Baumler’s College Writing II class. Nick is a sophomore at Marist College, and is an English Major concentrating in Writing. He was born in Lindenhurst, New York. Nick absolutely loves reading and writing, and can easily spend an entire day at a bookstore just looking through books. He would like to thank Donna Baumler for helping him become a better writer. After college, his dream is to ultimately become a writer and write novels.

Marissa Santory won Third Place for her essay, “The Human Error Behind the Titanic Disaster” written for Carolyn Cooper’s College Writing II class.
Andrew Wellington won Fourth Place for his essay “American Torture: Violating the Geneva Convention” written for Marc Fisher’s College Writing II class. “Drew” Wellington is a sophomore Criminal Justice major with a minor in Information Technology. He is involved in clubs such as Singers, Computer Science Society, and LGSA, in which he holds an office. Drew is from a small town on the west side of Rochester, NY, where the population of cows outnumbers people. Writing has always come rather naturally to him, but college writing has really honed his skills. In all honesty, he admits his writing needed a lot of work when he left high school, and college writing really helped him in that regard. He didn’t even know he had been entered into this competition, and he would like to thank Professor Fisher for submitting his paper.
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By Jayne Helfrick

Recently the Trevi Fountain, one of Rome’s renowned artistic works from the eighteenth century, spilled blood—blood-red water that is. On October 19, 2007, a baseball-capped man emptied a bottle of red dye into the fountain before scurrying away, leaving shocked spectators to mourn, or admire, what Robert D’Agostino, an Italian blogger, has called the resurrection of the Trevi. The red water disappeared within a day, leaving no trace of the act committed and the public in debate—was this an act of vandalism or artistic genius? Or perhaps the act fell somewhere in between? The destruction of art can come in a variety of forms, be it tampering with a piece and leaving
permanent damage, causing temporary mutation in the artwork (such as the incident of the Trevi Fountain), or using vandalism as an individual performance. Though art is open to interpretation, when art vandals permanently alter other pieces of art it is not artistic genius but wonton destruction of someone else’s genius. Protecting pieces of art from vandals is the best way to assure public trust and continued enjoyment of art.

Iconoclasm, the act of interfering and destroying, or attempting to destroy a work of art, is a crime, yet there are those who believe that what is considered vandalism by some could equally be considered as a form of contemporary art. Some art critics view vandalism as another artist’s interpretation or opposition to the work. When debating the controversial subject of iconoclasm, one must look at the reasoning behind many acts of art vandalism. Most acts of vandalism are done in front of a wide audience. The vandal wants to make a
statement—wants his “art” to be noticed and publicized. This factor brings on two important concepts: the idea of vandalism as (a form) of protest and the use of another’s work as a means to project one’s own motivations. For instance, the vandal at the Trevi committed his act midday, with many people surrounding the area to observe, leaving behind not only his empty bottle of red-dye, but also a box of leaflets referring to Futurism, an early-twentieth-century art movement. In the fliers, the vandal explained his act as a form of protest of the Rome Film Fest occurring that week. Not only was the vandal able to grab the attention of those surrounding the fountain that day, he was able to gain attention across the globe. With no real damage done to the fountain, the public became aware of a possible darker side to the film festival previously unknown to them. Some, however, feel the act can be interpreted as a theatrical performance of contemporary art standards. Although many view the destruction of art as merely a crime, art vandalism
can emphasize forms of social protest, political protest, and even be presented as a form of art in itself.

Private destruction of art is rare. For most acts of art vandalism, the vandal craves the eye-catching, shocking statement that is made by the physical destruction of art. In one instance, a group of vandals broke into a Swedish museum armed with crowbars, axes, and a radio blaring death-metal music to destroy several sexually explicit photographs by Andres Serrano. The vandals, however, did not stop there. After escaping from their crime, they uploaded a video of the destruction they had committed onto the popular website, YouTube (Kimmelman). The act of vandalizing the works was not enough. It was recognition for the crime that the vandals wanted in this situation, and similarly in most situations this is what the vandal craves most.

The destruction of famous “masterpieces” affects the emotions, perceptions, and sensibilities of the viewers, provoking them
to feel compassion and sympathy for the piece. As Tobin Siebers discusses in his “Broken Beauty: Disability and Art Vandalism,” the vandal often attacks the human form in art. Generally it is the face, the eyes, the breasts, and the genitals that are mauled, and the sensitivity of these human areas brings yet another form of sympathy from the viewer. There is personification of the artwork as it takes on qualities that as an inanimate object it does not have. When paintings are splashed with acid or paint they are not simply stained, the paintings bleed. When canvases are ripped or torn with a knife, they are wounded. Statues that are smashed are considered battered and bruised, as if their skin has only been wounded and will recover with time (Siebers). Siebers uses the example of “The Venus de Milo” to emphasize the point that the “rules for looking at art and the world are utterly different” (Siebers). Looking at “The Venus de Milo,” the viewer immediately realizes that there are no arms past her shoulders. Despite the woman’s disfiguration, the object still
represents an ideal of feminine beauty in Western art (Siebers). When one views “The Venus de Milo” they are not horrified because of the missing limbs, but if one were to see an armless woman walking down the street ahead of him, the gaze would most likely not be of awe, but one of horror or surprise. Siebers’s example clearly illustrates how the representational image that is visible within the artwork does not translate to the real world. When a piece of art shows an object as disabled or flawed, the image seems more realistic to the viewer. Yet, when the work is vandalized, because the piece was not originally conceived as disabled, we as viewers “see the perfect image evaporate before our very eyes” (Siebers). This shows how, in art, the same image that in the real world is considered ugly can become beautiful.

Furthermore, a piece of art can never be fully restored following vandalism. Experts that restore artwork tend to never completely “fix” the work back to its original state. They
leave invisible prostheses to the body of art because, by leaving flaws in the work, the art shows what it has suffered through and allows the viewer to believe in the authenticity of the work. After all, all works are damaged over time—through aging, uncontrollable environmental factors, archaeological finds—all work shows its age and if restored to “perfect condition” the art lacks the history it has come to acquire over its lifetime.

It is not difficult to understand why art vandalism is used to promote the self-interest of others. Rather than vandalizing some of the world’s most beloved possessions, publicity can be sought after in other forms of protest. Vandalized artwork, however, has one benefit that is hard to obtain through other efforts: money. Most artwork is unique and rare, which results in a relationship of supply and demand. Leo Steinberg said it well when he claimed that “Art is not, after all, what we thought it was; in the broadest sense it is hard cash”
(Steinberg). This is why the vandalism of artwork creates such a stir throughout the media and the public. Art is expensive—to make, to purchase, to restore, to care for—and the combination of money and the uniqueness and sacredness of a work of art will undoubtedly make headlines.

Politics and money go hand in hand, and therefore, the destruction of expensive artwork is often used to protest political and economic concerns. In 1914, Mary Richardson attacked “The Rokeby Venus,” a piece by Velasquez, in retaliation for the arrest of the British suffragette movement’s leader, Emmeline Pankhurst (Goss). Richardson’s attack on a work of art was not her first form of protest for the suffragette movement, but because of the importance and fame of the art, she gained a great deal of attention for her dedication to her political ideals. In May of 1985, a man named Eugene D. Burt slashed eight out of seventy-five paintings in an exhibition in Washington D.C. before writing religious
slogans over the paintings with a red crayon. These writings included “John Paul is Good” and “Antichrist Ronald Reagan 666” (Goss). Burt’s attack was based upon his own, somewhat ludicrous, views. He turned himself in to the police immediately after the attacks, only providing the reasoning as a denouncement of the anti-Christ in Europe. Although his intentions are difficult to understand, from the attacks the public was introduced to Burt’s opinions, his feelings on certain politicians, and how Burt felt those politicians related to his religion. Similarly, the vandal of the Trevi Fountain used an already existing piece of art to protest the price and values of the Rome Film Fest (Povoledo). The vandal in this case used the public area where thousands crowd each day to literally stain his statement in one of Rome’s most historic pieces. His intention was to present his own opinion to a wide public audience. These examples, illustrate the idea of vandalism as a protest, whether it be for
someone’s political views, religious beliefs, or in the case of the Trevi, in protest of the art community itself.

Protesting the restrictions placed on art and the commercialization of many works of art has become a key issue behind many destructive acts on art. Although museums and galleries are open for the public to view, the traditional museums have always had the bylaw of “no-touch” that all viewers must abide by. Often the most famous pieces of work are hidden behind glass casing or roped off, allowing the public to come only so close to the work. To some, the isolation of certain pieces gives them yet another personified characteristic of high importance—as if the piece is an elite among society that cannot be disturbed by the visitors that come to see it. The “Mona Lisa,” hanging in the Louvre, “seems to recede farther behind glass” each year (Kimmelman). The amount of money spent to enable artwork to be displayed, cased off, or protected by guards, cameras, and other expensive security
systems is enormous, yet each year more and more money is spent to keep the world’s beloved artworks as safe as possible. Many times the destruction of work relates back to the limits that are imposed upon the public when visiting museums. One already spends money to gain access into the museum, but then is barely able to see the works. When describing how Picasso’s “Guernica” was displayed when transferred to Madrid over twenty-six years ago, hidden behind bulletproof glass and surrounded with soldiers guarding the masterpiece, it “was almost impossible to see” (Kimmelman). Often, art vandals seek to make a statement not only about the artwork, but also about the way it is portrayed to the public—often as something that the viewer is unworthy of being in the presence of and must, therefore, be restricted from coming too close to the piece.

