

Freedom

Supreme Court decision victory for all U.S. citizens

The U.S. Supreme Court, with its new "conservative" membership, has surprised a lot of people in the past few weeks with some very controversial decisions.

One such ruling that caused an outcry said it was a violation of "the separation of church and state" clause in the Constitution to have prayer at public athletic events such as high school football games. But that was just the beginning of the controversial stances the court would take.

Last Wednesday, the court voted 5-4 that no laws could prohibit political protestors from burning the American flag in peaceful demonstrations because such forms of expression are protected by the Constitution. The decision nullified flag desecration laws in 48 states, including South Carolina's law, as well as a similar federal statute.

The ruling was a victory for all American citizens, including the veterans who protested the loudest. With their ruling, the judges in effect said that the freedom of expression and speech which the flag symbolizes is more important than the symbol itself.

This is what the United States is all about — freedom and the pluralism of ideas that grows because of that freedom. Symbols should not be more important than that freedom. If they were, the necessary reforms needed in a democratic country could not take place.

People can speak out peacefully against injustice and corruption in the U.S. government and demand change, and this right must never be taken away. It should not be taken away even if not everyone agrees with the way groups may express their desire for change — such as the burning of the American flag in a peaceful demonstration where no private property or other citizens are hurt.

It is that right that separates us from China, where thousands have died when they dared to criticize the government and to demand reform.

Justice William J. Brennan summed it up beautifully when he wrote for the majority, "We do not consecrate the flag by punishing its desecration, for in doing so we dilute the freedom that this cherished emblem represents."

The Gamecock does not attack any veteran for their outrage against the Supreme Court ruling. They have a special place in history, but we must also remember the brave soldiers who died in battle lost their lives not for the symbol of freedom but for the cause of freedom itself. They also have the Constitutional right to express their outrage.

Instead, we believe in the famous quote by Voltaire: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

Or, in this case, to express peacefully your criticism of the government by the poignant message represented in the burning of the American flag.



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U.S. has a lot more to be concerned about

What have we here? Our noble representatives in the federal government want to create a new amendment to the Constitution which would ban the burning of the Stars and Stripes.

I work the night shift in a store in downtown Columbia. It's very interesting work, and I meet a lot of new and different people.

For example, the elderly former prostitute who sits outside by the broken-down fountain a block away wondering where the safest place to sleep would be tonight.

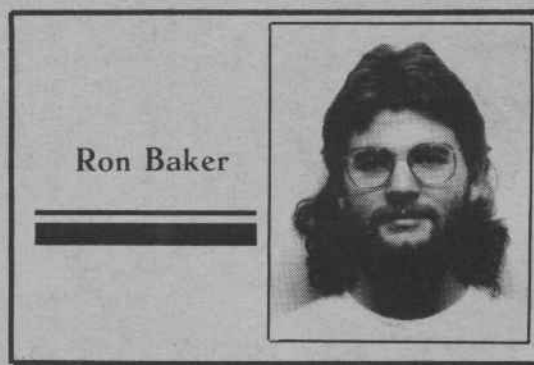
And then there's the homeless couple (dubbed "street people" as some sort of bizarre euphemism to make us all feel better) who come in for generic cigarettes daily. I have never seen the woman's face free of bruises and cuts.

Her husband drinks a lot, and he doesn't seem too happy most of the time. He spends a lot of time telling everyone what a lousy b--- his wife is.

And there's a man named Sam who comes in regularly waiting for someone to offer to buy him a Coke and a pack of crackers. He has been looking for work for months.

But it seems that Columbia businesses are generally unwilling to hire a man with only one set of clothes and no address.

I'm told that the Constitution has already done everything possible to take care of such problems.



Ron Baker

Now we need to look after something far more pressing.

We must protect our flag.

I will not concern myself in this space with matters of freedom of expression. I prefer to exercise that freedom and say that the government of the United States has a hell of a lot more to be concerned with than the "desecration" of a symbol.

