

# Opinion

## Americans easy prey because of low self-esteem

There is a disease that is threatening the well-being of every American. It's not AIDS. It's not drug abuse. It's not immorality. It's low self-esteem.



**Karl Pallmeyer**

A typical American has put up with a lot of problems these days, and the biggest problem facing Americans is the constant attack on self-esteem.

A person can't turn on the TV without seeing dozens of attacks on his self-esteem. Every commercial says something like: "You smell — use this soap," or "You're fat — come to our gym," or "You're ugly — use these cosmetics," or "Your clothes look stupid — shop at our store," or "You're nobody unless you have a credit card."

It seems as if the purpose of advertis-

ing is to make the consumer feel inadequate unless he or she buys a certain product. Once the consumer buys that product, he or she is then made to feel inadequate because he purchased that product and not another.

Aside from the constant bombardment of commercials, movies, music and literature are being used to destroy self-esteem by promoting conformity. "Top Gun" had one message — join the armed forces so you can be just like the cute people in the movie. Every song on the radio sounds the same for one reason — to get people to want the same thing. And when was the last time you put down Stephen King's newest book of the month in favor of a book that challenged your mind?

The social issues of the day deal with conformity and the destruction of self-esteem. Being an individual is shown as bad or, in an ironic twist of the matter, the thing to strive for as long as everyone strives to be the same individual.

The AIDS scare has been turned into

a massive weapon against the self-esteem of every American, not just homosexuals. Throughout most of history, homosexuals have been wrongly persecuted for their sexual practices. Homosexuals were made to feel that they were somehow inferior or perverted because of the way they were. Now, thanks to AIDS, homosexuals are being portrayed as disease-ridden perverts. Being homosexual is not only considered a sin by some, it is considered a deadly sin.

The sexual practices of heterosexuals also are being attacked because of the AIDS scare. A prevailing idea in America today is that AIDS is a disease, sent by God, to punish the homosexuals and those who have casual sex. The Bible says casual sex is wrong.

The fear of AIDS has caused many people to fear sex. Fear of sex does not lead to high self-esteem. Although sex is not something to be enjoyed indiscriminately, the choice of when, where, how, why, and with whom should be the choice of the participants — not the general public.

The War on Drugs was nothing more

than a war on self-esteem. How can Nancy and Ronnie Reagan, two people who have made their lives out of escaping from reality, criticize anybody who wants a little relief from their reality?

If the right wing wanted to do something about drug abuse, it would have accomplished a lot more if it had stressed developing self-esteem instead of setting up witch hunts in the form of drug testing. If the message had been "let's work it out" instead of "you're busted," a lot more would have been accomplished.

Attacking the drug problem from a moral standpoint is impossible. Any person who spends his days dreaming of the life they will have when they go to heaven has no business criticizing those who seek heaven via chemicals.

Religion also is being used to destroy the self-esteem of the American people. The fundamentalists oppose any form of thinking that suggests mankind is capable of anything. In a recent court case, "The Wizard of Oz" was attacked by fundamentalists because the characters in the book are told that they can

find courage, intelligence, love or way home by looking inside themselves. Fundamentalists believe that such virtues come from God and that man cannot develop any good traits without Almighty.

Thanks to the fundamentalists, Americans are being made to think they are useless. Mankind can do anything except wait for death.

If we're truly God's children, we're probably looking forward to the day when we start walking by ourselves.

If America is going to get well, American people need to stop trying to be what someone tells them to be. They need to balance fantasy with reality. They need to believe in themselves. They need to look inside before they attack what is outside. They need to believe that heaven is made and bought.

America needs better self-esteem that is not going to come unless it comes from the self.

*Karl Pallmeyer is a journalism graduate and a columnist for The Battalion.*

### Farmers Write!

#### U.S. leadership with integrity?

Sitting in my apartment, talking with a smart friend of mine the other

**Ken Hendrickson**  
Guest Columnist

night, it struck me that in my lifetime there has been (maybe) one president of the United States who appeared to have been concerned about the Constitution. James Earl Carter's administration, however, collapses under the weight of economic distress, the Iran hostage debacle and an electoral defeat in 1980 of landslide proportions. In fact, no president has left the White House clean since Eisenhower (five years before I was born), and it was later discovered that he was responsible for the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and escalation of U.S. activity in Vietnam.

Since Ike, and since my birth, the country has seen Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter and Reagan. (Kennedy's administration — 1961-Nov., 1963 — preceded my lifetime. He too, however, was responsible for a U.S. escalation in Vietnam and the assassination of Diem, among other things.)

Johnson secretly bombed targets in Vietnam, initiated the era there of direct U.S. combat involvement and purposely lied to the American people to protect his policies.

Nixon, in his career, participated in everything from smear campaigns and witch hunts to conspiracy to conceal a felony.

Ford suddenly became president after Nixon's resignation and pardoned his predecessor even though no charges had yet been pressed.

Carter seems to have been the exception. Though guilty of shoddy staffwork and political ineptitude, there exists as yet no evidence that his administration participated in extra-constitutional activities during his term as president.