While some art critics focus on the political motivations driving art vandals, others propose a variety of mental disturbances as a
motivation for vandalizing others’ artistic creations. It is commonly accepted that art is to be seen, not touched, and that the work of others is to be respected, whether it appeals to the viewer or not. Someone who crosses this socially constructed boundary could therefore be viewed as abnormal. While art is supposed to provoke thought and emotions within each person, the vandal is provoked so intensely to the extent that he will actually reach out and destroy what is in front of him. In Siebers’s “Broken Beauty: Disability and Art Vandalism,” he uses three examples to introduce the idea of psychopathological reasoning behind vandalism. Hans-Joachim Bohlmann habitually attacked twenty-three paintings after the death of his wife, claiming that he drew pleasure from the destruction of something others cherished. Robert Cambridge fired a shotgun at Leonardo da Vinci’s “The Virgin and Child with St. Anne and John the Baptist” in protest against society. Dennis Heiner brushed strokes of white paint across the face and body of Chris Ofili’s “Holy
Virgin Mary” in an attempt to “clean” the painting which had used pornographic cutouts and elephant dung in its creation. All three of these examples show how the vandal damaged another’s work to advance his own vision upon the world, but also present a connection between the disability of art and the mental instability of the vandal (Siebers). Whether it be in the case of Bohlmann who is unable to cope with others cherishing the artwork because he has lost what he cherished most in life, his wife, or in the case of Heiner who saw Ofili’s work as an attack upon his religious and moral values, the psychopathic vandal is unable to distinguish between art and reality.

The delusional vandal is not only unable to distinguish between art and reality, but is also unable to differentiate between the work of another and his own. This concept leads into perhaps the most controversial issue behind art vandalism, protest as fine art. The vandalism of an image changes the function the
work was once created for, therefore creating a new image. This idea shows how the act of vandalism not only creates a new image, but also how the vandalism changes the referent of the work (Siebers). What the work once represented is often no longer visible because the act of vandalism superimposes itself upon the image and changes what the work means, corresponding more to what the vandal was protesting than what the original artist was attempting to explore. Despite the ability of vandalism to provoke the emotions and perceptions of those who view the art in its new form, the work done by vandals cannot be considered art because their intention is not to create a work of their own, but rather to take the work of another and manipulate it to so that it benefits their own needs. Whether the vandal’s actions are intended as protest or not, the vandal uses the wealth and fame of another to gain attention because he or she is not capable of creating a work of art or other form of protest that
will have the same attention given to it as that of someone else’s work.

There is a distinction between contemporary artwork and aspiring to create art through vandalizing someone else’s work. Contemporary art “seems to exist in a zone of freedom” (Stallabrass). Often contemporary artwork pushes the limits of what has been done before to represent what is happening in the present time. Robert Rauschenberg’s piece, “Erased de Kooning Drawing” is an example of contemporary art that illustrates the confusion that can arise within the creation of something new from the vandalism of an original artwork. Rauschenberg took a graphite drawing by Willem de Kooning and erased the entire piece before displaying it as a work of his own. This was considered an innovative idea to many art critics; however, Rauschenberg only erased the work of another, which to many could be considered the same as splashing paint across another artist’s piece. The
work of Rauschenberg was some of the first to begin questioning the nature of reality (Cerrito). In his “Erased de Kooning Drawing” there is the question of existence present—was there an image there before, or is the paper all that ever existed?

Vandalism as a form of art changes once again when looking at graffiti, which can be defined as illicit marks that attempt to establish some sort of composition that is typically visibly accessible to the public (Phillips). Graffiti, like vandalism of art, is done for a variety of purposes. Political graffiti often combines with other forms of public media, such as comic books, newspapers, and even in art exhibitions, in order to gain access to a wide range of people. This form of graffiti can be used to recognize certain political groups or dissatisfied individuals, but may also be created in response to situations such as riots or to current political legislation. Gang members also use graffiti to indicate membership
within a group, to distinguish themselves from their enemies, and to visually mark territorial and ideological boundaries. This genre of graffiti often includes stylized codes and calligraphies and may correspond with tattoos and clothing that represent gang membership. The most commercialized genre of graffiti is known as graffiti art, which is typically considered to have originated from New York subway graffiti. “Canvases” can be created upon the side of a building, large rocks, road signs, billboards, train carriages, and vehicles. This typically is the genre of graffiti that is considered as fine art to some (Phillips). One might initially think of the graffiti on abandoned buildings and throughout many urban locations before recognizing that the imagery of graffiti has started to work its way into galleries and museums. Keith Haring is considered a professional artist, yet his work first began on subway walls versus upon the walls of galleries (Phillips).
With the work of graffiti artists now being presented as legitimized artwork, many question whether graffiti, which is often considered vandalism, as a true form of art and whether graffiti that is created legally can be considered actual graffiti (Phillips). In addition to graffiti’s migration into the fine art world, the imagery found in many pieces of graffiti can now be found in a variety of media forms. Several clothing lines have integrated the graphical calligraphy and striking forms of graffiti into their designs. Graffiti has even made its way into video games, such as “Getting Up: Contents under Pressure,” where many visual images display graffiti on outer walls; “gamers” can even create their own versions of street art in the game (Lueck). Phillips makes a valid point when she says that “graffiti personalize depersonalized space, construct landscapes of identity, make public space into private space and act as promoters of ethnic unity as well as diversity” (Phillips). In contrary to the vandalism of another’s
artwork, graffiti is still a form of creation that has the ability to provoke thought and emotions to a very public audience.

Although the vandalism of art may represent the creation and thought of an important idea, it is still the destruction of an original form. It is impossible to sum up the motivations for art vandalism. All vandals destroy art for their own purposes, but there are common characteristics of art vandalism. Whether the act is manipulated as a form of social protest, political protest, or protest of the art itself, the vandalism of art is done publicly and begs for the attention of the rest of the world. In his article “A Symbol of Freedom and a Target for Terrorists,” Kimmelman says that “Part of what’s beautiful about an art museum, aside from what’s on view, is that it implies trust—it lets us stand next to objects that supposedly represent civilization at its best and, in so doing, flatters us for respecting our common welfare” (Kimmelman). The very thing that is so wonderful about the
concept of museums and galleries and other forms of public art is the trust factor that each person is given. Art vandals not only take advantage of this freedom, but destroy all that is represented within these boundaries. Without trust of the public to respect the art surrounding everyone each day, there is no life for art. Vandalism of art not only takes away something from the artist, but destroys the public’s freedom to view the art and formulate their own thoughts, emotions, and sensibilities towards the work, and therefore eliminates all that art is supposed to represent.
Works Cited


The Sitcom Evolution

By Brian Smith

Ever since television first took hold in American homes, it has revolutionized the way we receive our information and entertainment. One type of entertainment genre that was born from television was the situation comedy, or “sitcom.” Although sitcoms have greatly changed over time from their origins as radio show adaptations, they would typically show a problem solved and a lesson learned in a 30-minute time frame. These predictable outcomes were presented in a humorous way, while showering the audience with laughter and enjoyment. Through the years, several types of sitcoms developed, including: domestic comedies (*All in the Family*), kid comedies (*Happy Days*), couple comedies (*I Love Lucy*), science-fiction comedies (*Bewitched*), rural comedies (*Beverly Hillbillies*), ethnic comedies
(The Jeffersons), career comedies (The Mary Tyler Moore Show), and slob comedies like Married with Children. (“Sitcom”)

No matter the type of sitcom, each followed the same basic structure and its content was influenced by current events; therefore, sitcoms can be said to reflect the values in society during a particular time period.

The earliest sitcoms from the post World War II era during the 1950s boasted the “good feelings” of the time. I Love Lucy was one of the first “couplecoms” and set the standard of how sitcoms were produced and how audiences would perceive them. This show pioneered the 3-camera filmed and post-production techniques, whereas most prior shows were shot live. This show was shot in front of a live studio audience, adding real laughter to the soundtrack but filmed from 3 different angles to create the illusion of continuity in the final product (Hilmes). As in I Love Lucy, most sitcom families from the 1950s, like in Leave it to Beaver, and Ozzie and Harriet were content middle-class families
living in the suburbs or working towards their goals. Families in these shows often provided moral guidance based on clear-cut rules through the love and respect they had for each other and their children.

Even though the threat of nuclear attack plagued military and foreign policy in the 1950s, other than news coverage it was rarely seen as a theme in entertainment programs or popular culture. “The general absence of Cold War politics from 1950s television programming may have been a response to the horrifying nature of the subject, which would not appeal to viewers interested in escaping the stress of their daily work day” (Schwartz). For marketing reasons, television executives usually avoided controversial subjects in their programming to prevent boycotting of their advertisers’ products, and had a tendency of avoiding political controversies of any sort (Schwartz).

