

## To the Readers . . .

**A**s many of you are no doubt aware, last month's issue of *The Freelancer* featured a spread on teenage sexual activity that caused a great deal of controversy among students, parents, and faculty alike.

Since assuming the positions of Editors in Chief at the outset of the year, Ms. Webster and I have always maintained the editorial philosophy that *The Freelancer's* purpose is, contrary to popular belief, not to serve as a public relations mouthpiece for the administration or simply provide entertainment for the student body, but, like any legitimate media outlet, to address the important, relevant, and very real issues that our audience faces. Whether or not such realities are uncomfortable for people to confront is, in our opinion, irrelevant. To ignore or try to sweep such things under the rug would not only be poor and irresponsible journalism, but a disservice to the community.

On the other hand, to tackle an issue as important as teenage drug usage or sexual activity and handle it improperly would be equally as offensive to the tenets of quality journalism.

As such, *The Freelancer* apologizes to readers who were offended by the word search that appeared in last month's issue. We concede that the piece, which ran as a result of miscommunication among our staff, was in poor taste and threatened to undermine the seriousness with which we intended to handle the issue's controversial subject matter. We assume full responsibility for the poor judgement that led to the publication of the word search and promise to take precautions to ensure that such an incident does not again occur in the future.

That said, our staff, at least in regards to the rest of the newspaper's content, will continue to stand by and support the editorial decisions made involving last month's issue. We remain convinced that neither our presentation nor content was either offensive, obscene, or inappropriate.

We ask that readers keep in mind our intent: Our purpose was not to pose the question, "Is teenage sexual activity acceptable?" but to present the fact that teenagers *are* sexually active and ask, "Are they being responsible and why/why not?" It was our decision to minimize the representation of abstinent students not because we were *promoting* sex, but because we felt it would detract from the more important focus: irresponsibly sexually active students and the risks they take and pose. Abstinent students are not at risk for teenage pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases, but sexually irresponsible students are. *That* is where the problem, concern, and, as far as we're concerned, focus should lie.

Some readers have also expressed dissatisfaction with the photograph that ran alongside our coverage of "teen sex." We believe that the image, while mildly suggestive, was certainly no worse than what one might see in magazines, movies, television, advertisements, or walking past an Abercrombie & Fitch or Victoria's Secret store in a mall. It is an unfortunate reality of print journalism that we must sometimes resort to using provocative or sensationalistic images to capture our audience's interest. Is it not, in some cases, preferable that students read our publication for the wrong reasons than not at all?

On that note, it has come to our attention that members of the school's faculty who had personal objections to content presented in the newspaper were confiscating and throwing away their students' copies. Such action is, in fact, a clear violation of California Education Code § 48907, which states:

*"School officials shall have the burden of showing justification without undue delay prior to any limitation of student expression . . ."*

To our knowledge, the teachers involved in the confiscation of the newspapers never notified us of their intent to do so, let alone did they meet their "burden of showing justification."

In any event, *The Freelancer* is grateful to those readers who have expressed support for our work. We also appreciate those who are critical of what we decide to print and publish and encourage them to continue to voice their concerns via the proper channels. Our goals, first and foremost, have always been to inspire criticism, debate, and discussion, and I vehemently believe that we have accomplished that and successfully achieved what we set out to do this year. Our staff chooses to consider this experience an important and invaluable lesson in censorship, journalistic integrity, students' rights, and the fundamental principles of American freedom and democracy.

We will not be complacent; we realize that we have our flaws, but nonetheless we are extremely proud of the work we've put forth this year and the progress we've made in aiming to meet the high standards we set for ourselves. We hope that future *Freelancer* staffs will continue to strive for the improvement, quality, and excellence we've chosen to pursue, and we wish them the best of luck.

Sergio Hernandez  
Editor in Chief, '06

## Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

I am writing this letter to convey my congratulations to you and your staff on a very enlightening issue about teenagers and sex in high school.

When I learned that this issue had caused great commotion and discontent among parents and teachers I could not comprehend why. I thought it was well written, informative, and in good taste.

It took great courage to allow your students to publish such a controversial issue that has made us aware of what really goes on in our high school. I am certain that La Serna is not an isolated case. There are situations that occur all around the country and the sooner parents come to terms with these realities in the world we live in, the sooner topics like these can be approached with more openness, and less fear, shame and anger.

Thank you,

— Margarita Morla

To the Editor:

I am writing this letter to tell you just how disgusted I am with the last issue you have sent out about sex.

