

Opinion

Racism is alive and well with today's hypocrites

It's too bad. Too bad that a country founded on the idea of freedom and equality can be intolerant and judgmental more than 200 years later.



Tracy Staton

Too bad that the civil rights granted to minority groups just 24 years ago aren't as secure as they had hoped. That new legislation designed to increase the effectiveness of civil rights mandates could be called "dangerous."

Although Congress overrode President Reagan's veto of the Civil Rights Restoration Act, the necessity for an override illustrates the lack of real change in people's attitudes toward minorities. It reveals a current of racism that still underlies all the idealistic rhetoric about "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

It may be a surprise to many sheltered white Americans, but racism still

exists. And many of its perpetrators are the same upstanding citizens who claim they aren't prejudiced.

It's certainly no victims of its insidious groups who are victims of its insidious sneer or condescending words. They feel the subtle forms of racism every day.

They feel it when they overhear co-workers telling them jokes. Or when a classmate assumes that they're an athlete just because they're black. Or when their boss says "you work just as hard as a white person" and smiles because he thinks it's a compliment.

Ethnic minority groups aren't the only people who experience discrimination. Homosexuals have become even more susceptible to unfair treatment since acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) hit the media. Despite the advances in equal rights for women, sexual harassment and unequal pay still plague the female sex.

The recent civil rights bill was designed to further protect all these groups. It allows real punishment for violations of civil rights: withholding federal funds from institutions that discrim-

inate. It gives a sharper bite to laws that just barked loudly before.

So people are upset. They're upset because they can no longer just support civil rights with lip service. They're afraid they'll have to practice the equality they advocate. They complain about this "extension of federal authority" on philosophical grounds instead of admitting that they just don't want to obey the rules.

The uproar and debate about this legislation has exposed hypocrites and dragged closet bigots into the light. It has shown that many Americans are no more open-minded or tolerant now than they were before the Civil War.

Rev. Jerry Falwell's opposition to the bill was dramatic and deplorable. Granted, he's never been accused of having an open mind. But his campaign to incense fundamentalists to action employed what many congressmen called "scare tactics."

Falwell said the legislation could force churches and religious schools to employ "a certain number of homosexuals, alcoholics, transvestites and drug addicts." The Moral Majority called it a

"perverted law."

Perhaps a time warp has held this fundamentalist group to the thought processes of another century; otherwise, this archaic belief is inexcusable. But not only the Ku Klux Klan and the Moral Majority are living in the past.

Young, educated people who were raised in the post-Martin Luther King Jr. era are guilty of racism, too. Racially-motivated violence has mushroomed on college campuses since 1986. And subtle racism permeates universities, creating an atmosphere of alienation and isolation for many minority students and faculty.

Blacks, Mexican-Americans and Asian-Americans continue to be outnumbered on campus. Their cultures are ignored by administrators when curricula are designed. The Scholastic Aptitude test, a test that has been called racially biased, continues to be the primary factor in selecting students to enroll in college.

Steps have been taken to increase involvement of minorities. Minority recruitment measures are in vogue, as are multicultural programs. These attempts

to rectify an imbalanced situation are important.

But rules don't change the way people think. If they did, Americans would have abandoned all forms of racism in 1964. And people's attitudes, not just their statements, must change before any real progress can be made.

Perhaps the debate about the Civil Rights Restoration Act — and President Reagan's ineffective veto — will be learning experience for some people. Maybe the mask of hypocrisy will be torn permanently from the ugly face of racism. And Americans will realize that they need to make fundamental changes in the way they think, not just in the way they talk.

Maybe. Maybe not. But if no one learns from these problems — campus violence, political sidestepping, however discrimination manifests itself — racism will continue to breed in American society. And that's too bad.

Tracy Staton is a senior journalism major, a staff writer and a columnist for The Battalion.

Where is the racism in professional baseball?

Robert Dowdy
Guest Columnist

It's that time of year again. Time to gambol in the spring-fresh fields. Time to swim in the warm waters of the Gulf. And time to accuse Major League Baseball of racist hiring practices.

This time last year then L.A. Dodgers V.P. Al Campanis remarked that blacks lacked the "necessities" to manage a baseball team. This initiated a new wave of criticism against management hiring practices in baseball and professional sports in general.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson came forward to threaten that if every major league club didn't have an affirmative action program by June 29th, he would call for a boycott of games by blacks, hispanics and women. Jackson called off the threat before the deadline.

But there's a fundamental flaw in that approach; namely, his misreading of the reason why people attend sporting events.

