

Opinion

Help through understanding, not persecution from fear

Ryan White has been banned from school — again. The reason — fear. White has AIDS. White, 14, went to class Friday for the first time this school year. After completing the five-hour day, he was barred from returning by a federal judge.



Loren Steffy

AIDS is feared worse than leprosy and the Black Death combined. People panic because AIDS is fatal and incurable, because it's linked to homosexuals and because it can be contracted through blood transfusions, even in the "safe" surroundings of a hospital.

Parents find it hard to sleep at night knowing in the morning their children will take the bus to school and risk being exposed to an AIDS carrier. Ryan White isn't the only one who's persecuted because he's infected with the virus. Workers who just show symptoms but don't have AIDS have been fired and babies born with AIDS have been abandoned.

Doctors and health institutions, despite all their assurances that the virus can be contracted only through sexual contact and exposure to infected blood, can't turn the tide of public opinion.

The feelings were no different in

White's hometown of Kokomo, Ind. The restraining order against White was received with applause from parents who fear for their children's health. Forty-three percent of the students at White's school were absent on the day of his return. Several parents announced they would transfer their children.

Even more disturbing were the dozen students calling themselves "Students Against AIDS" who demonstrated outside the school and the petition that was signed by 240 students requesting White be banned from the classroom "until we can be guaranteed of our safety."

The petition will be turned over to parents who also are protesting White's return. The parents' fears have been instilled in the minds of the children who mimic the adults' actions and are rewarded for it.

The evidence that could put the worried minds to rest is considerable, if only those minds were open. Last week the *New England Journal of Medicine* printed the results of a study at the Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx. The AIDS victims' family members who were studied had a nonsexual living relationship with patients for at least two years. Some even shared drinking glasses, toothbrushes and combs with the victims. Only one of the 101 people studied showed signs of infection — a five-year-old girl believed to have contracted AIDS before birth.

Dr. Harold Jaffe, chief AIDS epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, says if the virus is not transmitted in an intimate family setting, "it is far less likely to be transmitted in schools, offices, restaurants and churches."

The attitudes in Kokomo are typical. Everyone is concerned about the possible threat to themselves or their families, but no one stops to consider the real victims. White contracted AIDS through a coagulant that is used to treat hemophiliacs. The God-is-punishing-these-people-for-being-gay-so-they-deserve-it argument doesn't apply.

What Ryan White and other victims need is not scorn, but help. Banning the teen-ager from school, then allowing him to re-enter, only to ban him again accomplishes nothing. Parents who keep their children home from school to avoid exposure to AIDS patients are hurting their youngsters — not protecting them.

The virus affects our entire society, not just one aspect of it. We must come to terms with AIDS, as we have with other terrible diseases, if not for the victim's sake — not even Ryan White's sake — then for society's sake.

Loren Steffy is a junior journalism major and the Opinion Page editor for *The Battalion*.



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Swimsuits key to womanhood, not designed for swimming

As far as I am concerned, summer blows in when the *Sports Illustrated* bathing suit edition hits the stands. It must be the same for other people because the issue is always a sellout.



Art Buchwald

I was extremely pleased with this year's cover, which features Miss Elle MacPherson and as much of Miss MacPherson as the *Sports Illustrated* editors were permitted to show. She also is wearing a blue bathing suit.

My wife demanded to know why I had brought the issue home.

"I'm dying to read about bicycle racing in Switzerland."

"It makes no difference to me if you want to leer over the bathing suit photographs," she said.

"Leering is too strong a word. It is essential we both get a preview of what to expect this summer on the sands of Martha's Vineyard."

My wife said, "Just when I think you've grown up, I discover you still have only one thing on your mind."

"Why won't you admit most of the

women's swimsuits are not designed for swimming?"

"What are they designed for?"

"Flagrant flaunting. Are you aware that although the swimsuit market is worth billions of dollars, only 5 percent of the suits ever get wet?"

"You seem to know a lot about the business."

"The bathing suit is a marvel of American engineering. The less fabric they use the more they can charge for it."

"All they have to do is sew two thin strips of nylon and a shoelace together and they can charge \$100. Women don't want a suit to protect themselves, but to provoke men who come to the beach to play with their pails."

"We have a constitutional right to wear anything that feels good at the seashore. This does not mean we are stalking males."

"Then why do you always get a pedicure before going to the beach?"

"You're shouting."

"Look at these pictures. The lady on the cover can hardly keep the suit on. Don't tell me she's dressed that way to swim the English Channel."

"Maybe she hopes to get a good suntan."

"Wrong again. It's because she can

arouse some poor helpless jerk on the beach into having lascivious thoughts about her while he's trying to read Lee Iacocca's book."