From the beginning, jokes among sitcom characters were often used to “express power between the sexes,” with conflicts between
male and female characters often the foundation on which many
domestic sitcoms were built (Scharrer). Since the 1950s, the
typical sitcom father’s role has changed dramatically, and the
progression of his role through the years has altered the type of
humor found in most shows. The result was a humor shift as his
role changed from the traditional head of the household with the
surrounding actions of other family members providing the bulk of
the show’s humor to a father being ridiculed as the source of
humor, rather than just supporting it. The changing social climate
would allow certain new jokes to become “fair game.” (Scharrer).
This was often the case with sitcoms where the father supported a
middle working-class family, such as in *Roseanne, The Honeymooners*, and *All in the Family*. Meanwhile, fathers from an
upper-class or wealthy family would still maintain the traditional
role as the strong head of the family and were not ridiculed for the
show’s humor, as in *Leave it to Beaver, Father Knows Best*, and
*The Cosby Show*. 
Changes to the roles of women in American society, especially in the 1970s, also contributed to these humor shifts. By this time, women were becoming increasingly important members in the nation’s workforce, and the traditional domestic mother figure was becoming outdated. As economic responsibility for the family became increasingly shared among the men and women of a household, stereotypes of gender roles naturally changed. For example, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* strengthened women’s appearance as an independent figure in the workforce who could reach age 30 without being married or celibate, and still led a happy life (Taflinger). As women took on increasingly powerful social roles, fathers in more sitcoms were usually depicted as more foolish than those in sitcoms dated closer to the 1950s. The changes that took place over the years to the sitcom’s family have been summarized as follows:

All-knowing and wise sitcom father of the past is theorized to have enjoyed a position above humorous criticism due to his
economically crucial role to the sitcom family. That portrayal is hypothesized to have given way to a modern scenario in which the sitcom father is the target of a growing number of jokes and is portrayed in situations that make him look increasingly foolish. (Scharrer)

During a time of social liberation in the 1970s, Norman Lear’s *All in the Family* stretched the situation comedy’s themes to their limits. For the first time, a sitcom’s plot was often based on subjects such as sexism, racism, and religious bigotry. This show violated cultural taboos with open discussions of sex and biological functions including death and bodily wastes (Taflinger). Soon after came *Three’s Company*, the first of the T&A (tits and ass) comedies. “The T&A sitcom is devoted to showing several beautiful young women wearing a minimum of clothing romping about the stage uttering sexual innuendos” (Taflinger). Society’s past norms mandating that these topics be discussed privately and
discreetly, if at all, no longer applied, and thus set the stage for present-day sitcoms which are often centered around those themes.

*All in the Family* also brought American class struggle to the forefront and provided a transition away from earlier domestic comedies, which had little connection with current social issues. The show’s main character, Archie Bunker, gave the audience a look into America’s underside, as the “cigar-chomping, beer-drinking, slur-slinging bigot in white socks, gaberdine trousers, and vest undershirt” (Kingwell). The comedy is driven mainly from conflicts between Archie and his upper-class son-in-law, Mike Stivik, reflecting the post-1968 generational and cultural conflicts. Differences among social classes were made obvious, “philistine against intellectual, working man tackling university-educated upstart” (Kingwell). The social concepts in this show are often regarded as a defense of blue-collar values during the Nixon administration, since Archie was the “silent majority” under attack. This show was one of the first socially conscious TV programs to
become a hit, and started a new trend for shows in the following years.

Some sitcoms in the 1980s saw a resurgence in family values themes from earlier shows, such as *The Cosby Show*, while others did the exact opposite. The “slobcom” was introduced in *Married with Children*, which showed a dysfunctional family consisting of a deadbeat dad, a frustrated and lazy housewife, and sexually charged delinquent children (“Sitcom”). The late eighties witnessed the advent of the animated sitcom, *The Simpsons*, the humor of which was parallel to that of the slobcom.

Many new humor themes were added to sitcoms in the 1990s while the envelope of acceptable behavior on television shows continued to be pushed. One of the most popular sitcoms in recent history, *Seinfeld*, was “a show about nothing, ranging from masturbation contests to the famed Soup Nazi” (“Sitcom”). Meanwhile, shows such as *Frasier* depicted class conflict elements as seen in *All in the Family*. As one of the most critically
successful shows of the time, *Frasier* implements the class-war of the 1990s American in a fairly opposite way compared to *All in the Family*. Frazier is a true elitist with an ivy-league education and several professional credentials, yet his character represents an idiot. He would appear to be the true American dream unfolded, yet in his upper-class position he is snobbish and has a sophisticated taste but poor judgment. Frasier is “a thoroughly modern fable about the simultaneous privileges and misgivings of those in the top echelons of the winner-take-it-all economy” (Kingwell). Although the show may depict upper-class elitists as foolish, it reminds us that at the day’s end, they are the ones driving home in luxury cars. *Friends* also promoted upper-class values since the group lived in lofty Manhattan apartments, fashioned with popular expensive clothing, and lived ultimately wealthier lifestyles than the average middle-class American (Brooks). This show, along with *Everybody Loves Raymond* also gained mass appeal and major success during that time.
In this past decade since the premiere of *American Idol*, sitcoms have entered a decline with television’s new domination by reality shows, due mainly to their relatively cheap production costs without a need for writers or many professional actors (Brooks). However, recent sitcoms have witnessed a return to family values seen in earlier shows, but rather than focusing on life inside the home, they concentrate on the workplace. This new string of shows tends to expose modern-day society’s obsession with ultra-long work weeks, technology, and pop-culture, all while using a new single-camera technique and often a fake documentary format made popular by *The Office* to appear more realistic.

“Networks appear to be putting more emphasis on workplace comedies now because jobs have become a primary focus of viewers’ family, dating, and social lives, making such sitcoms a natural extension of family and buddy comedies” (Benson). Modern sitcoms have also appeared in the form of animated cartoons, which normally use parody and satire to create humor from current events in politics and popular culture. Most popular
among these shows are *South Park* and *Family Guy*, which drive explicit themes involving sex, racism, violence, and most notably profanities to the extremes of acceptable content on television by today’s standards (Brooks).

Throughout its history, television sitcoms have spanned a changing array of topics, but one thing they all have in common is making their audiences laugh and feel good. For over fifty years, Americans have continued to step out of the norms of their everyday lives for 30 minutes and into the humorous unpredictable events in the lives of their favorite sitcom families.
Works Cited


The Patriot Act and Government Surveillance: A Denial of Basic Constitutional Rights

By Allyson Molloy

Is the Patriot Act unconstitutional? Does it create an all-powerful executive branch? After September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush expanded the power of the executive branch drastically with by passing the USA Patriot Act. Sections of the Patriot Act have granted the government unprecedented power in the form of government surveillance. The Patriot Act has destroyed the foundation of the American government by ignoring the checks and balances established by the United States Constitution. It has also trampled on the constitutional, inalienable rights guaranteed to the citizens of the United States of America.

Government surveillance has a long history in the United States. In the 1920s, technological advances replaced telephone
operators with automatic switchboards. This change caused the American people to believe that their telephone calls were and should be private. However, during World War I, police agencies used wire taps to monitor resident aliens who were suspected of being spies. And in the 1980s, police started using telephone “tapping” to gather evidence (Clemmitt, 2006). In a Supreme Court case, Katz v. United Sates, the Court ruled that FBI agents had violated the Fourth Amendment by “not requesting a judicial warrant before installing a listening device on a phone booth to record call” (Clemmitt, 2006). In 1971, the U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Damon J. Keith of Michigan took the constitutionality of wiretapping one step further when he ruled that national-security was not an “adequate justification” for wiretapping American citizens without warrants (Clemmitt, 2006). Keith stated that “we are a country of laws and not of men, if the president is given power to delegate who shall conduct wiretaps, the question arises whether there is any limit on this power” (Clemmitt, 2006). In 1972, Keith’s ruling was upheld by the Supreme Court. The
Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act or FISA was established in 1978. It created a group of judges to review government actions (Clemmitt, 2006). However, in 2002, President George W. Bush “secretly authorized” the National Security Agency or NSA to bypass FISA, and apply government surveillance in certain cases without warrants (Clemmitt, 2006).

The Patriot Act was passed 45 days after the September 11th attacks as an anti-terrorism measure. This act gives the federal government access to personal information such as medical records and tax records (“Patriot Act,” 2007). It establishes new powers in terms of government surveillance such as electronic eavesdropping. The federal government justifies the Patriot Act as a necessary measure to ensure national security. Although Congress passed the Patriot Act, the “administration was separately instituting a series of rules without consulting Congress that allowed authorities to indefinitely detain suspects and listen in on conversations between some federal prisoners and their
lawyers” (Bettelheim, 2002). The executive branch was covertly including authorizations over and above those passed by Congress.

The Patriot Act allows the government to access personal information and eavesdrop electronically on its citizens. This act gives the national government unprecedented power in the area of government surveillance, and it is therefore unconstitutional. This act is in violation of several constitutional amendments. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America states:

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; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. (“Bill of Rights,” 2007)
The Patriot Act violates the First Amendment because it abridges the American people’s right to freedom of speech. Citizens of the United States should not be fearful of the possible consequences of having personal conversations. The federal government refused to release information on the number of times United States citizens or “resident legal aliens had been electronically monitored” (Bettelheim, 2002). The rights of American citizens are being breached through this act.

The Patriot Act also violates the Fourth Amendment which guarantees:

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly
describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be
seized. (“Bill of Rights,” 2007)

The American people are granted the right to be “secure in their
persons, houses, papers, and effects,” and this right cannot be
violated unless there is “probable cause” (“Bill of Rights,” 2007).
The Patriot Act allows the government access to personal
information with no probable cause and without needing to
disclose that they conducted a search (“Patriot Act,” 2007).

The rights granted in the Fifth Amendment are also abridged by
the Patriot Act. The Fifth Amendment states:

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise
infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand
Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the
Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger, nor
shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in
jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal
case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life,
liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private
property be taken for public use, without just compensation. (“Bill
of Rights,” 2007).

The Patriot Act has violated the part of this amendment that
requires an “indictment of a Grand Jury” in order for an individual
to be held accountable for the “capital” or “infamous crime” (“Bill
of Rights,” 2007). The Patriot Act gives the government the power
to make arrests without judicial review. The suspects involved in
these cases can be detained without being charged with a crime.
Under the Patriot Act, the government has seven days to charge
suspects with a crime, release them, or begin a deportation process
(Bettelheim, 2002). These extreme consequences can result from
government eavesdropping without there ever having to be a
judicial process.