First off, it would be good to educate people about sex and their risks, but I believe what you did was way out of hand. The picture of a couple on top of each other, an inappropriate word search, and very inaccurate statistics; it seemed as if you were promoting sex.

I felt very sick reading the paper and very embarrassed. Would it be right to post the picture of that couple all over school? No! It is inappropriate.

I am sorry to shoot down the hard work and research the newstaff put into it, but I feel it should have been done in a different way. It is very sad to see where this school goes with things such as cussing, behavior issues, and just some really immature people.

I do not mean to come down on people, I love you all, but we are in high school now and we need to grow up already. And yes, cussing makes you sound very unintelligent and stupid.

All I can say is I am disappointed with the newstaff and I hope they will continue to be more wise with what they put in the paper.

— Anonymous

To the Editor:

Re: "" by Claire Webster (March, 31):

Your article reflects to me as a person full of hate for the church, Christians, teachers and pastors. I grieved for you and for what you stand for as a young student. You are promoting and projecting yourself to be a foe to

the Christians. You are like Dan Brown in similar ways distorting and downgrading Christians and Biblical truth. Dan Brown make his money by distorting the truth for a lie whereas you seek attention and misusing your position as Editor for *The Freelancer* forcing your ideology and hate message to young Christians in your school. Probably, Satan puts you there and uses you as his mouthpiece and tools for his sound-off.

I believe you must have been emotionally hurt by Christians. Not all Christians are hypocrites and not all pastors drive Ferrari cars. Hypocritical Christians still go to church, because they admit they are helpless and still continue to be dependent on HIM and that is why they go to church: to confess their sins and continue to allow the word of God to transform and restore their life. The church is like a hospital where we can seek healing, forgiveness and hope and redemption through the message of God's words and God's grace. We are all sinners redeemed by Christ. We are not perfect but we are not cowards to admit our sins and asked for forgiveness and continue to allow God's words to prick our heart and conscience to work in us until He returns.

Joseph in the Bible was dearly loved by his father. But Joseph didn't know when to keep his mouth shut. He did not know how much he angered his jealous brothers when he talked about his dreams of one day being greater than them. Reuben, only one of his brothers willing to give him a break. Joseph would have met a fate worse than slavery. Like Reuben, we need to show mercy to those who hurt us. Did you know Joseph was sold into slavery by his own brothers? Your own brothers cause you pain and reject you. Joseph forgave them and saw a bigger picture. If he had not been sold or thrown into prison, he never would have been in the position to save the tiny nation of Israel from death by famine. Joseph forgave his brothers and wept for them and said, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Genesis 50).

It is my prayer that Jesus will appear and reveal himself to you. He loves you unconditionally but the world will only love you if you can prove your worth and what you can do for them. Release the hurt, anger, pain, and unforgiveness to our Lord, Jesus Christ and you will be amazed of his supernatural ability and love that He will pour on you to walk in

freedom in Christ. "You do not have because you did not ask" (James 4:2). I am not afraid to let you know I am a Christian and I will NOT allow you to blasphemy my savior, Jesus Christ, the church, or pastors and all the young believers in your school. Though, I still consider you my friend and dare you to print this letter. Philippians 1:21- For to me. To live is Christ, and to die is Gain.

— Anonymous

First off, I must ask: if you are so adamant about your faith and that you are a Christian, then why are you afraid to tell me who you are? If you do not sign a letter that proclaims your faith, then in my opinion, you don't truly want to stand up for your god.

The second question I must pose is: did you read the entire issue of the paper? Because if you had, you would have realized that it was an April Fool's issue.

Basically your letter is in vain because I am a Christian. Your letter is hypocritical because although you state that I am abusing my powers as editor and forcing my ideologies on others, aren't you forcing yours on me? You say "I still consider you my friend," but how are we friends? You say I am a minion of Satan and I don't even know who you are.

Claire Webster  
Editor in Chief

To the Editor:

Re: "In search of a role model" by Megan Kelperis ():

I am inspired to write you today because of your article made me think you are letting TV and pop culture influence your thinking. Pink and other pop music seem to have the need to point out what's wrong about America. If we are such a failure, why are we the country so many people want to live here? Maybe you should look closer to home for your role models. I have two great daughters who are productive loving stay-at-home moms who are raising great kids. All of our grand kids, girls and boys, are generous, fun, globally minded, loving Christian kids.

Look at the page - the entire page - where your article and pretty smiling face appear. Your role models are right here in Whittier... not on MTV. As an author and political science major, you have an opportunity to build America, not trash it.

Lovingly,

— Mrs. J. Billard