As a young and naive student, I have come to believe that the government's duty to the citizens it serves is simply to do just that — serve them.

I am not at all sure that battling over a Constitutional Amendment to ban flag-torching is the best way the American public can be served right now.

Leftist pontifications aside, there is really a lot wrong with this country. An Equal Rights Amendment seems less of a possibility each year, the AIDS epidemic is growing to ghastly proportions, our society has created a class of working poor which grows daily, and there are people wandering the streets who own nothing and have little or no prospect of ever improving their situation.

And did you hear the one about the drug problem in our fine nation's capital? We'll get to that later, they tell me.

Because, you see, there is a piece of cloth stapled to a stick for sale at Wal-Mart which must be protected at all costs to our society.

They tell me it is the pride of the United States, that it died more than 50,000 times in Vietnam protecting the ideals it stands for, that it is more important than all of the aforementioned human lives which apparently are contributing nothing to the American way of life.

Excuse me. Could you please define "way of life" for me again. I think I missed something.

Mr. Bush's "1,000 points of light" seem as inept in dealing with all of the problems we have in the U.S. as are the "50 points of light" on the American flag. I'll venture to guess that the U.S. government would fare far better in solving our troubles if they really knew what the "American way of life" is really like out here.

Fair's daughter real victim of controversy

Fair concedes that he is objecting to overnight visitation because his daughter, Meridith, will attend USC next fall.

"Yeah, I'm thinking like a dad," he said. *The State* March 21, 1989

"My fight for visitation never concerned my daughter. I was simply responding to the concerns of my constituents." *The Gamecock* June 28, 1989

My, what a tangled web we weave. Meridith Fair, daughter of trustee and state Rep. Mike Fair, R-Greenville, will not attend USC this fall. After her father's unpopular fight to restrict overnight visitation, she has decided that the pressure of verbal and potential physical abuse is too much for her to handle. I don't doubt it.

While I don't condone or encourage the threats Miss Fair has allegedly received, it seemed obvious to me from the start that she would be subject to endless verbal abuse by students upset about our new visitation policies — most of the students on campus.

It is unfortunate Miss Fair won't attend USC. She is really the loser in this most recent episode in the drama that has been the visitation policy issue. She wants to major in nursing. Miss Fair has a B+



Todd Christensen

average and was voted most outstanding leader in her high school.

She, like the thousands of on-campus students, has been victimized by the controversial stance taken by her father. And Rep. Fair did her no favors by bringing her into the issue. Father doesn't always know best, it would seem.

Don't get me wrong. When you talk to Fair, he doesn't foam at the mouth or anything like that. He is very calm and confident in his beliefs. He knows what he is doing is right. You have to give him credit for taking a very unpopular position, rather than just going along with the norm. In this, he takes pride.

But what he has done is unfair, no pun intended.

This former USC student, who never got a degree, has single-handedly decided what 6,500 students can do in the privacy of their dorm rooms.

Although Fair does not see this as a bridging the gap between church and state, he uses the names "Sodom" and "Jerusalem" for visitation policies at USC and the ideal school, respectively.

Fair does have his supporters, however. My mother, for one:

If you had a daughter away at college, you would do the same thing.

I doubt it. First of all, I resent the implication that, if I had a daughter — or son, for that matter — I would be a narrow-minded, suffocating, self-righteous zealot. I like to think that I will give my children the power to decide for themselves in situations of a personal nature. I would object to someone who had the audacity to make those decisions for them, decisions that are an important part of the maturation process.

By the way, Fair requested his position on the Board of Trustees. One member of the House Committee on Education is an *ex officio* member of the board.

There are close to 25,000 registered voters at USC, some of whom live in Greenville. Let your voices be heard. Don't allow Fair to victimize you any longer. His daughter should stand as an example.

I'm sorry, Meridith. I really am.