The right to privacy is not specifically stated or guaranteed in
the Constitution of the United States of America. However,
privacy is considered a human right. There are certain amendments to the Constitution that imply a right to privacy such as the Ninth Amendment and the Fifth Amendment. The Ninth Amendment states that, “The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people” (“Bill of Rights,” 2007). The Fifth Amendment specifically states that the only way private property or information can be submitted to a search is if there is an indictment or some form of judicial process. There have also been several Supreme Court cases that have dealt with the right to privacy. The most famous of these cases is Roe v. Wade which upholds a women’s right to privacy.

The proponents of the Patriot Act claim that it is a necessary attempt at improving national security and preventing future terrorist attacks. The Patriot Act has broken up terrorist cells in states such as Ohio and Florida (“USA Patriot Act,” 2007). Although the Patriot Act has unearthed terrorist cells in the United
States, it comes at the sacrifice of the unalienable rights guaranteed to all American citizens. It also defies the fundamental structure of the American government in establishing an extremely powerful executive branch that is not open to the scrutiny of the other branches. The Constitution creates a system of checks and balances that is violated by the Patriot Act, which grants the executive branch a massive amount of power. Congress was at a disadvantage to combat such a powerful executive because by nature it is decentralized and bipartisan. President Bush has also changed the function of the Department of Justice. Attorney General John Ashcroft stated at a Judges Conference, “The mission of the Department of Justice has been transformed from a focus on prosecution of illegal acts to a focus on the prevention of terrorist attacks” (Bettelheim, 2002). The Department of Justice was not created for the purpose of preventing terrorist attacks; however, President Bush had the power to reconstruct this department to use as he deemed necessary. Attorney General John Ashcroft also stated at the same conference, “That is why we…{are} mindful
that we seek to secure liberty, not trade liberty for security” (Bettelheim, 2002).

The Patriot Act creates an all-powerful executive branch and violates the constitutional rights of American citizens. The most fundamental rights that we value as citizens of the United States, such as freedom of speech and privacy, are mutilated by the Patriot Act. The security that we seek to ensure through anti-terrorism legislation should not come at the sacrifice of our constitutional rights.
References


The Benefits of Vehicles Powered by Alternate Fuel

By Sean Antoniewicz

In this day and age, technology is rapidly advancing. Not only technology as in computers and electronics, but also in different areas such as in medicine, education, and even the motor industry. In the past decade, advancements in the motor industry have been very notable. With the recent “oil crisis,” the search for alternate fuel types has become more urgent. Automobile manufacturers, along with scientists, are exploring different sources of fuel to power cars. Several means of fuel are being investigated, such as ethanol, electric, biodiesel, natural gas, propane, and even hydrogen. Many of these alternative fuels, as they are called, are proving to be very successful. It is becoming easier and easier to believe that at some point alternative fuel will become the standard fuel in the automotive industry. Vehicles powered by alternative
fuel should eventually be able to take over the gas market because these vehicles are more environmentally friendly, they are becoming more cost efficient for consumers, and the types of alternative fuel are quickly developing.

Environmental and health damages due to pollution are vast. Each year the total damages in dollars from pollution are in the billions. The noxious gases that automobiles release into the atmosphere can be detrimental to our health and the environment. Problems such as smog in cities, building deterioration, loss of vision and even cancer have been tied to some sort of pollution. These problems could be greatly reduced with the use of alternative fuel instead of gasoline. One type of alternative fuel, biodiesel, is one of many that can help to reduce pollution and environmental destruction.

Biodiesel has been described as “a type of processed fuel that can be derived from biological sources. It can be readily used in diesel engine vehicles. This distinguishes it from the use of straight
vegetable oils (SVO) or waste vegetable oils (WVO) as the chosen alternative which requires vehicles to have modified diesel engines installed in order to make use of such fuels” (O’Connor). The use of Biodiesel results in significantly reduced emissions of carbon monoxide. Biodiesel also contains fewer hydrocarbons and can reduce tailpipe particle emissions by as much as 20 percent (National Biodiesel Board). This means that the adverse effects on the environment would be greatly lowered by using this type of fuel. In an interview with Patricia Brennan, an educated individual on the topic of Biodiesel fuel, she states, “The use of Biodiesel fuel would help to cut down the harmful emissions released by gasoline powered cars, and also help to lower our every growing dependency on the oil industry” (Brennan). Biodiesel is a clean burning alternative fuel produced from domestic, renewable resources. Biodiesel contains no petroleum, but it can be blended at any level with petroleum diesel to create a biodiesel blend. It can be used in diesel engines with little or no modifications. Biodiesel is simple to use, biodegradable, nontoxic, and essentially free of
sulfur and aromatics. Biodiesel is often confused with vegetable oil, but they are much different. Biodiesel must be refined and meet strict EPA regulations. Biodiesel is a very practical source of fuel because it is so easy to use. Since little or no modification of a diesel engine is required to use biodiesel, nearly any diesel car can use it. Biodiesel refueling stations are turning up all over the country. Although Biodiesel may not presently be the solution to alternative fuel, it will play a strong part in the equation.

Ethanol is another environmentally friendly alternative to gasoline. “Ethanol is made by fermenting and then distilling starch and sugar crops -- maize, sorghum, potatoes, wheat, sugar-cane, even cornstalks, fruit and vegetable waste” (Addison). Producing Ethanol and burning it is believed not to contribute to the greenhouse effect. As stated by the US EPA, Ethanol’s high oxygen content reduces carbon monoxide levels by 25-30%. This statistic suggests that the use of Ethanol will benefit the environment and help to reduce pollution related health risks. With cars that run on
pure Ethanol, harmful emissions would be near zero. The use of Ethanol can reduce the emissions of cancer-causing benzene and butadiene by more than 50%. Engines can be manufactured to run purely off of Ethanol; however, most Ethanol vehicles are currently a mixture of Ethanol and gasoline. The use of Ethanol can help reduce the emission of cancer causing gases into the air. Because Ethanol is very high in octane, Ethanol cars are extremely efficient; an engine running on Ethanol will perform better than that of one running on gasoline. Hopefully in the near future, 100% Ethanol powered vehicles will be available (Addison).

Propane, hydrogen, and natural gas are other alternative fuels. Propane, or liquefied petroleum gas, is a clean burning fossil fuel that emits a significantly lower amount of toxic and smog forming air pollutants than standard petrol gasoline. Propane is also less expensive than gasoline and is available for access in the United States. Hydrogen fuel is another alternative with nearly no negative effects on the environment. When a hydrogen fuel cell is burned
in a car it emits zero harmful gases into the air. The only substance that comes out of the tailpipe of the car is water. Hydrogen can be produced domestically, therefore eliminating our reliance on foreign countries for oil. Hydrogen is also one of the most abundant elements on earth, making it highly accessible.

Natural gas, which is a fossil fuel made up mostly of methane, is one of the cleanest burning alternative fuel sources. Natural gas can be used in two forms: compressed natural gas or liquid natural gas. Natural gas can be domestically produced, making it easily accessible. It also has about 80% less smog producing pollutants and about 35% fewer greenhouse gases than standard gasoline.

The use of alternative fuels has a positive impact on the environment. Simply changing the way we fuel cars can help preserve our beautiful earth and even help to save the lives of people. However, there are other ways to use gasoline more efficiently. Hybrid cars are an alternate way to power a motor. A hybrid car uses mostly electricity to power it, but also gasoline in
some situations. The hybrid car uses an electric start to turn on the
car, eliminating cold start up emissions; during ignition, gasoline
powered cars release the most harmful emissions. When the car
breaks, the battery uses the force and motion of the brakes to
recharge its batteries, making it a very self-sufficient car. The car
only uses gasoline at high speeds and during quick acceleration.

The availability and pricing of cars that use alternative fuels
have become far more reasonable lately due to advances in the
field of alternative fuel and the recent rise in demand for these
cars. Because of the high demand, automotive manufacturers are
becoming more efficient at producing them. They have also made
the cars much more reasonably priced and reliable and have
implemented alternative fuel motors on different models.
Companies such as Lexus and BMW have begun to produce
alternative fuel motors on their already popular models. Not only
are these changes present in cars, but sport utility vehicles and
even pickup trucks are being produced with alternative fuel
motors. Ford, for example, offers the Escape sport utility vehicle in a hybrid form. Even Chevy jumped on board, releasing an E85 Silervado pickup truck; E85 means that the truck uses 85% Ethanol to power the motor, resulting in lower harmful emissions and a cleaner burning truck. Eventually, companies hope to run the engine on pure Ethanol, which would greatly reduce harmful emissions. The technology is available; however more testing is needed to implement these vehicles into the market.

Due to the increase in availability, the cost of alternatively fueled vehicles is decreasing. The price of an alternative fueled car is only slightly more expensive than purchasing a non-alternative fueled car. However, tax deductions are being granted for driving one of these cars or trucks. Along with this, alternative fueled cars are much better on mileage, thus resulting in less money spent on refueling. The 2005 Toyota Prius, a hybrid car, gets on average about 45 miles to the gallon and about 500 miles to one tank of gas. The average annual cost to fill up this car is under $1,000.
This is about half the cost of what it takes to fill up the gas tank of a car of equal size. Toyota now offers most of its cars with a hybrid engine for only about $5,000 more on average. Even high end car companies, such as Lexus, now offer hybrid cars. Lexus claims that the Lexus RX 400h is a hybrid sport utility vehicle that costs only about $3,000 more than the regular RX and delivers the same power and performance (Lexus.com). Lexus also offers two other hybrid models that are available for about the same price as their non-hybrid counterparts. All automobile manufacturers are beginning to realize the potential in alternative fueled vehicles and are starting to research and implement alternative fuel into most of their models. The opportunities to have an alternative fueled vehicle are readily available; now it is left up to the consumer to act.

