

Fear of dissent is a fear of freedom

Late last month, a junior sociology major at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va., silently stationed himself near a military recruiters' table on campus. The student, Tariq Khan, is a Pakistani-American and a four-year veteran of the U.S. Air Force. He held literature and wore a sign stating, "Recruiters lie. Don't be deceived."

The recruiters, naturally, were not happy. Some bystanders weren't either. Words were exchanged. Campus police arrived, Tariq Khan was unable to produce identification, a scuffle ensued, and the student, bruised and bloodied, according to one news account, was taken to jail.

That same day, at Holyoke Community College in Massachusetts, a similar clash was unfolding. State police in riot gear, with gas masks at the ready, were on hand when a dozen or more students gathered to protest National Guard recruiters on campus. A police officer reportedly grabbed a student's sign, reading "Cops Are Hypocrites." The student wound up banned from campus and facing possible criminal charges.

Similar anti-military recruiting protests have resulted in similar confrontations on college and university campuses across the nation, according to an Oct. 12 article in *The Nation*. They include New York's City College, William Paterson University in New Jersey, San Francisco State, the University of California-Santa Cruz and the University of Wisconsin.

Protesters off campus run into the same problems. On Sept. 26, 370 anti-war protesters outside the White House were hauled away to jail. Also that day, 41 demonstrators at the Pentagon were picked up and carted off for booking.

Officially, authorities cite trespass, disorderly conduct, failure to obtain a permit and similar laws as reasons for arrests, threats of arrest and disruption of such demonstrations. Unofficially, they send a chilling signal that disagreement with government policy or majority opinion can get you in trouble with the law.

That message is clearly sent when authorities cite possible involvement in "terrorist activities" as justification for spying on advocacy groups. The American Civil Liberties Union recently obtained through the Freedom of Information Act an FBI document that targets a peace group and an affirmative-action group in Michigan.

One does not have to endorse or defend anti-war or anti-military sentiments raised in peaceful protests to recognize the risk that suppressing dissenting voices poses for a vital democracy. Whether stifling such voices is done in the name of good order or disagreement with the message, such actions reflect a fear of dissent.

Fear regularly tests Americans' commitment to First Amendment rights and values. It has done so since the nation's inception. And we have yet to conquer the instinct to fear speech and limit liberty.

That instinct is especially active during wartime. Afraid of foreign enemies, we've attacked our own rights. We sent hundreds of Americans to prison under the 1798 Sedition Act and the 1917 Espionage Act for criticizing war or the government or its leaders.

Today, facing real and symbolic wars against terrorism, we too often allow our leaders to insulate themselves from criticism and opposition. Public officials herd college students, demonstrators, even journalists, into so-called "free-speech zones." Government agents peer over the shoulders of ordinary citizens engaged in First Amendment activities on the Internet, on cell phones, at the library, even at their places of worship.

The fear and distrust driving such actions is particularly dangerous when they defang political discourse. Discourse promotes deliberation. Deliberation ensures sound and supported government policies and actions. But without robust dissent, discourse is anemic and ultimately ineffectual.

That's why the courts generally have held that the First Amendment protects dissent, which in turn ensures government accountability, fosters new ideas and sharpens old ones. In the absence of clear and concerted citizen commitment to such principles, however, all speech eventually kneels before official authority.