Recently, it has been revealed that the Reagan administration has been, for a period of almost two years, engaged in clandestine, at times illegal, transfers of weapons and cash with the governments of Iran, Israel and the leadership of the Nicaraguan rebel Contras. My question is, why does the American public bother to elect presidents under the current system? Why not just accept openly that anyone becoming president will seek thereafter to effect his/her policies regardless of the will of the people. Is this really what we've come to?

When elected, President Reagan swore to uphold and defend the Constitution. Since then, we've learned that his administration reversed its

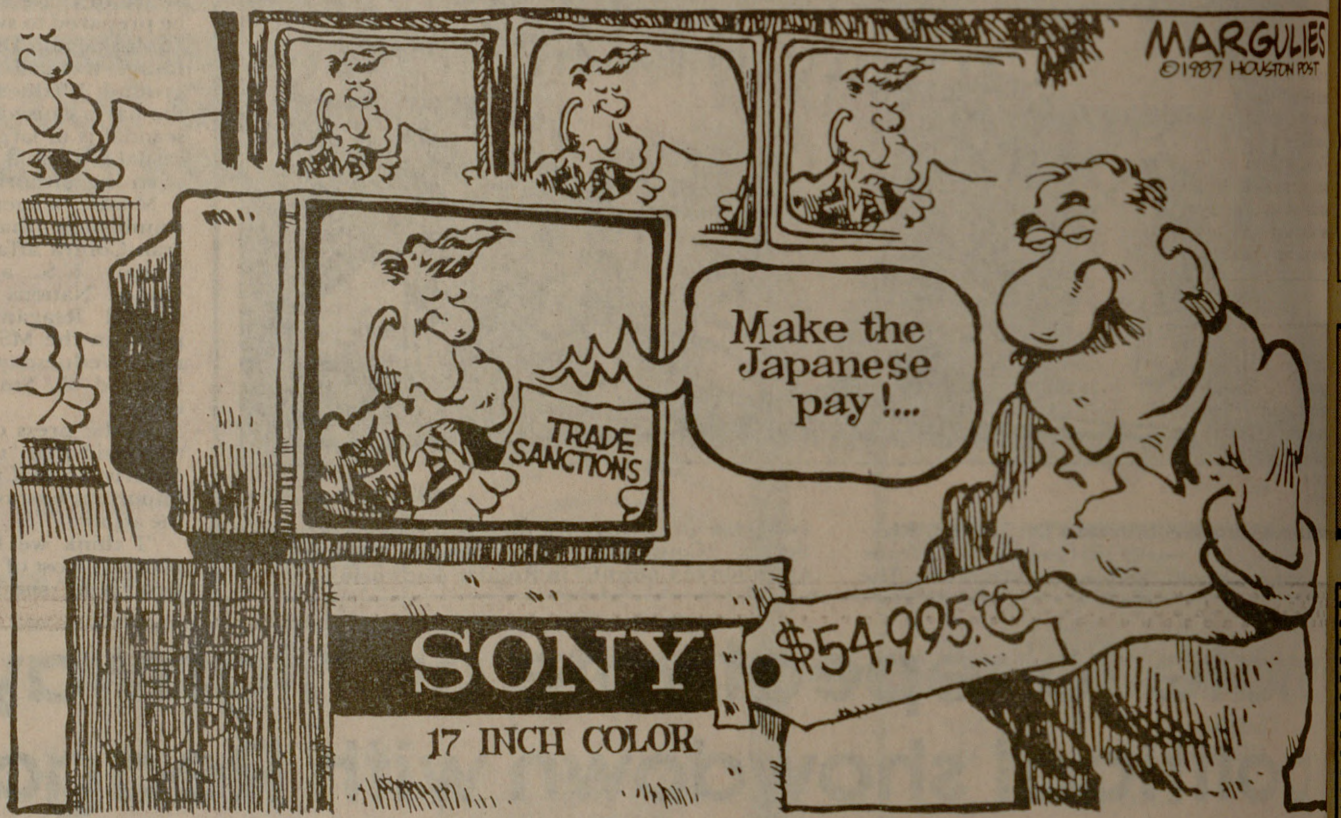
stated policy of no negotiations with terrorists (not a criminal act even if an ugly lie) and purposely circumvented U.S. law as enacted by Congress (definitely a criminal act). So far, the best answer for this given to the American people is "I can't remember." Security advisers Oliver North and John M. Poindexter have scrambled for the Fifth Amendment, and North has gone so far as to initiate court proceedings to determine the constitutionality of investigations into his own possibly criminal activities. Many seem ready and willing to take advantage of the protections offered by our Constitution — few appear willing to abide by its restrictions. Look hard, there are our own leaders, the people to whom we should turn our eyes with respect. These people are examples for our young.