Aside from hybrid cars, manufacturers are tapping into even more potential fuel sources. For example, BMW is looking to implement a hydrogen powered series of cars. BMW is looking to
set the stage with the 7 Series and push the boundaries to new fuel alternatives: “The BMW Hydrogen 7 is a four-seater with the two passengers at the rear enjoying the same high standard of comfort in the world's first hydrogen car developed for everyday use as in one of BMW's "regular" luxury performance vehicles” (Vanzieleghem). The Hydrogen 7, gets about 400 miles to the gallon and uses a mix between gasoline and hydrogen for power. The goal, however, is to eventually eliminate the use of gasoline and use only hydrogen. The car can be started in hydrogen mode, to eliminate cold engine startup emissions. When the Hydrogen 7 starts in hydrogen mode, it releases virtually no harmful gases into the atmosphere. The cost of hydrogen is even lower than that of gasoline, therefore reducing refueling costs. The BMW Hydrogen 7 has passed safety inspections, making it at least as safe as gasoline cars (Vanzieleghem). Because hydrogen is available in virtually unlimited amounts, the problem of running out of fuel is near impossible. There are already 5 hydrogen fill stations in Germany, and more are being considered.
Hydrogen fueled vehicles are still in primitive stages, but with companies like BMW exploring their potential, it is likely that hydrogen power will become more popular. Hydrogen is very naturally abundant, making it ideal to use as a fuel source. The main struggle is trying to find a source of fuel that is sustainable. Hydrogen could be the answer. Hydrogen emits nearly no harmful toxins into the air and releases only water vapor from the tail pipe of the car. Authors James Larminie and Andrew Dicks states “The by-product of the main fuel cell reaction, when hydrogen is the fuel, is pure water, which means a fuel cell can be essentially “zero emission.”” Hydrogen powered cars are still a bit pricey, but with the amount research being invested in these cars, the price and availability will soon become more reasonable. California has even taken steps into hydrogen powered vehicle research. They are looking to someday allow only hydrogen powered vehicles on the state’s roads in order to reduce harmful emissions of greenhouse gases into the air.
Car companies are also utilizing natural gas as an alternative to oil. Honda is one example and has just released a natural gas powered vehicle. The Civic GX is the first and only midsized sedan to run purely on compressed natural gas. The 2008 Civic GX is priced at about $25,000 and emits virtually no harmful emissions. The safety and performance of the Civic GX are comparable to that of the standard Civic models. The 2007 Civic GX was named "America's Greenest Car" by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE). Natural gas is also extremely accessible in North America, making the fuel easily attainable. The cost of natural gas is far less expensive than that of regular gasoline, giving it yet another advantage. Natural gas refueling stations are beginning to come more and more prominent throughout the country. Many stations are open in the tri-state area and around the country for the refueling of natural gas vehicles (American Honda Motor Co).
The use of compressed natural gas in vehicles has already begun. Honda already has released a sedan to the automotive market. Natural gas is comprised mostly of methane as its fuel source. Natural gas is very abundant in North America and can be harnessed to power several types of vehicles. Natural gas refueling stations are opening up all over the country, and are proving to be successful. Natural gas is a very clean burning type of fuel that is efficient on mileage and low on harmful emissions; cars powered by natural gas have been voted to be the most eco-friendly vehicles. Although only one model of natural gas powered car is available, more manufacturers are researching the technology and will hopefully be implementing it soon.

Vehicles powered by alternative fuel will eventually be able to take over the gasoline market, because vehicles powered by alternative fuel are more environmentally friendly, they are becoming more cost efficient for consumers, and the types of fuel are quickly developing. Alternative fueled vehicles have a very
positive impact on the environment, as they do not release nearly
as many harmful gases into the atmosphere as gasoline powered
cars do. Different types of alternative fuel vehicles are becoming
more readily available to consumers everywhere at reasonable
costs. With the recent developments in these different fuel types,
in the near future, alternative fuel sources will be able to replace
gasoline. With all of the technology available and the cost
efficiency of alternatively fueled cars, there is no reason to
continue to use gasoline fueled cars. The use of these alternatively
fueled vehicles will help to preserve the earth and ourselves.
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Nothing to Eat? Who’s to Blame?

By Lindsay Moreau

Athletes are always thought of as having great bodies, but how much does it take to get their physique? In an area that has only recently experienced investigation, research has proven that there are many athletes with disordered eating. The causes behind athletes with eating disorders encompass many different aspects, including the self, the environment, and influential people in relation to their sport. While there may be many causes of eating disorders, when it comes to athletes, there is one group that has a lot of power to either create and enforce, or conversely, prevent and prohibit disordered eating. Coaches are respected and revered by their athletes, and this power can allow them to foster a culture
of disordered eating, or instead create a culture of healthy consumption and positive body image.

In order to put athlete’s eating disorders in context, it is important to consider how widespread these disorders are in general. Studies have shown that eating disorders affect 35 million Americans (Bonci et al 89, Prah, Robinson and Ferraro 117). The National Eating Disorders Association states that ten million females and one million males battle anorexia, bulimia or both, but it is highly probable that these numbers underreport the actual statistics as many people do not report their symptoms (Bonci et al 88, Prah.). Anorexics severely limit their food intake, allowing themselves to eat only enough to survive (Prah). Additionally, those with anorexia have a warped self-perception and a severe apprehension about gaining weight (Robinson and Ferraro 115). Bulimics are chained to a cycle of binging and purging; they compulsively eat an excessive amount of food and then use
extreme measures such as vomiting, fasting, excessively exercising, and/or using laxatives to lose the weight (Prah).

Traditionally, anorexia and bulimia have been viewed as female disorders. Ironically, many coupled the issue with a lack of will power saying that females were just not strong enough to overcome the unimportant issue of wanting to be thin. In reality, it takes a significant amount of will power to refrain from eating. Traditional thought was also incorrect in believing eating disorders to only affect females. While male athletes statistically have fewer cases, there are still many who have disordered eating and those that do are more prevalently overlooked (Baum 1). Males with disordered eating are more often found to have a considerable delay between the start of symptoms and the time at which they begin treatment; this is most likely a result of males feeling embarrassed about their stereotypical feminine malady (Bonci et al 90). Within the realm of male athletes, eating disorders are
certainly under-documented (Baum 6), just as the disorder is in
general.

Athletes have their own category in the realm of eating
disorders. The potential risk of disordered eating is higher
amongst athletes as they have “increased physiological demands
imposed by high-intensity and high-volume sport training” (Bonci
et al 80). This is not to say that athletes have more eating disorders
than the general public, but they have a higher risk of falling into
poor dietary habits; they constantly need to be in great athletic
shape and maintaining a low percentage of body fat is often
equated with better performance. Decreased food intake as well as
increased cardio workouts are often symptoms found in athletes
with disordered eating.
Research has proven that several factors foster eating disorders in athletes. LaFountaine explained that the environment has a serious impact on young females and described the study of the wellness of first year collegiate female athletes. Being in a new environment can cause new stresses to arise, leading young women to feel overwhelmed as they attempt to not only fit in, but mature (LaFountaine 83). A college student’s first priority should be their academics. 35.6% of females were found to say that stress was the number one impediment to academic performance; throw in practices twice a day with games or meets twice a week, and
stress levels will certainly elevate (LaFountaine 83). Thus, college female athletes are very susceptible to eating disorders. Research has shown that close to 15 percent of college athletes have an eating disorder (Grabmeier).

Bissell looked at the ways in which the media affects women and the perceptions of their bodies. A study was done looking at how sports media exposure was related to how women felt about their size and shape (Bissell 108). Athletic women’s bodies are different from the ‘thin ideal’ models found all over the media today, but some experts hypothesized that media viewers, both athletes and non-athletes, who are inundated with images of extremely fit women will still feel more dissatisfied with their bodies as a result (Bissell 108). Examining typical women right after the end of the Summer Olympic Games in Sydney in 2000, it was found that women who watched lean sports, which include gymnastics, swimming, dancing, running, jockeying, cheerleading,
cross-country skiing, ski jumping, and figure skating, did have
lower levels of body satisfaction afterwards (Bissell 112).

The media has displayed mainly thin models for decades
putting pressure on young women, but in today’s world, there are
just as many men in the media who have the ‘perfect’ body. Some
believe this increase in male models has led to the increase in male
disordered eating (Baum 2). It has become common practice to
place shirtless men in advertisements throughout the media and
additionally, fitness ads are often targeted towards men.
Constantly seeing the idealized, muscular body in ads everywhere
coupled with the bombardment of gym memberships and Bow
Flex commercials, it is no wonder that males are starting to feel
more pressure to be physically fit as well as athletic.
Pressure to be thin is found throughout the athletic world, but with more intensity in lean and aesthetic sports. Those participating in sports where having a lower weight is a competitive advantage or where the physique of one’s body significantly affects their results have an increased probability of
falling into an eating disorder. When compared to non-athletes, wrestlers and rowers in low weight divisions showed a higher prevalence of binging and/or disordered eating (Baum 2). A study done for *The Journal of Psychology* by Kristen Robinson and Richard Ferraro examined the levels of disordered eating and body dissatisfaction in different types of athletes. The study’s hypothesis was that the lean sport athletes would have the highest frequency of disordered eating and body dissatisfaction, followed by the non-athletes, with the non-lean athletes having the least amount of eating disorders or body dissatisfaction (Robinson and Ferraro 119). Interestingly, the researchers found little difference between the three groups of athletes. While their results did not comply with the hypothesis, they had a very small study which may contribute potential false conclusions as a consequence (Robinson and Ferraro 122).

