

Opinion

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Black leaders are way out of line in criticizing Michael Jackson

The Association of Black Psychologists, meeting recently in Washington, indicated their displeasure with black rock star Michael Jackson for not being what they considered a proper role model for black children.



Lewis Grizzard

The group mentioned Jackson's heavy makeup, his nose job and his artificially straightened hair.

"He's creating an appearance that is more Anglo than African," Halford Fairchild, past president of the group, was quoted as saying.

"We need positive models that exhibit pride in African values of beauty."

Allow me to say, up front, I'm not a Michael Jackson fan. When it comes to music, I go back to my own heritage and the country sounds of Nelson, Haggard and Jones, to name a few.

However, if I were Michael Jackson, I would do one of two things: I would either ignore the Association of Black

Psychologists or I would tell them, in no uncertain terms, where they could go.

Regardless of Michael Jackson's African heritage, he is currently an American citizen, which means he can do anything he pleases in regard to how much makeup he wants to wear, what shape he wants his nose in and how he wants to style his hair.

I will admit that the few times I've seen Michael Jackson on television, he did tend to remind me more of a Michele than a Michael, but Willie Nelson has gone to wearing earrings, and I still play and enjoy his music as I did before he decided to bejewel his lobes.

Black people still have a lot of problems, and one of them seems to be that they get a lot of pressure from so-called black leaders on how they should look, who they should vote for and how they should fit in with other blacks.

White people used to do that for blacks, but as soon as they cast off those shackles, here came somebody else — their own — with a set of guidelines.

What's so wrong about a black kid looking up to Michael Jackson? He's got all the money in the world, he's known

throughout the world, and he probably gets all the free Pepsi he wants.

He gets a little weird at times, does things like sleeping in an oxygen chamber, making friends with a chimpanzee and trying to buy what of the Elephant Man.

But consider this: Roy Rogers was a role model as a child, and he rode a horse decorated like a Christmas tree and had a friend named Pat Brady who talked to his Jeep.

Other than the fact I put a garland in my dog at Christmas and have a friend who jogs, I turned out fairly well-adjusted.

Michael Jackson's new album topped the rock charts, incidentally, he'll make enough money off the album to buy himself a real elephant if he wants one.

Meanwhile, don't anybody tell me about Charlie Pride, the country music star who happens to be black and is a very rich selling white people's music.

Knowing something like that can make a black shrink have a nervous breakdown.

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Equality needed

Now that the NFL strike is over and the "real" players are returning to work, it may be easy for ecstatic fans to lose sight of what the players were fighting for.

At first glance, the fight for free agency may seem greedy coming from men whose annual salaries are often exorbitant. But by refusing free agency, the owners are refusing the players a right the owners have: the right to get the best deal they can.

Houston may be losing the Oilers to Jacksonville because owner Bud Adams is unhappy with the deal he's getting from the city and the fans, whose support has been waning. The NFL allows owners to pick up and move when they're unhappy with the deal they are getting; players don't have the same right.

Whether or not you agree with free agency, it's easy to see the situation is inequitable. The NFL should give in to the players' demands on free agency — or require the owners to stay in one place along with them.

Lure of 'Texana' threatens our state

Recently a young lady and I were sitting up late watching television at her apartment and playing video command with the remote control unit. Without warning, she stopped on the Nashville Network. Aghast, I protested loudly and in the strongest terms possible. "Shhhh!" she hissed sternly, increasing the volume. For the next few agonizing minutes I was shocked at the spectacle of this woman I thought I knew watching a country-western music video in open-mouthed adulation, her wide eyes filling with tears as she sniffed sentimentally.

R. Lee Sullivan
Guest Columnist

good part of these cities' economies depend on tourism. If expectant yankees are short-changed on their visit to the Lone Star State, they may not come back.