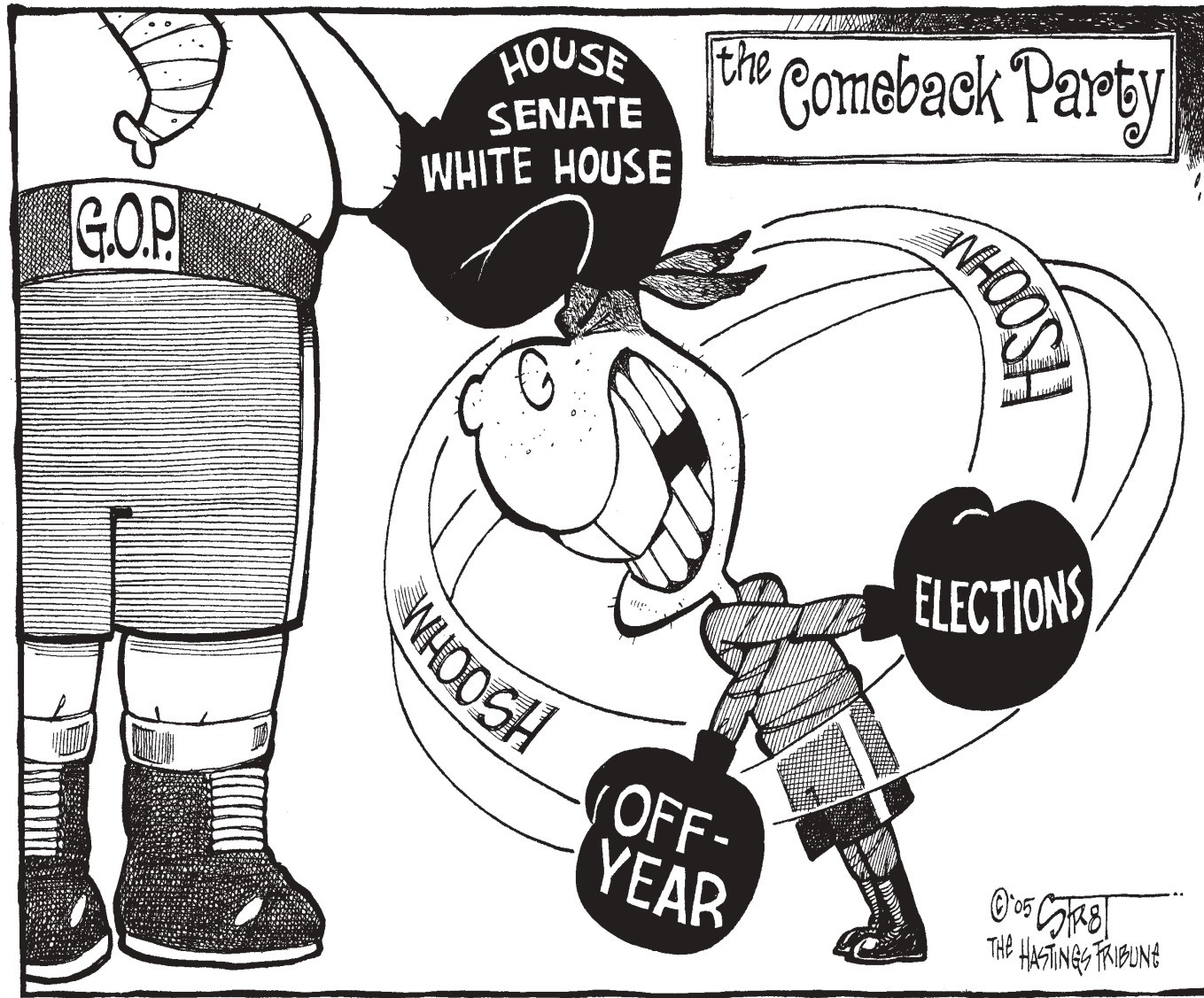
Constitutional guarantees alone will not fully protect those principles because freedom of expression, the right to dissent especially, each day must face and prevail over the power of government, the will of the majority and the passions of the moment.

With such powerful forces arrayed against it, dissent also requires the protection of an independent judiciary and an informed public.

The more unpopular the protest, the more our commitment to the First Amendment is tested. When we're tested, we're reminded of the menace to democracy and freedom posed by what Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis termed "silence coerced by law."

The First Amendment is important, not only because it protects our rights, but also because it gives us the courage to fight for what can be ours if we dare claim it: freedom from fear, the freedom to speak and the right to disagree.

— Paul K. McMasters,
First Amendment Center



God had a hand in evolution

An exhibit opened this week, which is sure to stir the pot just a little more in the evolution versus intelligent design debate for which our state has become known.

The University of Kansas exhibit* is one more attempt to educate our state and help us to appear more knowledgeable than the present state board would portray us.

The debate between evolution and intelligent design has always surprised me just a bit. I've never understood what the debate was about anyway.

To me the two sides are not opposing at all. To me the whole of our world has been created by "intelligent design". In my vocabulary God includes evolution.

Should intelligent design be taught in public school?

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



Not unless all religious thought can be taught, including the Koran. Don't forget we are a country founded on religious freedom, not Christian freedom.

