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Western civilization not 'greatest known'

I was very surprised on Wednesday morning when I read in The Battalion that "Western civilization is the greatest culture ever known." If that is the argument that Mr. Irvine and the conservatives and Republicans of TAMU are using against multicultural courses, they are absolutely wrong.

One cannot compare one culture to another. Each culture is unique, and it is the outcome of the way a group of intelligent human beings have dealt with their environment. If some cultural groups are facing problems now, it is only because "Western civilization" disrupted their ways of life by introducing cultural elements that those cul-

tures neither needed nor wanted.

I do not think that a culture that has destroyed so much of the earth's environment, killed so many people, and that has high rates of crimes, suicides, unemployment, disease, etc. can be considered to be "the greatest culture ever known."

Multicultural courses are a good way to teach Aggies that people from different groups behave in different ways because they understand their environment in different ways. People are different. That is a fact. But it does not mean that we cannot under-

Multiculturalism is not only about foreign countries. There is multiculturalism even in the same country. People from different racial, ethnic, historical, geographical, and even gender groups behave in different ways as they were taught by their cultures. Western civilization is the result of many different cultures. I sincerely applaud TAMU for taking the

initiative in multiculturalism and hope that it ends the bigotry displayed by some Aggies.

Julio Toro Class of '96

Let students pick their classes for themselves

I'm the first to admit that I'm not exactly an expert on multiculturalism, education or the benefits of forcibly slamming them together. But after all the posturing pontificating and windy rhetoric this whole issue has generated in the last few weeks, I for one think it's about time we cut through the 50cent words and spoke plainly.

Don't get me wrong — I respect the Facul-

ty Senate's intentions here. In a rapidly shrinking and increasingly diverse society, it only makes sense to acquire a certain background about other cultures. Knowledge, after all, is not just power but opportunity, and I can certainly see how learning about, for instance, Asian or European culture and history might well aid A&M graduates who will be competing with Asians and Europeans for jobs in the future. That's a practical view of this proposal.

Of course ,there's also an abstract view. Some of the proponents of enforced multiculturalism have thrown around lofty phrases like,"We are charged with the responsibility of providing the finest, most well-rounded education possible to our students, the future leaders of America and the world. Not including a multicultural requirement in the core curriculum would be an injustice to them, who would then enter the world, incomplete, unaware, and noncompetitive. Not only would this proposal create more competent graduates - it would also create

better human beings."

Get off the soapbox, people. I personally find one of A&M's strengths to be its diversity of education. But I would prefer to be the person choosing which fields to be educated in. The same argument could be made that the environment will probably become more and more important to all of us in the next century, that we all should have an interest in learning about it. Does that mean we should all be required to study flora and fauna?

You can't mass-produce education, package it, slap a nifty-sounding label on it and call it good for everybody. Fact is, although I personally wouldn't mind learning a little about African-American literature or Middle Eastern society, it's my right to decide whether I want to learn about it and to determine how much.

What sounds great, sensible and maybe even necessary to you might just sound trivial and off-the-wall to me. Some people just don't care about Native-American History, and guess what? That's their right.

Let us choose what we wish to be educated in. Isn't that the point of going to college?

Rick Cromack

White males already covered in textbooks

I would like to respond to your recent article, "Students air opinions at multiculturalism forum" and particularly to the comments

made by Dane Ray and Mark McElwain.

Mr. Ray's concern for a "hidden political agenda" in the multicultural courses pr posed by the Faculty Senate is ridiculous. course there's a political agenda involve there always has been. What, Mr. Ra would you consider was involved in the se lection of classes prior to this proposal?

Couldn't we say, for example, that the his tory of this country, a history predominant written by white males and taught by whi males reflects a political agenda? Why, for example, can't women or blacks level the same accusations against an agenda that has forced upon them a particular history for over 200 hundred years and with far less subtlety? What is the difference, Mr. Ray?

There are a host of legitimate argument that can be raised against the Faculty Sen ate's proposal, though the possible underrepresentation of white males in the University's curricula isn't one of them. Mr. Ray's and Mr. McElwain's points, instead, in exemplifying cultural ignorance (their own in fact) and insensitivity do much to show a need for

James MacDougall

Standard classes sweep minorities under rug

It was hard to take Reed Irvine's speech on multiculturalism seriously. Many of A&M's courses already contain materials which a Republican would classify as multi-cultural. A&M students who take Spanish language and literature or history are already exposed to works which Irvine and his Republican supporters consider to be of no value.

He said quite explicitly that this included Latin American culture. As a native Texan and a fan of Latin American writers such as Octavio Paz, this came as quite a surprise to me. I consider Octavio Paz' work "The Labyrinth of Solitude" to be one of the best works of literary anthropology in our time.

The argument about multiculturalism

seems to me to miss the point. The aim of this curriculum is to acquaint students with the problems of those who have been oppressed by American society. It is certainly the case that black folks, who were not even allowed to attend TAMU until recently, belong to that class.

If the standard academic courses were doing their job, then there would be no need for multiculturalism. But, my experience is that history, economics and political science are all taught from a consensus point of view. That is, the history of blacks and other minorities is just swept under the rug.

Finally, the Republicans by opposing multiculturalism have once again shown that they are the party of George Wallace, David Duke and all the other racists in the U.S.A.

Michael Kraft

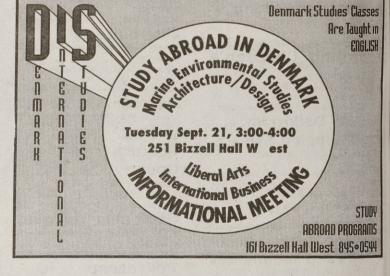
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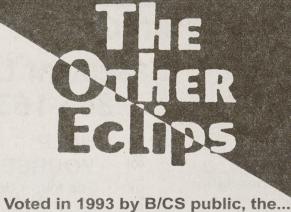
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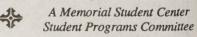
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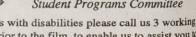
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