

OPINIONS

A stand against censorship

by Alicia Hartman
Co-editor

Have you ever had something that you created censored? Actually, we all have been censored. What we say, think and believe; how we act and behave.

Censorship is the suppression of creativity and ideas. Censorship in any form is wrong whether it's television, radio, magazines, in the movies or music.

Censorship prevents people from thinking and expressing themselves.

Those who censor desire the power to manipulate. Often this control is exerted in cases which they do not want the truth about something revealed.

Some people say that we need censorship to protect children from violence and aggression. Solution: pay closer attention to what children watch, read and listen to. But don't prevent adults from choosing what they want to see, read and hear.

People think censorship is acceptable if it decreases exposure to violence and other "bad things."

On the other hand, if you believe that seeing, reading or hearing about violence promotes actions of violence, censorship only gives temporary relief. It does not eliminate the problem of violence, only the exposure to.

You never realize how serious and sensitive censorship is until it happens to you.

I was involved in a censorship case while I was the editor of my high school newspaper.

It was the spring of 1991 and the Student Council was sponsoring a variety show. The last act was a heavy metal band.

Three minutes into their performance the band started screaming "DIE! DIE! DIE!". The principal raced up the steps of the stage yelling "Stop playing! Stop playing!" but the band didn't listen. The principal then yanked the cords out of their amplifiers.

Neither students nor the band was happy with the principal's actions because 1) the equipment could have been extensively damaged and 2) the band's time to perform hadn't run out according to several audience members.

In response to the incident my

assistant editor, Karen, wrote an editorial as an allegory symbolizing a tea party at which everyone was having a good time until someone (the principal) got upset because people were not abiding by his rules.



When Karen went to interview the principal to hear his side of the story, he asked Karen if he could read the editorial. He didn't approve of parts and edited them.

Karen went through this editing process two more times

and by the third rewrite she claimed that the article wasn't hers anymore.

We never did publish Karen's editorial. In its place we ran a piece about being censored.

According to the Pennsylvania School Code at that time, no administrator could require prior review of an article unless the district had a written policy that 1) stated the name of the individual to conduct the prior review and 2) how long the student publication had to wait before a decision on the article was made.

My high school had no such policy.

We could have sued the principal for censorship and our newspaper advisor even consulted the Student Press Law Center in Washington, D.C. The SPLC is a national organization that provides advice and information to the student media.

Because Karen was a minor and didn't have the money to go to court, we didn't pursue the matter any further.

Being censored made me realize how unethical and immoral some people will be just to save

their reputations and evade admitting they're wrong.

Because of this incident, I am a devout advocate of the freedom of the press.

Across the country, censorship can be found at other college campuses while newspaper staffs engage in battle for freedom of the press.

This censorship can be found in denial of access to crime and disciplinary records and on-campus judicial hearings, and "trashing" offending newspapers.

Collegiate administrations try to limit access to information and deny access to crime reports.

Student governments attempt censorship by limiting funding of the newspaper and creating policies to impeach the editor(s).

While writing, keep in mind the freedom of the press and what it guarantees. Remember your unalienable rights? Make use of them. They are your greatest tools and protection if need be.

The pen is mightier than the sword.

Year in Review

by Dave Barry
Syndicated Columnist

JANUARY

1 -- President-elect William Jefferson Rodham Kennedy Clinton, preparing for the task of being the most powerful human on Earth after 4,000 straight months on the campaign trail, sits down with his top aides and a complete set of the World Book Encyclopedia to learn about all these foreign countries.

10 -- The Clinton Inauguration (Official Theme: "Let's Beat The Word 'Hope' To Death") goes off without a hitch.

24 -- Violently anti-American pro-terrorist religious fanatic Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman arrives in New York with a suitcase containing 100 pounds of high explosives and a detailed map of the World Trade Center. He tells U.S. immigration authorities he is here "to see a Knicks game."

FEBRUARY

15 -- After a frantic search, President Clinton picks Janet Reno to be his attorney general, citing her "tremendous height." Sen. Bob Packwood is hospitalized after he attempts to give Reno what his aides claim was "only a congratulatory hug."

28 -- Near Waco, Texas, agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, suspecting firearms violations in the Branch Davidian compound, smoothly execute an action plan masterminded by Wile E. Coyote.

MARCH

8 -- Seeking to reduce violence in the high schools, the New York City School Board, in a move strongly supported by the teachers, votes to ban students.