The beauty of evolution is it is so typical of God's methods.

God is not big into the instant, flashy, magic acts, just ask the Israelites. Although He has been known to enjoy a "Road to Damascus" experience on occa-

sion, He more frequently enjoys a gradual revealing. Rather He lets the beauty of life unfold and expose itself to each of us.

Should I be offended to think I might come from a long line of monkeys... many who know my family would guarantee I have.

The ideal result of this exhibit would be to portray Kansans, not as fearful of science, but embracing the wonderful challenges God gives us to discover His world.

Do I believe in evolution?
Do you see me getting a flu shot or taking others to get theirs each year?

You sure do. Cells evolve, including flu cells, as they change I rejoice in their change.

*For more information, please refer to www.cnn.com/2005/EDUCATION/11/04/evolution.kansas.reut/index.

Parade brings thoughts of freedom

What a joy to view the wonderful Norton Veterans Day Parade. I have mentioned before that I become teary eyed when the National Anthem is played and even more emotional when I see the veterans of past wars walking or riding down the street, still proud and some in their uniforms.

Maybe it affects me so much because I remember World War II even though I was young. Then there was the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

It would have been wonderful if World War I would have been the war to end all wars as many people thought at that time.

Even though I remember, I know I have no idea what those soldiers went through to keep our freedoms. It bothers me a great deal when people use that freedom in the wrong way.

I believe freedom also demands us to use our freedoms in a responsible manner. If I want to protest, for the most part I will do it through the ballot box and through dialogue with people who may have a dif-

Memories Sonya Montgomery



ferent opinion.

It was also appreciated to see so many young people involved in the parade, I believe they will long remember being a part of the Veterans Day Parade and maybe they will ask their parents or teachers what the parade and the day is all about.

Jake Durham and all others who organize the parade and the many people who take part are to be commended. All those who stood along the streets to view as well. Hats off to those workers of the Andbe Home who brought some of the residents in the van so they could enjoy

the parade.

I heard the Norton Junior High band play patriotic music and the Northern Valley band also did very well. The Norton High School band looked sharp, and they played at the special tribute, then the Bluejay Fight Song as they came down the street?. Oh, well, it sounded good.

Norton should take pride in this great parade each year.

The flags looked great on main street. On another subject, why were Welcome flags not placed on main street on Saturday for the Arts and Crafts shows and the opening of pheasant season?

It looked pretty bare when there are so many people from out of town that come to shop in Norton.

I don't know who should have been in charge of that.

I think we miss opportunities when we do not make those people feel welcome, who knows they may even come back to shop next week.

Hospice needs community support

Hospices Services, Inc. By Julia Schemper

We all want the best care of our loved ones when they are sick. But when someone we love is dying, it's hard to go it alone.

Every day we hear about people facing questions about serious illness, care giving, end-of-life and grief.

The good news is, you don't have to go through this alone. All of the issues mentioned above, Hospice Services can help with. Another advantage is the care comes from a local base. Yet Hospice Services would not be possible without community support.

Hospice Services is you. Your gift makes a significant difference. Past gifts have allowed Hospice Services to purchase or rent durable medical equipment for patients. It allows volunteers to be trained to be prepared to help families as face serious illnesses.

It also allows Hospice Services to sponsor bereavement support group. One such

bereavement program entitled "Handling the Holidays" will be held from noon to 1 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 10, at the Norton Public Library. This particular bereavement group is to help make the holidays a less stressful time for those who have lost a loved one. The program is free to anyone in the community, not just Hospice Services patient families.

If you would like to continue to make end-of-life care better for everyone in your community you can donate to Hospice Services through the "Caring Hearts" fund-drive. You may leave a donation in a drop-box located at: Almena State Bank

in Almena and Norton, First Security Bank and Trust in Lenora and Norton, First State Bank in Norton, Norton Area Chamber of Commerce, The Bank in Norton, and the Norton County Hospital.

All gifts to Hospice Services have a direct impact on improving end-of-life care.

The Hospice Services staff and volunteers are passionate about improving how people live out their lives in Norton County.

Whether people are dealing with a difficult diagnosis, thinking ahead about options, or dealing with the loss of a loved one, Hospice Services offers resources and support people need to improve end-of-life care for everyone in the Norton County community.

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