

Politically illiterate (and proud)

by Jennifer V. Colvin
Editor in Chief

In today's society, everyone has to be politically correct (or at least that's what I've been told). But beyond politeness, does everyone have to be politically literate? I will be the first to admit it (since no one else has come forward) - I am politically illiterate. I cannot name three US Supreme Court Justices, all of the 1996 presidential candidates, and do not know who Richard Nixon's running mate was -- nor do I care to know.

But the point that I am pondering is...am I the only one?

I am not naive and realize that my future does not depend upon these facts. First of all, they are in the past; second, I will not be a contestant on Jeopardy any time soon; third, I do not matter. A sweet little 'ole middle class protestant white girl in college does not make that big of a difference in the entire political scheme; and never will.

Sounds harsh doesn't it? I'm sorry if I have offended any of the Young Republicans, but it's the truth. For years I have believed in the myth that my vote matters. It doesn't. There are well over 200 million people in the United States. If you write that number out it looks like this: 200,000,000+. Not counting me, it looks like this: 200,000,000+.

See anything different? I didn't think so. Yes it is true that if all college students were to believe like me, that number would change drastically. However, even then, this single person will not matter.

I suppose what I'm getting to is that I

am politically illiterate by choice. I do not memorize ballots nor do I watch CNN faithfully. Chastized by many, I am proud of this handicap. Maybe there are others like me; people who shy from anything with the root word "politic" in it's title. We could start a club. We would have field trips and exclude any member who has ever run for public office or served on their student government. There would be rules of course:

1. Cannot major in Political Science (has the root word "politic" in it)

2. Would have to pass a competency test (compiled by the National Counsel on Political Angst)

3. Never have toured the White House or Capitol in Washington D.C. (exceptions made for tours with parents)

4. Must have never watched the State of the Union address in January.

Think you may have what it takes to join my club? Well to determine political competency the National Counsel on Political Angst has created a survey. The test is to be taken at will, but all answers are to come from memory only. Test takers may not look up any answers. Feel free to take the test, but remember that if you answer more than one question correctly, you will be excluded membership....

1. Name three US Supreme Court Justices.

2. Who was president in 1969?

3. Name all 1996 presidential candidates.

4. What was the last bill passed by US Congress?

5. How many US senators are there presently?

How did you do? If you could not answer these questions do not feel ashamed. I can answer only one (and I looked it up). I will admit that I know exactly where to look to find the answers to the questions. But you have to consider one thing: Do I want to find these answers? Will I be a better person?

Is that what really matters in today's society? Politics? I don't think so.

Political conversations are exactly that - conversations. I am very proud of my country and all that it has to offer. The US is honorable and I love it. But no one will ever ask me "Jen, how would you do it?" (They'd be much better off if they did, but we won't go there.) The governing future of tomorrow will never depend on my insight. With or without me the US will go on. And that is why I do not involve myself in the politics of this country - my mind is a terrible thing to waste.

As unethical as it may sound, I do not care about politics. I am glad that there are people in this country who are willing to waste their time running a government, but I am very thankful that I am not one of them. Everywhere I look, in every newspaper that I read, politics are a hot topic. If social problems were half as interesting to some, we would not need half the politicians we already have. Politics are everywhere around us; US politics, world politics fog our vision and clog the airwaves. But world politics are a completely different story....maybe a different club too.

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Waves of censorship

By Mary Began
Collegian Staff

Censorship - it's a universal thing. In the madness of this dynamic world, censorship, in every form possible, continues to be one of the most constant and widespread controls repressing humans. This is because censorship - in any configuration, whether found in books, songs, or in computers, solely pertains to language and the context with which it is used.

Language is constantly changing. Some words become obsolete, while others become commonplace. Yet, there are even some words that will take on new meanings and connotations. Words are merely what we interpret them to be, nothing more than a bunch of letters strewn together to solely express a human's thought. It is not the words that bother society but the diction that lies beneath those words. The English language, or any language for that matter, is one of the most exquisite and astonishing creations of the human race. Do we really want controls over OUR language? Men and women in the United States of America have the right to think for themselves. We are all individuals drawn together by the one thing that defines us: language.

However, every society has forbid opinions and words that have a dangerous indication. We all are aware of the "clear and present danger" clause of the Constitution that states that some forms

of speech are prohibited, only when they denote or imply harm to other individuals and things. This clause can be stretched to cover many areas as to who will be hurt from some sort of language usage. Some books may contain words or ideas that a community does not agree with or believe in, so they ban these books, even engage at times in book burning "celebrations." Some songs may contain inappropriate language or detrimental suggestions towards certain sexes, races or religions, so people place warning labels on albums indicating the nature of the profanity and even restrict the sale of albums. Some computer programs may contain pornography that many parents fear their children will see, or have on-line forums that are considered too smutty for others, so there are limitations and cautions as to what words can be used and bans placed on programs containing pornography. The first amendment of the Constitution (the "backbone" of our great nation) guarantees the freedom of speech yet later in the constitution it asks for society to define how far free speech can be tolerated. Should certain forms of communication be censored?

I agree that curse words do seem vulgar at times and also that they sound absolutely moronic when every other word in a sentence is a curse. However, I only feel this way because some social hierarchy has convinced me to ascertain certain ideas and perceptions from curse words when I hear or see them

Psychologically, I can only presume

that there are particular connotations along with these cuss words and a form of rebellion is achieved when they are uttered. They are just words, but it is the emotion and meaning placed behind these words that cause people to react the way they do when profanity is heard or viewed.

Alas, I suppose some of this has to do with being nice. but once I say this, the issues of morals will have to come into play and I know what a problem that is. Well, actually, I know how big of a problem it can be, but do I actually understand why it's a problem? No. No way. Negative. Uh-uh. This is where it gets confusing, because - stay with me here - morals are things people do not want to have imposed on them. So then why do people censor and restrict? That's the catch. It makes no sense. We want to be able to have and speak and believe in our ideas but we do not want to hear anybody else's. Hellooo? Every person in this world, whether you choose to accept it or not, is influenced by something else. It is humanly impossible to solely think of ourselves as individuals. We are influenced by TV. What if you don't have a TV? Then you are influenced by the walls that surround you. What if you don't have a home? Then, you're influenced by nature.

Therefore, we have all received our ideas and conceptions in some form or another from someone or something else! Hence, if we choose to restrict other forms of ideas, the human race will ultimately be limiting themselves.