

Chris Latson

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Censorship and Pornography

Censorship is the “supervision and control of the information and ideas that are circulated among the people within a society” (Encarta). It refers to the examination of books, films, television and radio programs, and other communication media for the purpose of altering sections that are thought to be objectionable or offensive. This objectionable material may be considered immoral, treasonable, or injurious to the national security of the country. When censorship prohibits anything, because of the nature of its their content, then it is wrong and doesn’t do its intended purpose. Censorship of obscene materials violates the rights given by the “First Amendment” of the U.S. Constitution.

Pornography is “any written, graphic, or oral depiction’s of erotic subjects intended to arouse sexual excitement in the audience” (Encarta). The term pornography is commonly divided into two different categories. There is soft-core, in which the erotic material is more titillating than explicit, and there is hard-core, in which erotic content is explicit and intense. Pornography is commonly equated with obscenity, “Pornography is a legal term covering anything offensive to public morals, whereas the former refers specifically and exclusively to the erotic content of a book, painting, recording, motion picture, or other form of communication” (Encarta). It is commonly called “porn”, and has grown from a small-time activity into a large multi-million dollar industry.

The “First Amendment” of the United States Constitution says “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” (Encarta). This sounds exactly like what censorship is trying to prohibit. Pornography is not forced upon anyone, and therefore is not infringing on the rights of anyone, so it should not be prohibited. No one is forced to watch pornography, neither is anyone forced to participate or pose in the explicit materials.

Although everyone in society may not agree with the ideas and graphic nature of pornography, this doesn't mean that it should be censored. America belongs to the people, and that means all the people. This means that the views and values of some cannot be considered to be the same for everyone. This is suppose to be the land of the free, and if people can't express themselves, then that saying is just a fluke. The views of some should not be enough to intimidate Congress into passing some censorship law, that would violate the rights of citizens in the free world.

Pornography is not a recent controversial issue. It has quite a bit of history behind it. “Pornography is an age-old phenomenon. The ancient Greeks were familiar with it, as is evident in the derivation of the word, which is classical Greek for writings about harlots (Encarta). Censorship also goes back to ancient times. “Every society has had customs, taboos, or laws by which speech, play, dress, religious observance, and sexual expression were regulated” (Encarta). In 1970 there was a “President's Commission on Obscenity and Pornography”. The commission gathered all types of information and conducted lots of research.

In the majority report, there was both a Non-Legislative Recommendation, and a Legislative Recommendation. In the Non-Legislative Recommendation, “the commission believes that much of the problem regarding materials which depict explicit

sexual activity stems from the inability or reluctance of people in our society to be open and direct in dealing with sexual matters..." (Conversations 602). In the Legislative Recommendation "the commission recommends that federal, state, and local legislation prohibiting the sale, exhibition, or distribution of sexual materials to consenting adults should be repealed..." (Conversations 602). In the end, the commission as a whole decided that government should not try to prohibit or censor sexual materials. So, if this was the case, why are government officials, in Washington, thinking of trying to go against what had already been decided?

I can sympathize with those who feel that pornography is something that they feel is wrong and would never be a part of. I can also relate to those who would want it censored, even with the protection of the constitution, because it goes against the beliefs of some cultures or religions. But that is about it. If you want to censor pornography, there are a couple other issues that you might want to tackle first. There is sex, newspapers, the press, alcohol, cigarettes, and gambling. These things directly affect the people involved where porn does not. No one can show where watching an pornographic videotape, or viewing other sexually explicit materials, hurt someone personally right then and there. Congress should be using our tax dollars to set up laws, or further increase present one to stop there dangerous, and in most cases, deadly issues.

The main problem with pornography is that it is very loosely defined. "How does one define something so infinitely variable, so deeply personal, so uniquely individualized as the image, the word, and the fantasy that cause sexual arousal?" (Conversations 632). This makes it difficult to actually determine what is pornography, and what is not. This conclusion depends on the individual, because one person'

values and perception of what is obscene can be completely different from the next person.

Although pornography should be protected by the first amendment, there are still many that believe “censorship is necessary for the protection of the family, the church, and the state” (Encarta). It’s increasing availability, has forced it to become the concentration of many human rights groups, who hope to be able to shut the industry down. Many feminist and puritan values, groups feel that “porn” degrades women everywhere because it portrays them as pieces of meat. They feel that men are exploiting the female body for their own benefit. They are stretched and straddled across magazine covers, and have sexual intercourse in front of cameras, but they are not forced to do this. These women earn wages, and any work that they do, they do willingly. So the only question is why does the opposition insist on trying to take away this right from them.

All in All, the issue of pornography is a difficult and very controversial one. It must be placed in the same category with abortion, when it comes to public opinion and society’s virtues and values. No matter what goes on in legislature opposers of pornography will not change over, and neither will its supporters. The main thing here is that Americans are guaranteed freedom of speech and freedom of expression, and that means anything that does not violate the law or violate others rights. I know that pornography may be approved of or meet the taste of everyone, but that is still no reason to try and have it banned. On other issues that involve the media, we don’t censor the stories because they are controversial, and don’t live up to supposed public morals. Showing off your body or performing sexual acts in front of a video camera is not bad unless you are unaware of it. It may be viewed as a form of distasteful

exhibitionism, but once again it should still be included as a form of freedom, which is guaranteed by the Constitution. You should have the right to do whatever makes you happy, as long as it is within the constraints of "The Law Of The Land". Freedom is what really makes this country great, and without it, America might as well be communist.