

Forum



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“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.”

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

OUR VIEW

Always skeptical. Always.

AT ISSUE: Viewers of anti-Wal-Mart documentary must consider bias of filmmakers

Guns, politics, French fries and Wal-Mart have all recently come under the radar of documentarians out to make a point. And the way documentaries like “Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price” are presented, it can be easy to swallow that point whole — but a little skepticism could save viewers from choking on an overly biased message.

A university campus is the perfect place to broadcast documentaries. College students are in the process of shaping their opinions about the world, and showing such films can make a difference in students’ perceptions of the country they live in.

We, as Muncie residents and university students, are undoubtedly affected by Wal-Mart’s presence. Most make several shopping trips to the Superstore every year, and some students are even employed by the company, so the stakes are higher.

Ball State University has also been an audience for several other documentaries in recent years, such as “Bowling for Columbine,” “Super Size Me” and “Fahrenheit 9/11.”

And such films elicit response.

As a result of Michael Moore’s movies, many counter-documentaries were made. In the wake of “Super Size Me,” McDonalds

stopped offering the super size option — even if the company denied any relation between its actions and the movie.

“Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price” could very likely have similar effects on Wal-Mart as a company, on consumers, on the documentary industry or on the Ball State students for whom the film will debut tonight.

However, viewers of the movie must keep in mind that it is a movie, not an unmediated presentation of real life. The documentarians are out to make a point and persuade viewers, rather than display raw truth.

The facts and situations presented in the film are most likely accurate, but there are always at least two sides to any story.

In this case, there are probably many more than two sides.

As was the controversial, single-perspective message of the Woroniecki family last week, this film is a lesson in bias for this campus community. Viewers must approach it with a reasonably critical eye.

It’s true for every debate: See the issue from both sides is just a good persuasive tactic. And viewing this film should be no different.

Tim Sukits:
OH, AND BY THE WAY...

Fraternities must work together to improve greek life

If you’re a member of a fraternity at Ball State University and you missed David Stollman’s speech, “Buy In or Get Out,” Thursday, you might want to get the notes from another fraternity member.

Ask any fraternity member on this campus who has made it to senior status, and he will tell you that our fraternal community has been not-so-slowly declining over the past few years. We’ve lost Beta Theta Pi, Alpha Tau Omega, Lambda Chi Alpha and Delta Chi. These are chapters that played a major role on this campus not more than 10 years ago — and now they’re gone.

I am a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon. Although we have a good reputation among Ball State faculty, I am well-aware we have one of the worst reputations among non-Greek students on this campus. I am even more aware that it is completely undeserved.

I hear the same thing at the beginning of every school year — it never fails. I tell some girl I’ve never met that I’m a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon, and she casually says, “I heard you guys put roofies in drinks,” or “I heard you guys rape girls.”

What am I supposed to say to that? How do you think that makes me feel?

I usually have the same reaction every time. First, the smile drains from my face, shortly followed by a long sigh, then a sickening feeling in my stomach. Sometimes, I walk away in silence and sit by myself until I can think about something else. Other times, I become enraged and ask who said that about our fraternity. The source of the rumor is always the same: one of the other fraternities on campus.

This is a perfect example of what is wrong with fraternities at Ball State — we don’t support each other. We put down one and spread rumors about another, and we gain nothing but a few enemies around campus. We should keep the competition on the intramural field and in the classroom, instead of competing to see how many freshmen girls and potential members we can spread rumors to.

Our chapter has always used rush tools such as having a house grade point average above the all-Ball State average, consistently winning at intramurals and philanthropy and having great alumni support. They’re not bad rush tools — usually bringing in a pretty solid pledge class.

With the 2004 No. 1 ranking among Ball State fraternities for GPA, we’ve only have academic competition from Phi Gamma Delta, which has an alcohol-free chapter house. They are also our only competition in total number of community service hours, and we seem to have no competition in money raised through philanthropic events — except sororities, of course.