The United States is a complex country. It has for years proudly hailed itself as a bastion of freedom, equality and rule by law. Yet, should we as Americans be satisfied with freedom to disobey and deceive We the People? Should we be satisfied with the equality of power, as exercised by those who would lead us? Does "rule by law" merely mean lip service to duly passed and enacted laws simultaneous to their flagrant violation? Whose laws rule here? Where would the United States be and what would our government be telling us today if not for a radical, fundamental Islamic politician in Iran who announced to his parliament that the United States had been engaged in secret cash and weapons deals with his government? Would we now be asking ourselves about these acts and their ramifications in Nicaragua? Should the American people depend upon hostile foreign nations to expose unethical and illegal activities of their own government?

We should demand more than that from our leadership and ourselves. If we want to continue to hold ourselves up as a triumph of democracy, we must live up to the rhetoric. It is indeed a search for excellence.

**Ken Hendrickson is a senior history major.**

Columns submitted for Farmers Write should be between 700 and 850 words. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit for grammar, style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each column must be signed and must include the major, classification, address and telephone number of the writer. Only the author's name, major and classification will be printed.



## Jimmy Carter for president, again

I've had some goofy ideas in the past, and maybe this is another one, but I would like to see Jimmy Carter back in the White House in 1988.



**Lewis Grizzard**

There are a number of reasons I feel this way:

1. Jimmy Carter has been president before. It would be nice to have a president who has presidential experience.

I think Carter knows what he did wrong when he was in the Oval Office before and that he wouldn't make the same mistakes again.

2. I'm not overly excited about any of the others who have been mentioned as presidential possibilities for 1988.

I don't like Gary Hart or George Bush, and Bob Dole strikes me as maybe having a mean streak.

I have a suspicion that Jack Kemp uses extra-hold hair spray, and I simply can't see the United States with a

president named Babbitt.

Can you? Imagine Barbara Walters interviewing him:

"Pwresident Bwabbbitt..."

Who would Pwresident Bwabbbitt get for his press secretary? Elmer Fudd?

3. In retrospect, Jimmy Carter didn't do as bad a job as president as we thought when we picked Ronald Reagan over him in 1980.

-He got Israel and Egypt to kiss and make up.

-He didn't order the invasion of a single Caribbean island.

-He championed human rights.

-And, as far as we know, he didn't sleep through a single crisis.

4. I realize this may not be that sound a reason to want a certain individual to be president, but Jimmy Carter gives good White House parties, too.

I was invited to the Carter White House for dinner, and later, I was invited to the Reagan White House for dinner.

I had a nice time on both occasions, but I must admit I felt a lot more at home at the Carter affair.

The Carter party took place in the backyard of the White House. They

served barbecue and beer and didn't have to wear a tie.

The entertainment was Willie Nelson. I never will forget sitting there, a moon hovered over the Washington Monument, hearing Willie sing, "Cious Memories."

It was a religious experience.

The Reagan party was much fancy. The ladies wore evening dresses and men came in tuxedos, and Henry Kissinger's wife dumped her cigarette ashes on the floor during the pre-dinner cocktail party.

I have no idea what we had to eat and the entertainment was a man playing a cello.

I have nothing against the cello or anybody who plays one, but in a crisis I think I would prefer a Willie Nelson man making important decisions, someone who would invite a cello dinner.

If Jimmy Carter became president again, I think his brother Billy would be more than happy to wait in the line this time.

Elmer Fudd simply has no place in politics.

Copyright 1986, Cowles Syndicate

### Mail Call

#### Solution is to do nothing

EDITOR:

It really doesn't surprise me that *The Battalion* takes a stand on prison reform right alongside Judge William Wayne Justice. He is the guy who says the poor losers in prison aren't getting enough cake, ice cream and TV. Justice, along with *The Battalion* editorial board, seems to think prisoners are being abused. It seems to me that people who kill, rape, steal and otherwise deprive innocent people of their constitutional rights should have no constitutional rights. What is your problem, people? Prison isn't supposed to be fun! Don't you see the logic in that? If someone sees prison as an undesirable place, they are less likely to commit the crime which would put them there.

**Bryan Jones '87**

#### Scheduling protest

EDITOR:

The Traditions Council would like to make clear its purpose behind the senior finals protest petition and correct the inaccuracies in Loren Steffy's column in the March 31 issue of *The Battalion*. The goal of the petition was and always has been to protest the scheduling of the faculty's proposal. The Traditions Council has always realized that senior finals are inevitable. The main concern has been to protect the Aggie traditions, commencement, commissioning and final review, which the Faculty Senate's proposal will jeopardize, or eventually destroy.

**Missy Simms '90**

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 author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the major, classification, address and telephone number of the writer.

### The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of  
Texas Press Association  
Southwest Journalism Conference

#### The Battalion Editorial Board

**Loren Steffy, Editor**  
**Marybeth Rohsner, Managing Editor**  
**Mike Sullivan, Opinion Page Editor**  
**Jens Koepke, City Editor**  
**Jeanne Isenberg, Sue Krenek, News Editors**  
**Homer Jacobs, Sports Editor**  
**Tom Ownbey, Photo Editor**

#### Editorial Policy

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-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 classes within the Department of Journalism. The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$34.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request. Our address: *The Battalion*, Department of Journalism, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-4111. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Battalion*, Department of Journalism, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.