

PERSPECTIVE

REBEL YELL



Jay Sapovits amazing column "From the Sap" will appear next week.

Blame, crime, and personal responsibility

And he said, "...Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

The man said, "The woman you put here with me - she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (Gen. 3:11-13, NIV)

Blaming others for our actions is nothing new. Even I have done it once or twice.

In this day and age, pointing the finger at others in the attempt to expiate one's guilt has taken us to new heights - and new depths. Yet it always seems as though, like the Adam-and-Eve-in-the-garden case, using others as our scapegoats always makes one appear guilty ever so much more.

The problems that plague society at large have usually been blamed on a despised group or

class of individuals. Nero blamed the Christians, Hitler the Jews, politically correct persons blame Caucasian males, the radical left blame Rush Limbaugh and Hugh Hefner. Libertarians blame government as the source of all societal catastrophe. We blame the neighbors. The alley cat. The brainless child across the street. President Clinton.

The family dog. And so on.

But rarely do we examine the cause; rather, we tend to blame those who benefit from the effects. And even when we manage to assign credit where credit is due, we smirk, with self-righteous glee, "See, I told you so."

A few examples:

AIDS has attracted the attention of the media, politicians, and virtually the entire planet. I note that whenever victims of AIDS are featured as guests on television talk shows, they are rarely blamed for getting the disease in the first place, although 90 percent of all persons with this disease received

it after actively pursuing the lifestyle which places them at high risk. Instead, they blame Reagan or Bush for not being fully committed to funding research for the cure, although, according to government figures, AIDS funding almost quadrupled during their administrations.

The recent trial of the four defendants in the Reginald Denny beating trial has sparked a furious debate over whether or not the rioters in south central Los Angeles, which includes the defendants themselves, are to carry the weight of guilt for their actions. As Maryanne Dawicki wrote in the Tuesday Yell, crime is to be blamed not on persons, but on an "economic system...unable to provide adequate jobs with decent incomes for minorit[ies]."

I cannot agree. If crime were the result of or even concomitant with unemployment or underemployment, then I should conclude that during the Great Depression and its 30 percent unemployment rate, we had the highest crime rate. Not true; in fact, during the 1930's, the incidence of crime per capita actually decreased, proof positive that economic condition is not the primary factor to crime.

Actions such as crime are eco-

nomically determined; criminals determine their law-breaking activities by "computing" the likelihood of getting caught and the punishment if convicted. So long as hoods think that either the likelihood of getting caught is small or the punishment, if convicted, is nothing more than a slap on the hand and are not held accountable to the law, they will continue in their activities.

There is a common thread running through the liberal side of such debates as abortion and capital punishment: to deny persons the consequences of their own actions. To accept responsibility for and the consequences of our actions is a necessary part of normal human social development, lest we remain

as children.

There must come a time when all men should start becoming accountable for their actions, and until that day comes, people will act as children, although nothing were wrong. Fortunately, God didn't let Adam or Eve get away with theirs.

"Nero blamed the Christians, Hitler the Jews, politically correct persons blame Caucasian males"

Read the Perspective section. Like it or not.



Staff Columnist

Donovan Stelzner

Student Spotlight

What do you think about the ban on beer at student government activities?



Mike Oates

Junior, Finance Major

"I was at the game during the middle of the 'brawl'. I was also drinking that day and fairly drunk. I had a designated driver and I am an extremely responsible drinker. Beer is not the source of immaturity, the organization is. I don't feel that the actions of few should result in the demise of the masses."



Gevora Leaks

Political Science Major

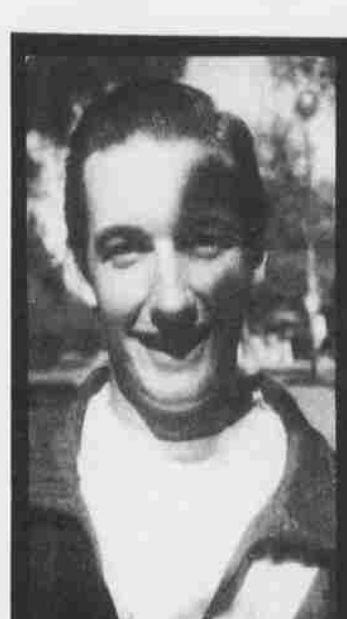
"I think the greater majority should not be penalized for the actions of the few and that alcohol should be allowed at any events as long as the distribution can be administered in moderation and in consideration of all those attending the event."



Joey Nelson

Senior, Political Science

"I don't think they should ban beer. People should drink in moderation or don't drink at all."



James Woodall

Senior, Kinseology

"If student government is going to provide beer or alcoholic for the student or who ever is going to tailgate parties then they should monitor it and give it out in certain amounts or ban it all together due to our recent skirmish at the game."



Tracie Walker

Freshman, Communications

"I guess they have the right to limit it but I think 'all' is going too far."