Baseball is not thought of by most fans as a business. It's entertainment. So it's ridiculous for Jackson to think that he can change the attitudes of fans because of what is going on in the front office. (By the way, the same argument can be made as to why there are very few black actors in the movies. It's a travesty.)

Commissioner Peter Ueberroth — whom I had admired in other programs he initiated — gave in to Jackson's demands and is working to establish new hiring programs among the clubs.

In addition to his threats, Jackson also drew up a list of former black players whom he believe could coach at the major league level. I can't remember all their names (one was Joe Morgan), but I do remember that none of them had coaching experience. They were all big name ballplayers, and Jackson had made the illogical leap of assuming that they would also be good coaches.

Recently, in pro basketball, Hall of Famer Bill Russell was fired as coach of the Sacramento Kings after only eight months in that position. And I'm not mentioning him because he's black. Wasn't it assumed that a certain actor would be a good politician because of his success in films? Look where that's gotten us.

There has been a black manager, **jo**

Frank Robinson, and he was fairly successful. He managed the San Francisco Giants from 1981 to the middle of the 1984 season, compiling a 264-277 record.

Robinson was a good manager, but he suffered from the same factors that many managers have to deal with: impatient owners and lack of consistent players. The Giants are now benefiting from the shrewd trades and excellent minor league teams that Robinson developed, producing such talent as Candy Maldonado and Will Clark.

One of the biggest obstacles for potential black managers is the perennial practice of teams hiring the same faces — a sort of Good Ol' Boys Club — regardless of their previous managerial records. Perhaps that is one area where Jackson's pressure can be beneficial.

You may be thinking I'm going to suggest that, since baseball is technically a business, then neither Ueberroth nor anyone else has the authority to dictate its hiring practices. That's a viable argument. But there is one aspect of baseball that nobody — not even Ueberroth — can affect: simple mathematics.

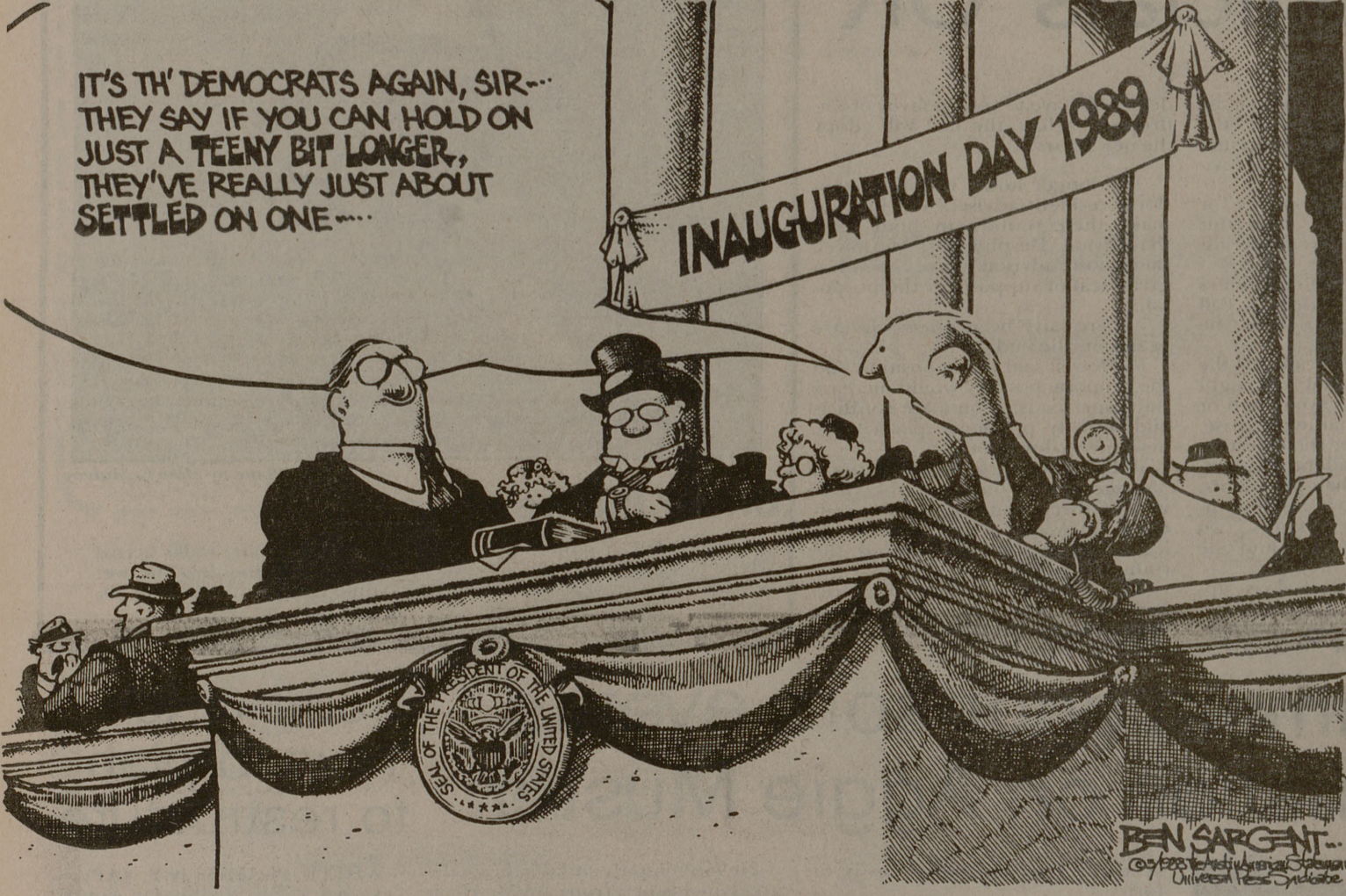
If you look at baseball history, you can see why there are very few blacks in management. About forty years ago Jackie Robinson became the first black to play in the majors.