This leads me to believe that if I were to attend a rush event at some of the other fraternities on this campus, I might hear things like “We throw the best parties,” or “We’ll get you laid” or “Sigma Phi Epsilon members are rapists.”

Well, if those are the rush tools that bring a solid group of future leaders into your chapter, by all means, keep using them. Just know that when those things are said, it reflects poorly on the whole Greek community, not just the chapter being slandered.

As Stollman said on Thursday, “We’re all Greek together.”

Oh, and by the way ... we would love to have some competition.



Tim Sukits is a senior magazine journalism major and writes ‘Oh, And By The Way...’ for the Daily News. His views do not necessarily agree with those of the newspaper.

Marie Zatezalo: **TRAVELING RIVERSIDE BLUES**

Teenage girls fight derogatory messages printed on Abercrombie and Fitch T-shirts

Boycott, meet girlcott.

Abercrombie and Fitch became the subject of a customer protest earlier this month, with a group of female high school students announcing their refusal to purchase any of the company’s products. Normally, this is referred to as a boycott, but under last week’s special circumstances, it’s actually a full-fledged girlcott.

Recently, Abercrombie and Fitch began selling T-shirts printed with messages that 16-year-old Emma Blackman-Mathis and her friends deemed derogatory to women. The Pennsylvania teens objected to messages like “Who needs brains when you have these?” printed across the bustline of a shirt. Another targeted shirt reads, “I had a nightmare I was a brunette.”

So, Blackman-Mathis organized a group and sent a message to Abercrombie and Fitch corporate headquarters: Stop degrading us.

Some readers will recall that in 2003, Abercrombie and Fitch pulled its catalogs from stores after nudity in the catalog provoked outrage among many consumers. The chain has always marketed with an edgy style — surging into the minds of young people with graphic images of sexuality and abandon — but there’s only so much pushing the envelope that can be done before people start getting offended.

Blackman-Mathis’s girlcott isn’t the first time a group of women have protested the racy ways of clothing manufacturers. What makes this situation intriguing, among other factors, is the age of the participants. It takes a lot of guts for a 16-year-old girl to not only organize a protest against a multi-million-dollar corporation but to also enlist support and take her message to the streets. Blackman-Mathis and



Marie Zatezalo is a graduate student and writes ‘Traveling Riverside Blues’ for the Daily News. Her views do not necessarily agree with those of the newspaper.

her fellow protesters have been interviewed on the “Today” show and several news networks, testifying to the growing phenomenon of their girlcott.

I’ll admit that my favorite pair of jeans, now in their fifth year under my ownership, are from Abercrombie and Fitch. Everything I’ve purchased from the store has fit well and been exceptionally durable. However, I haven’t set foot in an Abercrombie and Fitch store since freshman year of my undergraduate studies, and I’m glad to join Blackman-Mathis in her girlcott.

For one thing, it saves money, as Abercrombie and Fitch gear tends to be on the pricey side.

For another thing, I also object to the products recently marketed and the company’s grossly oversexualized image. It’s possible to sell clothing without shoving pornography in people’s faces — JCPenney, for example, seems to be doing fine without it. It’s such a shame that a perfectly good product like Abercrombie and Fitch clothing is ruined by overzealous marketers eager to push the envelope.

Besides, I have brown hair — I have to protest the “I had a nightmare I was a brunette” shirt strictly out of principle. Perhaps one day, women like myself, Angelina Jolie, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Salma Hayek and Halle Berry won’t have to suffer because of the ugliness that seems to be brown hair.

Critics argue that the girlcott is merely free advertising for Abercrombie and Fitch and that the attention drawn to their products will only serve to promote sales. This may be true, unfortunately, but it doesn’t change the fact that Blackman-Mathis possesses real courage and is setting a wonderful example for other young women across the nation.

She’s not simply complaining when things go wrong; she’s getting out there and making an effort to voice her opinions loud and clear. It’s exception to find such leadership and commitment — so rare in our adult economy and government — in a teenager.