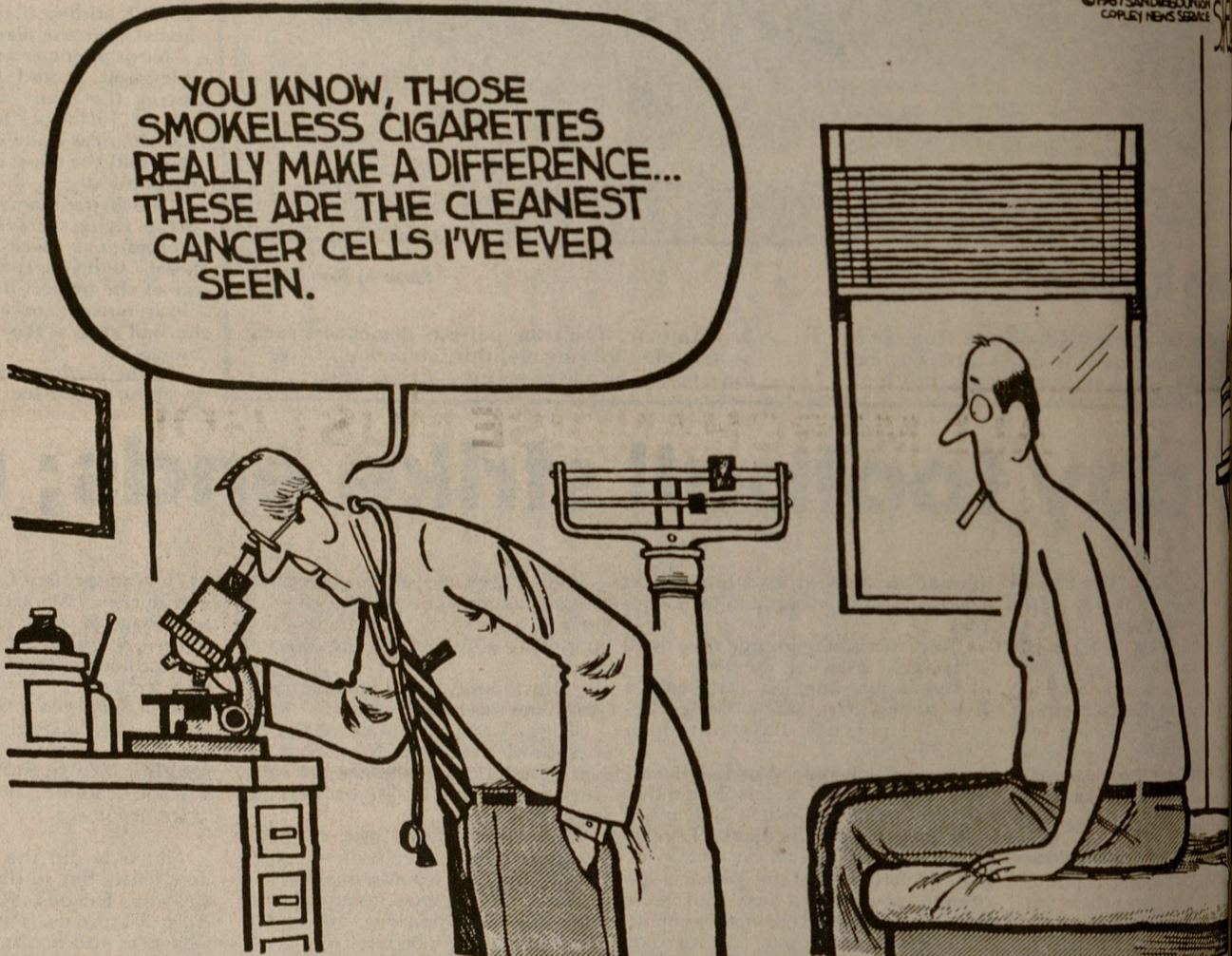
Travel farther south, though, to Houston, and it's difficult to tell you're in Texas at all. Houston is downright ugly, but it's real live Texas nonetheless. It's unpretentious and power-hungry, dedicated to commerce and doesn't care who knows it. A lot of its citizens may be out of work at the moment, but that's the reason most of the pioneers who originally came to Texas crossed the Red River in the first place. You don't get the veneer of Wild West hokum trying to disguise trade as tradition in Houston like you do up in Dallas, where they call it "bidness," and it's real cute. Houston is hardball, stripped-down capitalism that everyone can get a piece of no matter who his daddy is.

Houston looks the way it does because people don't go there to sight-see; they go there to make money, the oldest authentic Texas tradition there is. The occasional stray tourist who does end up in Houston gets sent to Pasadena because it sort of looks like Hollywood Texas, but that's only because yankees know more about Gilley's than they do about NASA. Besides, before John Travolta made his movie, almost no one wore starched Wranglers and Ropers to Gilley's. When I was in high school, we used to go there wearing 501s and AC/DC T-shirts, our hair hanging down to our shoulders, and we were more Texan than a whole posse of urban cowboys.

Of course, my young lady friend would disagree. It is instructive to note that she comes from old Texas money. The past was good to these people, and it's hard for them to give up things like an economy based on oil and agriculture. Besides, real he-men don't have a state income tax on the trust funds their parents worked so hard to inherit. Embracing the same sort of manifest destiny that motivated their forebears, these civic-minded successors to peerage in the redneck realm glory in the heritage that landed them in Highland Park, and they want things to stay that way. No matter if their history is as much of a myth as amateur athletics at SMU.

A tough son-of-a-gun like Sam Houston was probably as sentimental as a rattlesnake, and I'll bet he would have hated country music as much as he did the Confederacy. Dude-ranch Texas is good public relations as long as we don't start believing our own press. We're history when the accent becomes more important than what we have to say, when being Texan becomes more important than being successful. The men and women who settled this state concerned themselves with what Texas could be, not what it had been. That's why it's called the Lone Star State instead of the Lone Star Republic, or even worse, Mexico.

R. Lee Sullivan is a graduate student in English.



Mail Call

Where has 'Howdy' gone?

EDITOR:

Where have all the Howdy's gone?

In our efforts to become a "world class" university, Texas A&M students, faculty and administrators have lost sight of the spirit of Aggieland. The longstanding tradition of greeting people on campus with a "howdy" is quickly becoming extinct. A&M is well-known for its friendliness and strong school spirit. It is a reputation which students take pride in and which makes A&M unique. With the increase of enrollment because of Vandiver's goal of a "world class" university, Texas A&M has begun to lose the characteristics which brought people to it in the first place.

Texas A&M can be a "world class" university without 40,000-plus students. The quality and spirit of the people are what make the University "world class."

Come on Ags — Say "howdy," dammit!

Gail Turchi '90
Gina Rumore '89

Editor's note: At A&M, lamenting the demise of the "howdy" tradition is almost as much of a tradition as saying it in the first place. The following appeared in The Battalion on Oct. 30, 1947:

Howdy faces extinction

One of A&M's oldest and most creditable customs is rapidly sinking into oblivion. The custom of greeting everyone with a friendly "howdy" is one of the most valuable assets of an Aggie, and yet the present student body and corps members alike, have gradually let the custom slip into disuse without a single note of dissent.

To be sure, A&M students still speak, but howdy is not found in that friendly atmosphere that once pervaded the campus. . . . What is the cause of this indifference? Who is responsible? Why, WE are!

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editor 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 a return address, address and telephone number of the writer.

BLOOM COUNTY

by Berke Breathed