One of the most controversial causes of eating disorders for athletes is the coach. Coaches are known to have a lot of sway
over their athletes as they are respected and revered by them.

Being fit is an important factor for athletes, but many coaches are not knowledgeable in the healthiest ways to aid their athletes in losing weight (Bonci et al 93). Many female athletes were found to feel distressed over the ways in which their coaches handle weight issues (Bonci et al 93). Baum explained how one coach literally ‘looked the other way’ as his athletes bought laxatives to lose weight (84), proving that some coaches do not handle weight issues constructively. Both male and female athletes agreed that coaches who focused more on performance than health were viewed negatively; athletes felt more anxiety and fear about their weight (Baum 2). Psychological pressures as well as mandatory weigh-ins and target weights caused females to be disturbed at the ways in which their coaches handled weight concerns (Bonci et al 93). Baum stated that “it can therefore be said that a coach’s attitude can have a significant impact on the genesis of disordered behavior in the athlete” (2).
It is not outrageous to say that any person in a position of authority must exercise their power in the most constructive way. Thus, coaches must not only realize their power, but also use it in a way that is beneficial to the athlete. Athletes listen to and learn from their coaches and take their comments and ideas as important and vital for their lives as athletic performers. If a coach points out that being skinnier will result in a better performance, than many motivated athletes will seriously take losing weight into consideration. Talking negatively about an athlete who consumes too much food, or even too much of the wrong food, will change an athletes’ perception on how he or she eats. Even nonverbal behaviors such as a look of disgust or a raise of an eyebrow towards someone who is overweight can throw an athlete into a state of fear concerning his or her weight.

While this type of behavior from a coach can occur within any sport, it is most important to realize the consequences it can have within lean sports. As discussed before, lean sports are those
where a lower body weight can often make an athlete perform better.

“You can be anorexic and elite at the same time, at least in the short term.... I had one national champion who was 17 and she suffered progressive weight loss in the face of all attempts to help her and her attitude was, 'The lighter I get, the quicker I go'. Eventually she fell over and she was hospitalized several times and she was lost to the sport.”

-Jeff Bond (as quoted in Magnay)

Fig. 3. Daniela Hantuchova (Magnay)
This quote and the above image of Daniela Hantuchova, an elite and anorexic tennis star, make it even more apparent how a lean athlete’s situation is extremely delicate. Coaches must make sure they are handling any weight and food issues in the most positive way. Having low body fat has been linked to better performance in lean sports and thus being careful about making comments regarding weight and food is vital within the world of lean sports. Making a remark about eating too many cookies at dinner will most likely not affect a defensive soccer player the same way it will affect a gymnast, long distance runner or diver. Coaches must realize that negative behavior towards weight issues can cause a reaction where their athletes may make poor decisions and fall into bad dietary habits.

On the contrary, Virginia Overdorf stated that she did not believe that coaches cause eating disorders as comments and weigh ins only affect those who are already predisposed to an eating disorder (Prah). While at first glance this statement may seem to
have some truth, in reality it is far from convincing. Even if an athlete does have some preconceived insecurities about their weight, a coach should never make statements that criticizes an athlete’s body without directly assessing the situation as well as providing a concrete, detailed solution on how to fix it. Just throwing a comment out will do no good whether the athlete is susceptible to eating disorders or not. For instance, a mentally stable athlete may have a coach tell them they should drop a few pounds and may not get upset about it at all, but without providing that athlete with a safe dietary plan, they may go about losing weight in an unhealthy way. Now think about what would happen if that same comment was directed to an athlete who was mentally unstable in terms of his or her weight; not only would they suffer psychological stress but may take drastic physical measures in order to lose pounds. Coaches should want their athletes to be in great shape but they also need to make sure that athletes are following a healthy diet and routine.
Being an athlete requires the kind of dedication often associated with perfectionist personalities. As quoted in a USA Today article, Jenny Moshak, a well known athletic trainer for the University of Tennessee stated “Athletes are driven personalities, completely focused as people pleasers, almost obsessive-compulsive...People who have addictive tendencies gravitate toward athletics” (qtd in Hellmich). These characteristics are what make them great athletes as they devote time and energy day in and day out to become the best competitors possible. However, those same characteristics mixed with an eating disorder can be horrific. Athletes can become not only dedicated to their sport and coach, but also to spending hours doing cardio and going days without eating. Coaches should already know this. They look specifically for athletes who display determination and dedication. Thus, coaches, and especially those of lean sports, must pay attention to the way they handle any and all weight and dietary issues.
There are many publications and resources that will point out the importance of the coach when it comes to eating disorders, but what can really provide evidence are personal accounts. As an athlete in a lean sport, I’ve been surrounded by disordered eating for years. I’ve had coaches that were great at making athletes fantastic, but not all have been the best at handling weight and dietary issues. I was a member of a cross country team a few years ago and there were teammates that were obviously insecure about their weight. I, on the other hand, did not care about how much I was eating at dinner. At team dinners I was often the first to go up for dessert and jokingly my coach would poke fun at my slight obsession with the cafeteria’s cookies.

While this comment did nothing to injure my self-esteem, I know it was heard by some of my teammates and I was fearful of how some of them would take it. They barely ate anything as it was, and I was afraid they would limit their food intake even more, or possibly resort to purging after dinner. Unfortunately, one of our
teammates did start practicing bulimic habits soon afterwards. In response, another teammate and I spoke with our coach about not making comments about food intake, whether it was a joke or not. I in no way blame the coach as the sole cause of my teammates’ eating disorder, but I do feel that an environment was created which made it easier for her to fall into it.

In high school I had a lot of friends that were on the crew team, several of whom were in the light-weight boat. Being in the light-weight boat, weight was a hot topic. The coaches regularly held weigh-ins for both the light-weight rowers as well as the coxswains to make sure they had as little extra weight as possible. Whenever a weigh-in was coming I would notice that many of my friends would severely decrease the amount of food they ate. Had the coaches instilled a positive and healthy method of dieting into their athletes instead of creating a dreaded fear, my friends would most likely not have resulted in disordered eating.
Another true account of how some coaches handle losing weight also involves a cross country team. A friend of mine went away to college and had a coach that was strict about weight. He insisted she lose ten pounds. When she asked why, he replied, “Imagine running a race and the closest opponent to you is equal in both strength and speed, but you have a ten pound backpack on....Who do you think would win?” It is shocking how blunt some coaches are when it comes to such a touchy and sensitive subject.

Being knowledgeable about the subject is the most important step coaches can take to make sure they take good care of their athletes. There are many websites, books and seminars dedicated to coaches that provide educational information and guidelines on how to best handle weight and dietary concerns. Making sure they communicate in positive and healthy ways is also vitally important. Additionally, it is important for coaches to know a good nutritionist and psychologist that have experience in working with
athletes. Sometimes problems can spiral out of control and outside help may be necessary. However, many eating disorders stem from hostile environments, an area that the coach has a lot of control over.

With pressures to be thin coming from every angle, athletes are suffering from a lot of societal pressures to be thin. Additionally, with the demands from their sports, many athletes fall into eating disorders as a means to maintain a low weight. Many coaches don’t realize the power they have over their athletes in regards to their eating habits and body image. A weigh in, a comment, or even a snide look can cause an athlete to be self conscious about their weight. A hostile environment or an overlooked situation can lead to severe eating problems. Thus, coaches need to be informed of how to deal with weight and dietary issues. If a situation arises where an athlete does need to change his or her diet, the coach must not only explain the matter carefully but provide a thorough plan as to how to be as healthy as
possible. By taking precautions, coaches will foster a healthy
culture and maintain their athlete’s both physical and mental
health.
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Heroes and Liars: The Story of Yates the Futurist

By Nick Sweeney

British literary figure and statesman Benjamin Disraeli\(^1\) once said “Nurture your mind with great thoughts; to believe in the heroic makes heroes” (“Heroes”). Disraeli’s quote regarding heroes applies directly to the story of Yates, the protagonist of The Futurist written by James Othmer. Not only does Yates struggle with believing in himself but so does the reader; the question is not whether Yates is a hero or not, but what kind of hero he is. In today’s world, everyone is torn by conflict, regardless of who they are. People are torn apart because of such noble reasons as ideals, views, and affiliations and by such petty things such as money, reputation, and lies. Yates could possibly be the perfect image of the modern tragic hero, a hero many a reader can relate to and root

\(^1\) Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) was a British Conservative statesman and literary figure. He served as Prime Minister twice.
for. While not as tragic as Oedipus or Antigone of Greek literature, Yates is much more relatable than either. Readers feel compassion, some kind of remorse, seeing Yates spiral downhill as he drinks himself to oblivion. They flip the pages to see where Yates goes next on his journey around the world.