20 -- Scientists for the Tobacco Institute, after a 17-year study, released a report stating that there is "absolutely no scientific evidence" that people who purchase cigarettes do so

with the intention of smoking them.

APRIL

14 -- Mia Farrow, through her lawyer, presents documents linking Woody Allen to the World Trade Center bombing.

MAY

9 -- Buckingham Palace reports "very strong" sales of the three-volume Prince Charles Cellular Phone Tapes.

22 -- In Los Angeles, President Clinton, acting on the advice of new public-image adviser Ed Rollins, gets a haircut.

27 -- The Clinton Administration fires the White House travel staff and after "a totally objective nationwide search" for a replacement, selects Roger Clinton as the new travel director. Asked by the phone press about his qualifications, the President's half-brother state that he has "taken several, whaddycall'em, planes."

JUNE

14 -- President Clinton, leaving himself open to charges that his administration has "gone Hollywood," nominates Barbra Streisand to the Supreme Court.

21 -- The Bulls win the NBA

championship and Chicago celebrates in what has become the traditional American fashion for this type of joyful occasion. Two are killed.

JULY

8 -- In a major breakthrough, Japanese trade negotiators, after two years of stiff resistance, agree to order an American pizza.

10 -- U.S.-Japanese relations suffer a major setback when President Clinton, in Tokyo to finalize the trade talks, eats the entire pizza.

15 -- In the flood-ravaged Midwest, the toll of human misery worsens as thousands of houses are blown down by wind from helicopters carrying news crews and political leaders frowning down with concern.

AUGUST

24 -- The Clintons, vacationing on Martha's Vineyard, go sailing with Ted Kennedy and an estimated 4,500 life preservers.

27 -- In another setback for the space program, scientists at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration are unable to contact the Mars Observer space probe.

30 -- NASA scientists finally contact the Mars Observer space probe, only to be greeted by an answering machine that does nothing except repeat, over and over, in a very pleasant voice: "Your call is important to us."

SEPTEMBER

13 -- In a White House treaty-signing ceremony watched around the world, the Mideast conflict finally comes to an end

as Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, encouraged by President Clinton, engage in a historic handshake. Conflict resumes immediately when Rabin discovers that Arafat is wearing a "joy buzzer."

23 -- In a major address, President Clinton announces that the nation's current health-care system is bloated, inefficient, unresponsive, overpriced, wasteful and stupid, and that therefore he wants to turn control of it over to: the federal government.

25 -- Testifying on her health-care reform plan, Hillary Rodham Clinton is a huge hit on Capitol Hill as she is able, under close questioning, to correctly identify all the parts of the lymphatic system.

26 -- On Capitol Hill, Hillary Rodham Clinton continues to impress congressional committees by dissecting a cadaver.

OCTOBER

2 -- At the government's urging, millions of Americans receive flu shots, administered by Hillary Rodham Clinton.

8 -- In a development that receives more coverage than anything that happened all year in Bosnia, Michael Jordan announces that he will not be playing basketball this year.

21 -- In Los Angeles, the jury in the Reginald Denny beating trial, after much thinking, concludes that Person A is not necessarily trying to kill Person B just because Person A happens to very deliberately bash Person

B's skull in with a brick. The verdict is applauded by scientists at the Tobacco Institute.

NOVEMBER

1 -- Ross Perot claims NAFTA will permit "giant Mexican squirrels" to cross the border and bite people.

9 -- In a live televised debate over NAFTA, Ross Perot, in what is widely viewed as a tactical error, bites Al Gore on the ankle; the feisty billionaire cannot be pried loose until the Vice President beat him unconscious with a hard-cover copy of "Earth in the Balance."

20 -- Michael Jackson announces that he has become addicted to talking in a squeaky voice and will return to his home planet for treatment.

DECEMBER

7 -- Astronauts aboard the space shuttle Endeavour arrive at the Hubble Space Telescope and discover that it has been smashed beyond recognition in a high-speed collision with the Mars Observer. The astronauts elect to go to the Orbiting Space Convenience Store for coffee.

31 -- In a development that deeply disturbs the international community, the Chicago Tribune reports that the Chinese have agreed to sell nuclear weapons to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. We do not wish to create panic, but this news comes only hours before the scheduled broadcast of the end-of-the-world episode of "Beavis and Butt-head." It's best not to think about it.

Happy New Year.