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## ART CRITICS

Afghanistan's hardline Taliban rulers ordered the destruction of all statues as insulting Islam, including the world's tallest standing Buddha statue, already damaged in the wars that have ravaged this country in recent history. This undated photo shows the 53-meter (175-foot) tall, 2000-year-old Buddha statue, which is located in Bamiyan, about 150 kilometers (90 miles) west of the Afghan capital of Kabul. AP Photo

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# Debating Censorship

There are circumstances under which censorship is necessary, but censorship should not be taken too far. It is okay to censor material for the protection of others, for example, bleeping out swear words on public television. This is for the protection of kids who shouldn't know those words. However, it is not okay to censor things because they conflict with beliefs, bring up controversy, or just because people in power don't like them. Is it right for the Afghanistan rulers to order the destruction of Buddhist statues, harmless art, just because they consider their Buddhist theme contrary or insulting to Islam? I don't believe so; the Buddhist statues aren't hurting anybody. People probably enjoy the statues. Censorship of this manner is definitely wrong.

Censorship, if used at all, should be limited to protecting individuals, not altering or damaging society. By censoring things in public that would be considered unhealthy or inappropriate I believe that American society is being improved. On the contrary, I believe that by destroying the Buddhist statues in Afghanistan the Taliban rulers are damaging their society. This act of censorship gives the people of Afghanistan the message that their opinions and beliefs will not be accepted unless they follow what the Taliban rulers tell them to believe. Is this message leading to a more productive, creative, and happy Afghanistan? Absolutely not; this is the type of message that incites bitterness in people. People have a right to their beliefs and should be able to express them however they please. These expressions of beliefs should only be censored when they cause harm.