A tragic hero, according to Aristotle in the Glossary of Literary Terms, is neither truly good nor evil. He is to be seen with both “pity and terror” (Abrams 331). This is meant so that it has the effect on readers showing that the hero is somewhat “better than we are.” Yates is not the ordinary tragic hero; he turns from a successful Futurist to international jerk-for-hire in a matter of mere minutes. He creates his own problems; however, these problems are ones that society seems to help make for each and every person. Yates is seen with pity because of his sarcastic nature and terror for all the horrible and cold things he says and does. Yates, in the beginning of the novel, seems very pathetic, wanting all the attention and always asks “Why me?” believing he is much more important than he actually is. During a conversation about his
email stalker “Nostradamus” with his only actual friend, Campbell, Yates says “Again, I’m not as concerned about the prophetic accuracy as I am about the why-me part” (Othmer 51). He seems to want pity for all that has happened to him, from the love of his life, Lauren, dumping him for a history teacher to the ironic turn of events with the space hotel. On the other side, Yates seems to make his own problems, and he seems to deserve the negative things that happen to him. It seems that his tragic flaws are constant lying, sarcasm, and lack of morals, each of which is evident through the rising action of this novel. Yates is a character who is to be rooted for and hated; the reader hopes that he both gets the girl and also that he receives what’s coming to him. In this way, Yates seems to be a modern depiction of the tragic hero. Any reader of this novel sees that Yates lies as much as he drinks, and it seems as if his lying and drinking are interconnected. Combined with the sarcasm, such as saying he is a “button designer,” forces readers to search between the lines and see what Yates really means compared to what he says just to appease the people which
whom he interacts (Othmer 98). In one example of Yates’s eccentric personality early on in the novel, he is conversing with another futurist, although not as powerful, Blevins; they are both discussing American activity in foreign countries: “Skateboarding in Mongolia. Boogie Boarding the Yangtze. Fucking in outer space” (Othmer 2). Not only is the sarcasm almost a full part of his dialogue, but he is an expert liar. After a while it seems as if he is not only lying for a living but lying to himself and he recognizes this; hence he makes the very heroic speech known as Chapter: Google Response #69. It starts off as little lies such as saying he is a button designer, and then evolves to lies saying that Lauren left him, and not the probable reality of him driving her away (Othmer 98).

Throughout the novel, the reader must question whether or not Yates is lying for the right reasons. Is he lying as a self-defense mechanism because of everything he is so used to or is he lying because he doesn’t want to know any real truth? It is up for debate
whether Yates’s constant lying helps him or hurts him throughout the novel. He lies and leads on Blevins, Marjorie, and his new employers “Johnson and Johnson,” and it seems as if it digs him into a deep hole, but somehow he finds a way to make it a little less deep. Another question that arises is whether or not Yates lies to make himself feel better about him about everything that has happened or if he is trying to truly redeem himself and his occupation. Yates can be viewed as a selfish coward, or a late-in-the-book hero. Within the first few chapters he seems everything that a hero shouldn’t be: cowardly, always running away, and completely and utterly selfish. He is also alright with his state of drunkenness and being pathetic in front of all, as if he has no shame with his decisions. He acts as if he can’t change anything, but really the only person who can change the current horrible state of his life is himself. As readers continue to read the novel, Yates sees more things that make him think: the soccer riot, the staged bombing, and the catalyst of Yates finally becoming a hero -- his father’s very unfortunate death. He travels on a journey,
one in which can be viewed as a one leading toward heroicness, although it somewhat unorthodox compared to tragic heroes of old. He first renounces his entire faith and profession at Johannesburg, and then travels to Greenland, a place of isolation for him to take a moment to think. At this location he finally gains some insight on what people are thinking, with the help of his friend Campbell. After this, he finds the confidence to finally go back to regaining some kind of reputation but instead experiences an event that changes his life forever; the Milan bombing. This event is something of a fuse that shows that Yates isn’t invincible and that the world isn’t the place he talks of all the time.

Soon after this, Yates believes he needs a vacation, a vacation in which he goes with Marjorie and finds that he truly does have feelings for her, but not just sexually. The climatic event of both the journey and the novel seems to be his father’s death which brings him home and also gives him a chance to finally redeem himself forever, by going into the war zone of Ba’sar. This journey
is one of slow redemption and one of a learning hero. It takes a while to see that Yates slowly shows feelings for others, and not for selfish reasons. Unfortunately, his tragic flaws seem to slow him down from becoming the hero he has potential to be.

To see Yates as not just a hero, but a tragic hero, is to see his flaws. Yates is not an ordinary hero. He constantly drinks as a way to numb himself from actually caring. Yates even admits his state of drinking when he is viewed as a terrorist in Milan (Othmer 115). The turning point of this is after the death of his father when he is on the flight to Ba’sar where he resists a drink and instead reads up on the Middle and Philip Dick, a science fiction writer: “Alcohol is a possibility, but he won’t let himself start, primarily because he wants to keep that option in reserve.” This quote shows that he is slowly resisting taking the easy way out. Yates is becoming a hero and starts with fixing his flaws.

Becoming a hero also requires him to stop blaming others.

Throughout the novel he is running away from Lauren, who has
“left him” for a sixth grade history teacher, one of the more ironic events noteworthy of the novel. Irony is another factor in seeing a tragic hero (Abrams 331). It also seems as if Marjorie is something he can’t get past, an obstacle he cannot sweet talk like adventurous models in a fashion bar. Marjorie, in a sense, can be viewed as the primary reason that Yates finally shapes up and flies right. She proves him wrong time after time, and resists his pathetic attempts. Any reader can see that it is because of her and her most influential line in the novel “Then tell the truth” that Yates finally gives the whole futurist gig a rest (Othmer 21).

To relate back to the Benjamin Disraeli quote with which I began the paper, Yates does think from time to time of acting heroic, and trying to find the good within himself: “I read it somewhere the other day—I don’t think it was me--they said find something more important than you and dedicate your life to it” (Othmer 60). The entire journey sends him around the world not only to see what
people think, but it shows what is truly important in life, living it while it is there, living in the present, not the past or the future.

Yates learns that there is more to life than bullshitting people about what they should do, and in reality people should do things because they want to, and not because it’s supposed to happen.

Another example of Yates finally realizing his potential is his thoughts on page 117: “He is disgusted that he can be thinking heroic thoughts one moment, and then, in the face of adversity, turn so weak so quickly.” He sees his flaws. He sees his potential and it slowly takes him the entire novel to realize what is truly right and wrong, the most visible sign of a hero. Later on that same page, he comes to terms that he is running away from everything gone wrong in his life, from Lauren to the space hotel disaster.

Admitting the wrongness of one’s life is the first step in moving from a pathetic zero to a tragic hero.
The Italian novelist Umberto Eco\(^2\) describes the type of hero that Yates seems to become: “The real hero is always a hero by mistake; he dreams of being an honest coward like everybody else” (“Heroes”). Yates doesn’t view himself as a hero because he doesn’t want to be one. He sees himself as a coward, a man of no conscience, a man who views himself with much pity but doesn’t know the meaning of such a word. It takes events that truly affect him, that in which his family and the few he cares for show him the truth instead of the sarcastic bullshit he is used to hearing, saying, and selling. While the novel doesn’t end on a somber note, it does not end with celebration, but it does just that; it ends. No dramatic ending, no prize at the end, just the ending of a terrific novel. The ending itself shows that a hero’s journey is never really finished, and readers should realize this as another step in themselves becoming a hero. Yates can be seen by the modern reader as Oedipus was by the Greeks; a tragic hero.

\(^2\) Umberto Eco (1932- ) is an Italian medievalist, semiotician, philosopher, literary critic and novelist, best known for his novel *The Name of the Rose*
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The Human Error behind the Titanic Disaster

By Marisa Santory

It was a cold, calm night on the Northern Atlantic Ocean. The sea was still while the magnificent White Star Liner steamed over the surface seemingly floating on-air. The RMS Titanic, the “unsinkable” ship, was within a few hours of docking in New York City when she struck a large iceberg. Neither the crew nor the passengers were prepared for the chaos and tragedy that would take the lives of approximately 1,500 people as the Titanic met her destiny at the bottom of the Atlantic less than three hours after the collision (Linkin 20). While the collision with the iceberg was the direct cause of the sinking, human errors made before and after the collision undoubtedly classify this event as a man-made disaster; poor judgment and irresponsibility, the public’s desire for speed,
and failures in technology and equipment ultimately contributed to one of the most devastating maritime disasters in history.

Captain Edward Smith, the commander of the Titanic, showed poor judgment and irresponsibility despite forty years of experience behind the helm. His decision to proceed through the treacherous Northern region of the Atlantic after receiving iceberg warnings is regarded as a crucial mistake that contributed to the sinking of the ship. The Atlanta Constitution published an article on April 17th of 1912, two days after the Titanic sank, claiming that the French liner La Touraine reportedly slowed her speed due to a huge field of icebergs breaking the surface of the water. The La Touraine communicated with the Titanic on the afternoon of April 12th about her findings, and Captain Smith reportedly acknowledged the message with gratitude. Despite his response to this warning, Captain Smith continued to plot a course directly through the dangerous ice field, even though there was plenty of time to set extra lookouts, slow down, and alter the course more
toward the south (Brown 2). His decision, in hopes of shortening the ocean voyage, wound up endangering the lives of everyone aboard the ship.

Even before the *Titanic* departed England, decisions were made that ultimately put the passengers and crew in danger. None of the crew members of the *Titanic* had been given lifeboat drills or emergency training. Furthermore, Captain Smith cancelled a scheduled lifeboat drill on the morning the *Titanic* sank in order to allow passengers and crewmembers to attend church (Tate 2). The crewmembers’ lack of proper emergency training and inconsistency exasperated the dire situation. This fact became central in James Cameron’s filmic telling of the *Titanic* story. Cameron’s *Titanic* illustrates the effects of the crew’s inexperience and lack of proper training. During the lifeboat evacuation, crew members frantically filled the lifeboats with upper-class women and children, as gravity challenged them and the ocean water began to rise quickly. None of the crew members knew exactly
how much weight each boat could safely hold without collapsing
the mechanism used to lower the boats.