Write to Marie at mmzatezalo@bsu.edu

FORUM POLICY

The Daily News opinion page aims to stimulate discussion in the Ball State community. The Daily News welcomes reader viewpoints and offers four vehicles of expression for reader opinions: letters to the editor, guest columns, feedback on our Web site and phone responses. Letters must be signed and

appear as space permits each day. The limit for letter length is approximately 350 words. All letters must be typed. The editor reserves the right to edit and condense submissions for length as well as clarity. The name of the author is usually published but may be withheld for compelling reasons, such as physical harm to the author. The editor

decides this on an individual basis and must consult the writer before withholding the name. Lengthy letters that focus on an issue affecting students might be considered for “Your Turn” columns at the editor’s discretion. Those interested in submitting responses can submit a typed copy to the Daily News office, located in AJ 278.

Steve Nawara:
THE SENSIBLE SOUTHPAW

Democrats might have to work for 2006 wins

I always knew it would get bad for the Republicans in Congress and the White House, but I never thought it was possible to get this bad this quickly. If you look past the fact that Republican incompetence and recklessness is costing the country billions of dollars and thousands of lives, you could almost feel sorry for them.

The fact of the matter is that in less than a year, Bush and his Republican minions in Congress have suffered an almost Nixonesque collapse in popularity and are showing no sign of bottoming out.

On top of that, 53 percent of Americans say they would vote for Democrats in the next Congressional election, if it were held today, while only 36 percent say they’ll vote Republican, according to a Newsweek poll. The shocking part of it is Republicans are currently wooing only 26 percent of independents to their side.

Barring any huge turnaround, it looks like 2006 is going to be a very bad year for Republicans. Independent analyst Larry Sabato remarked last week, “If elections for Congress were being held next Tuesday, Republicans would lose both houses. The GOP knows it.”

So much for the sweeping mandate Republicans claimed last November. This next election wasn’t even supposed to be close; if you would have watched enough Fox News at the time, you would have thought that the Democratic Party was on its way to extinction.

The best part about this GOP implosion is that it was mostly the party’s own fault.

To the average person, the Republican Party has become so fantastically corrupt it cannot be trusted with power. To the average person, Iraq looks like a self-inflicted wound on our country. To the average person, the Republican Party no longer represents its own values.

However, being the only alternative will not automatically sweep Democrats into power in 2006 — though at this rate, it may get them close. Sitting by and watching the Republicans self-destruction is a perfectly acceptable strategy for now, but eventually Democrats are going to have to hit back with a widely acceptable national strategy.

If it were up to me, I would organize the 2006 national campaign around three central issues. The No. 1 goal would be to portray the Democratic Party as the party of reform and accountability. Democrats need to make sure Republicans answer to each scandal that has occurred on their watch. Check.

The next issue will be Iraq — few issues are as emotionally driven as this war. Democrats need to be the anti-Bush regarding Iraq. They need to promise to set a timetable for withdrawal so the conflict does not turn into endless war. This simplest of steps could automatically endear the Democratic Party to the 65 percent of the country that disapproves of Bush’s handling of the war. “Stay the Course” does not qualify as a foreign policy, and most of the country knows it.

The next issue might be the most important problem facing this country’s future. The fact remains that America as we know it cannot function without imported oil. I don’t know about you, but I do not want my future economic prosperity and security tied to the most unstable region in the world. My guess is that a winter of skyrocketing gasoline and natural gas prices will make most of America a little more receptive to exploring alternative energy sources. Democrats need to seize this growing discontent and become the party of scientific exploration and discovery.

Congress will not automatically fall into the lap of the Democrats. In order for Democrats to claim majority party status, they will have to show the country they are the correct choice to truly guide America into the 21st century.



Steve Nawara is a senior political science major and writes ‘The Sensible Southpaw’ for the Daily News. His views do not necessarily agree with those of the newspaper.

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The Daily News encourages its readers to voice their views on legislative issues. The following legislators represent the Ball State community:

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U.S. Rep. Mike Pence
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Rep. R. Tiny Adams
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Sen. Allie Craycraft Jr.
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