

## Censorship takes form in debate

by Catherine Booth

I had eagerly waited for the widely advertised debate between Professor Griff and Jack Thompson. Despite being a left wing, bleeding-heart, white-female liberal opposed to censorship, I entered this debate with the most free-thinking and unbiased mind I could, hoping to hear mature and intellectual arguments presented fairly. What I really entered was a circus.

By the time I left, not only was I frustrated that my time had been wasted on listening to only 20 minutes of constructive debate in the last two hours, but I was amazed and angered at what had just taken place on a university campus—where ideas, no matter how extreme or obtuse, are encouraged to be freely expressed and deserve to be received with open minds. Instead, this brought back memories of junior high school when children sat in the gym and booed and spit wads of gum at the nerd standing in front of them, trying to make

his first speech. This wasn't a real debate, but rather a re-enactment of what happened to the Bradys last February when a narrow-minded and stubborn audience booed and hissed them out of their chance to fairly present their ideas.

### Student Response

Although Jack Thompson, representing the minority opinion, was no gentleman, he was treated with an embarrassingly gross lack of respect from the moment that Rob Rosenthal, the moderator, introduced him to the majority anti-censorship audience. As Thompson presented his case on various forms of censorship, the audience moaned and groaned. Unfortunately, this disrespectful behavior was further fueled by the glib, charismatic and popular opponent known as Professor Griff. His sarcastic off-case statements attacked not only Thompson's view, but his character as well. The audience reacted by heckling blindly and wildly. Is this the way a university audience responds to oppos-

ing ideas?

While Thompson was trying to maintain the debate on a human level by speaking on various forms of censorship, Griff took the opportunity to maintain the debate solely on a racial level. Because this "expert" on racial issues was invited to argue this issue (using thousands of dollars in student fees), additional experts (feminists, artists) should also have been chosen for the debate to present a more balanced argument. Otherwise, perhaps CSUN and whoever else sponsored this event should have advertised it specifically as a debate on racial censorship.

By the end of the night when the time came for questions from the audience, 95 percent of the "questions" were really rhetorical caustic attacks aimed at Thompson, for the sake of letting out steam toward the vulnerable angry white man. It appeared to be done in order to let him know how it feels to be in the minority—attacked and intimidated by the majority.

Come on, people! We all know that—

at the risk of being trite—two wrongs don't make a right. Why revert back to the same behavior of 100 years ago that we condemn today? Additionally, this incredibly energized crowd set the atmosphere where anyone who so dared to oppose Griff and his blind loyalists would be intimidated, heckled and finally censored from expressing him/herself. Consequently, I chose to keep my questions to myself (the line for questions was too long anyway and I feared that a riot would break out).

If UNLV wants to be known as a high academic rather than an athletic institution, opinions, no matter how diverse, need to be accepted in an open and educated manner rather than with the embarrassingly rigid behavior displayed that night. Unless these and other events change, this university will continue to be viewed as the same circus—attracting the same old clowns for students.

Catherine Booth is a sophomore

## It's a bird, it's a plane — no, it's the end

by Debra D. Bass

Superman is dead and now injustice and criminal activity will run rampant through all factions of our society unheeded. That is, if anyone of us past the age of two still believes that the good guys still beat the bad guys on a consistent basis.

What is the world coming to? From court rooms to comic books, cliches like "justice for all" and "good overcoming evil" are being contradicted with an unsettling frequency.

The April riot scene catapulted our coveted judicial system into the national spotlight. Imagine judicial injustice, police brutality, and blatant racism running rampant through factions of our society which should inherently embody objectivity, equality and be otherwise above reproach.

Isn't it bad enough that ugly instances like this have disproven our ideologies? Now, we can't even rely on fantasy for an escape. It only intensifies our growing skepticism.

It's hard to envision Superman dead. He is supposed to be the man of steel, the caped crusader, the champion against evil, the funny looking guy in the blue tights—well, you get the picture. Our childhood hero will die in the Nov. 18 issue of the DC Comics Superman series at the hands of a superlunatic-escapee from a cosmic insane asylum wearing a straitjacket. Appropriately, his name is Doomsday.

What kind of message is this sending out? Can we assume that there was just so much evil out there that our fearless hero was bound to be overwhelmed sooner or later? Actually, it's surprising that he lasted as long as he did.

As children we learn that the good guy is supposed to always win and we believed it. But now, as adults, we come in contact with scores of demented, diabolical bad guys who kill and destroy things just for the fun of it and we actually root for them—Hannibal Lecter, Freddie Kruger, Chucky and Ross Perot to name a few.

In the process of assimilating into our disintegrating society we have become more cynical. There aren't any good guys anymore—only bad guys who haven't been caught yet. Consequently, in most instances, we trust the "good guys" less than the "bad guys," because they have already dropped their masks, so to speak. If they do something else questionable, at least it won't be a surprise.

Well, it's taken 50 years or so, but at last Superman has dropped his mask. He's really not invincible and perhaps this infers something deeper. The good guys are supposed to win and Superman doesn't win. Who will be the next to fall?

Debra Bass is the Opinion Page Editor of *The Rebel Yell*

### Letters to the Editor

#### 'Yell' insensitive in accusations

Dear Editor:

In the opinion column on Sept. 29, *The Rebel Yell* expressed its disgust at students' apparent lack of desire to attend cultural events, particularly the debate between Professor Griff and Jack Thompson or the international film series.

These editors seem to enjoy expanding their mind to learn about other cultures and enjoy calling the rest of the student body ethnocentric. Obviously, they need to spend a little more time contemplating their own culture, especially life here in good old Las Vegas.

They feel disgusted? Imagine the frustration a student experiences when UNLV endeavors to promote a "college environment," yet he or she must work 40 hours a week to pay tuition and living expenses which leaves no time to attend these events. I would venture to say that some form of this description applies to most of the students at UNLV since the average age here is 26 (according to UNLV Institutional Analysis). More than likely such "kids" can hardly remember parental financial

support let alone recall when they owned a free minute of their own. Corporations do not include culture leave as part of their excused absences.

Personally, I was lucky enough to attend classes in the spring of 1991 without the added burden of employment (though I am happy to be presently working). During that semester, I attended every last foreign film offered in Wright Hall on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and I am not a film major. Such an opportunity was unbelievable, especially at no cost.

This semester, however, I do not find myself in such an advantageous position and the editors of this paper should not subject me and other students like me to their thoughtless insensitivity. Isn't disappointment enough?

Stephanie Rushia  
undeclared

#### Pre-event publicity needed

Dear Editor:

The author of the column in the Sept. 29 paper about students not caring needs to investigate more than the number in attendance before making assertions. Most of my friends and I care about what happens on this campus as well as the world beyond.

As much as my friends and I care, none of us have heard about any of the mentioned events until after the event. In the case of Hillary Clinton's visit, none of us ever knew. Most of my friends, like myself, are graduate students from other universities and know that we need to watch bulletin boards and flyers for events that bring new information. Yet, not one of us has seen any information on such events. As a matter of fact, we don't know when *The Rebel Yell* is distributed, since we can never consistently find the current issue. I suspect that with better publicity, a greater number of students would show up to these events. But from what I have seen, the only events with any publicity offer free beer and hot dogs or mindless entertainment.

The next time the writer of this column decides that the student body should be ashamed for not caring, he/she needs to verify publicity. Besides, when I saw the Griff/Thompson debate at another university, no usable information was given—only emotionally charged rhetoric.

Karl Wood  
graduate student,  
economics

Editor's note: As the Sept. 29 editorial stated, Hillary Clinton appeared at the University of Colorado, not at UNLV.