For many years, steamship companies had been competing with
each other to establish the fastest route across the Atlantic to
satisfy the public’s desire for speed and gain business prestige.
During this time, captains and ship owners were trying to satisfy
the expectations of upper-class passengers of luxury and a rapid
voyage merely to make headlines (Burt 237). Captain Smith and J.
Bruce Ismay, managing director of the White Star Line, continued
to increase the Titanic’s traveling speed; consequently, she struck
the iceberg at nearly full speed (227). On April 18, 1912, the
Hartford Courant blamed the public’s desire for speedy travel and
business pressures as the catalyst behind the Titanic tragedy:

…and every fifteen or thirty minutes of reduction is hailed as a
record, and set up as a standard, and lodged permanently in the
back of the head of every captain having control of one of these
large and rapid passenger vessels as something that he must outdo
if he would please his employers and bring renown to himself.

(237)

The risks of traveling through dangerous ice zones at high speeds were simply overlooked as public interest became a priority. Ironically, the *Titanic*’s maiden voyage, her only voyage, did make headlines.

Following the sinking of the *Titanic*, it quickly became apparent that there had only been enough lifeboats aboard for about half of the passengers and crew and that this was a major contributor to the loss of life. In 1912, British regulations did not insure an adequate number of lifeboats for all the passengers on board; with twenty lifeboats, *Titanic* carried four more than the minimum required (Linkin 22). British steamship companies were operating under the assumption that new building techniques, such as watertight compartments, would keep modern ships afloat long enough for other ships to come to their aid. On April 17th of 1912,
the *New York World* commented on the reliance of new technology and equipment:

The old idea of lifeboats enough to take away everybody and send them adrift possibly for days on a sailless ocean had become obsolete under new conditions of thickly travelled oceanway and the water-tight compartment which would keep a ship long afloat after the most violent of collisions (Burt 241).

Because of these watertight compartments, the *Titanic* was considered the pinnacle of shipbuilding technology. She could stay afloat with any two compartments, or the first four compartments, completely flooded (Linkin 22). Unfortunately, several watertight compartments were flooded, and she sank before the nearest ship could reach her.

Recent investigations of Harland and Wolff, the shipbuilders of the *Titanic*, show that the iron rivets used in the bow were the cause of the damage to the watertight compartments. During April of 2008, *The New York Times* stated that the problems began with
overly ambitious building plans, and the company was forced to reach beyond its usual suppliers of iron rivets and used a lower-quality iron (Broad A21). Therefore, rivets used in building the “unsinkable” ship were of low quality and not suitable for the extreme conditions the Titanic would face. During this time, many steamship companies were beginning to use steel rivets, which were much more durable than iron rivets. However, the builders of the Titanic used steel rivets only in the hull and used iron for the bow and the stern (A21). As fate would have it, the bow is where the iceberg struck, which caused tearing in the first five compartments.

Other discoveries concerning the Titanic’s technology and equipment have shown flaws in the wireless communication. The wireless system, first used in 1900, had become standard on most passenger lines. However, a distress call was helpful only if nearby ships had their wireless on duty and were listening (Burt 240). Unfortunately, one ship close enough to have arrived in time to aid
the *Titanic* did not have a wireless operator on at the time of the disaster (240). As a result, the nearest ship to receive the wireless distress call, the *Carpathia*, was over 170 miles away, yet the *Titanic’s* unfortunate fate had already been sealed.

When the *Titanic* set sail on April 10, 1912, the world marveled at her majestic beauty and large size. She was the White Star Line’s most technologically advanced steamship, and she, therefore, was considered “unsinkable.” Ironically, the *Titanic* struck an iceberg only four days into her journey across the Atlantic. In less than three hours she was pulled underwater by the bow, and she took 1,500 lives with her. Several human errors were major contributors to the loss of life at sea. Captain Smith was one contributor, who showed poor judgment and irresponsibility when he continued to direct the *Titanic* through iceberg fields, despite warnings from another ship. Another cause was the public, who desired headlines, and pressured the captain and ship owners to travel faster. This, in turn, tested the technology and equipment in
unanticipated ways; consequently, the watertight compartments and wireless operation failed, and the lack of proper safety precautions and lifeboats were exposed as major weaknesses. The collision with the iceberg was the direct cause of the sinking, but these human errors ultimately caused the *Titanic* disaster.
American Torture: Violating the Geneva Conventions to “Save Innocent Lives” While Simultaneously Torturing Thousands of Innocent Civilians since September 11th, 2001

By Andrew Wellington

Throughout recorded history, civilizations have utilized the technique of torture for interrogative purposes. In ancient Greek and Roman times, they would torture captured enemy scouts to obtain information about enemy troop movements, among other things. Immediately following the September 11th terrorist attacks on the United States, the Bush administration began looking for ways in which to legally (or covertly) detain and interrogate members of Al-Qaeda. The US base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, serves as a base of operations free from the prying eyes of the politicians in Washington, the lawyers on Capitol Hill, and the
suspicious watchers of the international community. Then, realizing that the transportation of Middle Eastern men to Cuba en masse was tedious and time-consuming, the administration set up satellite torture camps in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Among these is the infamous Abu Ghraib in Iraq, a place where Saddam Hussein previously tortured and killed thousands of Kurds, but which now houses hundreds of Iraqi POW’s and “enemy combatants” held by American soldiers. At Abu Ghraib, prisoners are tortured in an effort to obtain some semblance of information. According to the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, torture is defined as:

any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or
a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions. (Garcia)

Torture is unconstitutional, counter-productive and illegal under international law. Instead of torturing possibly innocent people, American resources should be more focused on gaining reliable intelligence and being able to act swiftly on that intelligence.

The Eighth Amendment of the Constitution of the United States mandates that “excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted” (emphasis added). While the terms are ambiguous, there is no question about the cruel and unusual nature of some of the current torture methods implemented by the US government and others. Proponents of the use of torture would argue that the
Constitution applies only to US citizens, and therefore does not cover members of other international communities. This may be true for a few aspects of the Constitution, but the basic premise of the Constitution is to put inalienable human rights into writing in order to ensure that American citizens receive them regardless of the government in power, meaning that while the provisions are aimed at American citizens, the underlying principal should apply to everyone.

It is also necessary to emphasize the ineffectiveness of torture. Statistically speaking, torture doesn’t make sense. Under FIFA (the Freedom of Information Act), the US Government released the names, countries of origin and prisoner numbers of all of its detainees. According to an independent study, 759 prisoners have passed through Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, since September 11th, 2001 (Cornwell). Many of these were released to countries like Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Yemen, where no torture sanctions exist and the will of the US government can be executed without the
prying eyes of Washington. Of these detainees, less than ten have ever been charged with any crimes relating to terrorism.

Grave problems exist with the current approach to torture. On November 22\textsuperscript{nd}, the US government announced that it would not be charging Jose Padilla, who many of us recognize as the criminal mastermind responsible for the plot to plant a dirty radioactive bomb in a US city. The government did this because it had insufficient information to indict him on criminal charges, because the information they gleaned about Padilla’s plan was gleaned by torturing two men, Khalid Sheik Mohammed and Abu Zubaydah, two members of Al-Qaeda who were being held in then-secret CIA prisons. The reason these men couldn’t testify against Padilla was because they may have disclosed the fact that they were tortured, rendering their testimony inadmissible and their interrogators culpable (Bazelon). According to Alan Dershowitz, author of \textit{Why Terrorism Works: Understanding the Threat, Responding to the Challenge}, there is also strong supporting evidence that
information gleaned during torture is largely unreliable.

Somewhere between 70 and 90% of all confessions made under torture are partially or completely fabricated (Dershowitz). His proposition is similar to my own, in that he states that torture is never morally right, however sometimes it may be necessary. He proposes a hypothetical situation wherein an individual definitely possesses knowledge of a massive nuclear, chemical, or biological bomb, and it is up to the reader to decide whether or not to torture the information out of him. This situation, however, is basically impossible. With knowledge as ambiguous as it is, it is impossible to know whether the person you are torturing has any information, let alone information that is essential to something time-sensitive.

With this in mind, it is foolish to assume that every captured combatant has valuable knowledge, so the notion that we should torture all prisoners of war (or what the government calls enemy combatants) is simply erroneous. Historically speaking, the United States has never thwarted a possible terrorist attack on US soil using torture. Therefore, it can be concluded that the effort,
resources, and human sacrifice that is required to set up torture camps, fund them, and detain innocent civilians, far outweighs any benefit. The notion that the government is systematically violating thousand of people’s individual human rights in a vain effort to protect itself is sickening.

Proponents of torture may argue that the cost of human life would be much greater if we turned a blind eye on people that may possess valuable information, but this argument has already been proven erroneous. Even if a dozen roadside bombs went off that could have been prevented by torture, the cost of the innocent lives in Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib, and the others far outnumber the number of effected civilians involved in a roadside bombing.

Proponents of torture also argue that our enemies have the advantage over the United States and others because they do not follow international guidelines on torture or warfare. This claim has a certain amount of validity, but certainly not much. As Americans, it is our duty to uphold the laws and statutes that
differentiate us from terrorists and barbarians. After all, our own leaders claim that we have been targeted for terrorism because of our sound moral code and our just reasoning. It follows, then, that it is far more important to hold our morals and principles in the highest regard than it is to gain an advantage over terrorists.

It is therefore apparent that torture is not only illegal and unconstitutional, but also unreasonable, immoral, and counter-productive. The notion that torturing will someday prevent another September 11th is erroneous, given the magnitude of the US borders, airplanes, and the postal service. We must work to prevent another attack like September 11th, but we must do so without torture.

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