The Gamecock

Best Non-daily Collegiate Newspaper, Southeastern Region
Society of Professional Journalists, 1987-88

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Letters Policy: *The Gamecock* will try to print all letters received. Letters should be, at a maximum, 250 to 300 words long. The writer should include full name, professional title if an employee with USC or Columbia resident, or year and major if a student. An address and phone number are required with any letters sent. Guest editorials should not exceed 500 words. We reserve the right to edit letters for style or possible libel. *The Gamecock* will not withhold names under any circumstance.

Letters to the editor

Columnist's stand on issue unclear

To the editor:
The combination of having not read *The Gamecock* in a while and having been a summer staff member in the past made the June 21 issue interesting.

Since you don't get many letters during the summer, I thought you all could use some feedback. Here goes:

Mr. Baker needs to understand the tax system better if he wants to publish opinions on taxation. How can increased taxes not help local governments? You said yourself local governments don't intend to break even with the local option sales tax.

As for having property taxes go back up after a year, it's merely probable they'd go up, not definite. Besides, would you rather your property taxes go up (maybe one year and down one year, or go up both years?)

You admit local governments need more money. Isn't local taxation the best way to target local needs? Since many people including you and I don't own our own homes, but still need police and fire protection, isn't a sales tax fairer?

Your potshot at conservatives in state government is pointless. Your circular logic trying to tie into your argument wastes space.

But wait. Suddenly you extoll some positive aspects of the sales tax.

Suddenly you take a shot at the Reagan administration, then hint local option sale tax is inevitable. Your train of thought is derailing and leaving an ugly mess.

What's your point? Are you on one side or the other? Are you of no opinion, or just not sure? Or do you try to take a USC student angle on the issue? This is, after all, a student newspaper.

To paraphrase John Land: I tried to get a sense of your article, and found it had none.

Richard J. Breen
Broadcast technician,
USC Class of '88

Reader urges prayer for China

Last Wednesday morning when I heard the news that three Chinese students were executed for their participation in the protests, I was overwhelmed with grief to the point of numbness.

Somehow I wanted to retaliate. Somehow I wanted my government to impose some type of force to let the Chinese government know that we Americans are outraged and hurt over recent actions.

But as I thought these things, I was reminded that there is an enemy behind the evil government of China. His name is Satan, the evil one who opposes the Creator God. So, as a

follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, I realized I need to:

- pray more fervently (2 Thessalonians 3:1,2)
- remember the people of China as though I was being beaten, jailed and murdered. (Romans 13:3)
- be quick to respond to any suffering that Chinese people here might be facing because of tragedies with loved ones back home. (Proverbs 3:27)

While we as U.S. citizens cannot do anything about the injustices and murders, we as Christians (citizens of heaven) are told by Jesus that we can overcome evil with love. Let us pray:

- that our government make wise decisions concerning our policies with China;
- that the Chinese leaders be stopped by God so that His causes love, joy, and peace will be exalted in China;
- that the people in China find strength and peace in Jesus to live under China's rule until things can be changed (Romans 16:20, Daniel 4:37).

Regina Peterson
Columbia resident

Other countries guilty of crimes

To the editor:
I wish to add something to Janice Kraft's letter in the June 21

Gamecock expressing outrage about China. I agree with two of her remarks: "How can we maintain 'normal relations' with a government that murders its own people in cold blood!" and "We should never have armed them (China) in the first place."

In addition, we should never have provided military support in the first place to such repressive, right-wing groups as, among other, the governments of Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile and the Nicaraguan Contras, all of which have murdered civilians in cold blood while hiding behind a veil of anti-communism.

In her letter, Ms. Kraft leads us to believe that dictatorial atrocity around the world is only a communist phenomenon. We must not forget that tens of thousands of students laborers, farm workers, union members, peasants, health workers, nuns, and priests have been gunned down, simply for peaceful expression of political views by forces supported by the United States in its blind and fanatical crusade against communism.

We need to realize that just because a government is "anti-communist," it is not necessarily democratic. The U.S. must start acting consistently, sanctioning all repressive governments, communist and anti-communist, which abuse human rights.

Michael Yoder
Geography graduate student