My wife scanned the cover. "There is nothing provocative in that bathing suit," she said.

"Not in the bathing suit — outside it. Everything provocative is bulging out. What is a man on the beach to do when she walks by — other than pound the sands with his fists?"

There was steam coming out of my wife's ears. "Just because a woman likes to wear something comfortable does not mean she is trying to seduce a man."

"Okay, let's say the bathing suit is worn not to tease a man, but just to get a good suntan."

"To attract the opposite sex!"

"Bah humbug and oink, oink, oink."

"Here is a replica of the suit Bo Derek wore in '10.' It's a see-through T-shirt. They designed it with one thing in mind — to make strong men cry."

"That's your opinion."

"I know titillation when I see it. *Sports Illustrated* proves that for all the strides she has made toward liberation, every female must buy one decent bathing suit to fulfill herself as a woman."

Art Buchwald is a columnist for the *Los Angeles Times Syndicate*.

Mail Call

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length but will make every effort to maintain the writer's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.

Questions for know-it-alls

EDITOR:

Two strangers just knocked on my door. They wanted to know about my relationship with God. I let them in, listened to what they had to say and after they left I wished I could of asked them back.

For those two strangers, and to the preacher outside the Acadia Building, and the others who have all the questions of the world answered I have some questions of my own.

Why do you think people are all alike? By saying the only way to a relationship with God is through Christ is absurd. Do you think Muslims, Jews and Hindus have no foundation for their beliefs? Just because we are different from Christians doesn't mean God ignores them. Maybe works in different ways through different people. Who gives you the right as human beings to proclaim that God should be for everyone? If Christians are happy with themselves and God, and they pray, and believe, and they feel His presence in them, who are you in your Jewish well world, to say that is wrong?

Aren't we all children of God?

Jill E. Webb

It was wonderful, Karl

EDITOR:

Many thanks to Karl Palmeyer for his Feb. 20 column titled "It Was Wonderful?" — it certainly was!

Joanna Coughran '87

Eye opening

EDITOR:

I would like to address the issue of racism in America. I attended Charles King's seminar Tuesday night, and he forced my eyes and ears open to the ugliest problem I have ever seen: whites' treatment of blacks. I am not speaking of bigotry or the KKK. No, I'm talking about our attitude toward black people. (Dr. King pointed out that there are exceptions to everything; I would reiterate that now.)

White people in government, on school boards, in all positions of authority decide where blacks will live, where they will go to school, what they can (or can't) get jobs; and then when a black man is forced — forced — to a criminal life, we kick him for it. We insult him for what he did to himself!

I was in the minority last night. Dr. King insulted me, made me feel guilty, ashamed, stupid and very small. Then he said that that's what black people experience every day. He called it oppression. If you weren't there, let me assure you, oppression stinks. It's a problem that can't be ignored. Only white people can change the situation, because we (as a society) created it and by our silence, support it today.

Dr. King told the white people in the audience that the way we solve the problem is to understand it and to make other people understand it. This includes (perhaps I should say, necessitates) correcting whites to talk or act in an oppressive way. He gave us hope. I hope it works.

Sheryl Perkins '87

Job cost more than it's worth

EDITOR:

Just a word to the uniformed student worker or potential student worker, especially if they work at other part-time jobs. Your health is at risk and an injury on the job as a student worker could be disastrous physically and financially.

I was a student at Texas A&M and threw an early morning paper route to pay the bills to put myself through school. The latter job paid 75 percent of my income. After injuring my left knee as a student worker and unable to perform either job, I had arthroscopic knee surgery, five months in physical therapy, four months on crutches of which three months I was in a knee immobilizer and was rendered a 30 percent permanent-partial disability to my left knee. In the mean time, I also went through a loan consolidation as well as borrowed money from the bank, the school, friends and relatives just to pay bills. How was I compensated?

I received 66.66 percent of my weekly wages as a student worker (I made minimum wage) and received a mere \$2,300 for my 30 percent permanent-partial disability. I wasn't compensated for my other job, although, after attempting to return to my paper route, I was physically unable to continue it. I was told I was not eligible to receive compensation for that job because it was not similar to my job as a student worker.

I asked does it not matter that I received 75 percent of my income from the paper route. They said no! I asked the insurance department at A&M if that seemed fair. They said it did not matter if it was fair, that was the law required of them. So student workers beware that the job may cost you more than it is worth.

Barry Watson
Ex-student worker

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USPS 045 360

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The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M University College Station.

Opinions expressed in *The Battalion* are those of the Editorial Board or the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography through the Department of Communications.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and inclement weather periods. Mail subscriptions are \$16.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$85 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

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Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.