opinion

Pornography dispute is foolish and unwanted

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The president of this engineering school wrote a letter to the editor, complaining about this comic. He stated, "I believe that if we had a truly integrated community here — one in which diverse backgrounds were understood, welcomed, valued, and shared — that such a cartoon would not be found on the editorial page of The Tech."

There have been many similar incidents during the past few years, including Thursday's "Censors' Guide to X-MEN," the "MacGregor Desk Incident," and the incident involving the Residence Handbook subsection on administration.

The point is that people on the campus suffer from offensiveness. If people look for things to take offense at, and then overreact to the slightest provocation, that is true for a lot of people at MIT, from the students to the administration. It is stupid, and, pardon the phrase, offensive.

The Grogo incidents are primarily examples of this. Implicit in anyone's reaction that these incidents were racist is a fundamental belief that a gorilla is closely related to a black person. When I look at a gorilla I think "ape," not "black." For anyone to do otherwise is extremely racist.

Another example is the recent case of a group of people thinking "blacks" for "gorilla," it is their problem. However, they assume I am racist also, and that when I see "gorilla" I mean "black," an assumption which I personally find demeaning.

The freshman picturebook for the Class of 1987 contained a picture of "Skyeyes," a bizarre cartoon character, who, the book said, was from Poughkeepsie, New York, my hometown. I should take it to imply that all the people from Poughkeepsie are bizarre and unreal? The picturebook also contained Orpen the penguin, a character in the comic strip Bloom County. Does that imply that the Class of 1987 is full of comical penguins?

The problem of offensiveness is evident in the current furor over the registration day film. A group of women complained about the registration day film because they feel it is demeaning to women, and many people think the registration day film should be banned because it is offensive to this minority.

Offensiveness is the primary argument against these pornography films. If they are demeaning to women, then they are just as demeaning to men.

There are certain types of films that are degrading to women. For example, do you feel that the James Bond films instead? James Bond is more degrading to women than any pornographic film I have seen on this campus. This all brings us back to offensiveness. People who suffer from offensiveness are sensitive to being easily offended. These same people assume that every one else is just as easily offended, and they react accordingly. Not all of us suffer from offensiveness, but the types of films who have little management to make life difficult for the rest of us. It is good to be sensitive to the plight of others, but some people get carried away. Perhaps I am just oversensitive to others' oversensitivity.

They provide the average MIT student an opportunity to see a sense of entertainment that he or she would not otherwise see. I would rather see an X-rated movie and decide for myself how to react. If the protagonists are seriously offended by films degrading women, why do they not protest James Bond films instead? James Bond is more degrading to women than any pornographic film I have seen on this campus.

We have the phrase, offensive.