

# No cause should prevent free speech

Freedom of expression is one of our most precious — and unique — liberties. But it has limits. For example, you can't yell "Fire!" in a crowded theater. Most people know this.

What they don't seem to realize is that you can't yell "Peace, Love and Happiness" or "The Duke is a Doink" either. Customers are trying to watch a movie and you have no right to interfere with their enjoyment.

Take Michael Dukakis. Whatever you think about him, he has his rights and Tuesday those rights were violated. The national news was filled with images of anti-abortion activists loudly disrupting a speech by the presidential candidate.

This is wrong. They can stage sit-ins. They can pass out leaflets. They can even stage a quick demonstration sometime during his speech and then shut up. But they *cannot* interfere with his right to speak.

Militancy on the part of anti-abortion activists is not new. They have taken to blocking the entrance of clinics and vandalizing those places when workers are away.

But most disturbing of all are the images of demonstrators verbally and mentally abusing women who try to pass by quietly. This is profoundly unchristian and deeply upsetting to those of us who are sympathetic to their cause.

As Pro-Life proponents would surely argue, human lives are at stake and this is no time for social niceties. If one life can be saved by their actions, they'll do what it takes. But we're not talking about "social niceties." We're talking about the Constitution.

Like it or not, women have had the legal right to obtain an abortion for about 15 years now. People who think this is wrong can and should try to change the law by all peaceful means. And frankly, I'll support them.

But lying? Vandalizing? Hurling insults and anger? As Americans, they should behave better. As Christians, they should know better.

*Michael Giltz*

## THE DILETTANTE

But don't think our friends on the right are alone in pressing their cause by improper means. Numerous conservative lectures at UF have been disrupted by demonstrators who have shouted down speakers or remained standing during the talk with their backs to the podium.

Whether the person talking is an Afghan freedom fighter or a Nicaraguan official, if you don't like what the person is saying, hand out leaflets or demonstrate outside. But don't impinge on their freedom to speak.

Which brings us back to our crowded theater. This Friday, *The Last Temptation Of Christ* comes to town. If you have decided — without actually viewing the film — that this isn't your type of movie, fine.

Talking to people outside of the theater who are willing to listen, handing out promotional material or sponsoring the showing of movies you *do* like are all good steps to take. In fact, Campus Forerunners is having a free showing of *Jesus: The Man You Thought You Knew* tonight at 7:30 p.m. in Room B-105 of the Fine Arts Building.

But don't write letters to local theater owners, heads of big chains or studio bosses and threaten to boycott their products if they show *The Last Temptation*. You would be interfering with the rights of people — such as myself — to see the movies they want.

And *don't* slash the theater screens, steal the prints of the movie or show anger or hatred towards your fellow neighbor. Remember: those rules Moses brought down from the mountain weren't the Ten Suggestions, they were the Ten Commandments.

*Michael Giltz screwed up. Last week he referred to an article in The New York Times Magazine. It was written by Mary Anne Dolan, not Ellen Goodman.*