Now consider how long it takes to become a manager in the majors. A manager usually comes from the playing ranks (but not always), manages for years at the minor league or college level, and only by the incident of someone retiring or getting fired does he have the chance to move up.

Try to imagine an applicants' pool from which the owner can choose. What percentage of these applicants — all of whom have to meet the above criteria — would be black or some other minority? Probably not more than five percent. Because, although Robinson broke the color barrier in the forties, blacks and hispanics didn't make their mark until the sixties. And if these players ended their careers in the mid-to-late seventies, then they wouldn't be entering the applicant pool until about now.

So Jackson stumbled onto an issue that was going to solve itself in a couple of years. And he'll probably get the credit for it.

Robert Dowdy is a senior English major



IT'S TH' DEMOCRATS AGAIN, SIR... THEY SAY IF YOU CAN HOLD ON JUST A TEENY BIT LONGER, THEY'VE REALLY JUST ABOUT SETTLED ON ONE....

Mail Call

Get back to basics

EDITOR:

In Brian Frederick's article on conditions in South Africa, he tried to describe the progress in South Africa's political and social system. While Frederick was successful in arguing some of his points (I'm not saying I agree with him, only that he supported his views well), he made one idiotic statement about the country's people: "In general, these groups (the various tribes and ethnic groups) are mutually distrustful and antagonistic. They speak different languages, possess varied cultures and practice different religions. It is doubtful that these groups would be able to cooperate peacefully in a western-style democracy were white rule to end now."

Frederick is a senior history major. Perhaps he should go back to his freshman Hist. 105 and 106 textbooks and read about the people who spoke "different languages, possessed varied cultures and practiced different religions" and settled our own democratic country rather successfully.

Cheryl Clements '88

We can rebuild her

EDITOR:

Recently we had our Siberian Husky, Sheba, in the hospital at the Small Animal Clinic at A&M. The quality of care she received while in the hospital was unbelievable. I did not realize how advanced animal medicine had

become. This was a great comfort to us, knowing Sheba had the best care we could give her. The entire staff, all the way from the girls in admissions to the students, doctors, and everyone in between, all complemented one another. They could teach a lot to human hospitals and doctors on how to treat their clients. They were all concerned with the well-being and care that was given to Sheba.

I would like to publicly thank them all for what they did for Sheba and us. The girls in admissions were always nice to us over the phone and when we came in. They were very good about getting messages to doctors. The students, Brian, Kevin and Kelly, called every day with progress reports and answered a million questions. Dr. Patricia Lutgen, the surgical staff, support staff and especially all in ICU cared the very best for Sheba.

And last but not least, Dr. Lynn Turner. I admire the skill and knowledge she has. The many phone calls to us took a lot of time out of her busy day, but she always had all the time we needed. She was always available for us. Dr. Turner will be in our thoughts and hearts for a very long time.

Again, thanks to all. I just hope the people in the Bryan-College Station area appreciate all these people. We are all very lucky to have them and Texas A&M.

Bill, Ann, Briann and "Wolf" Wilson
Post, Texas

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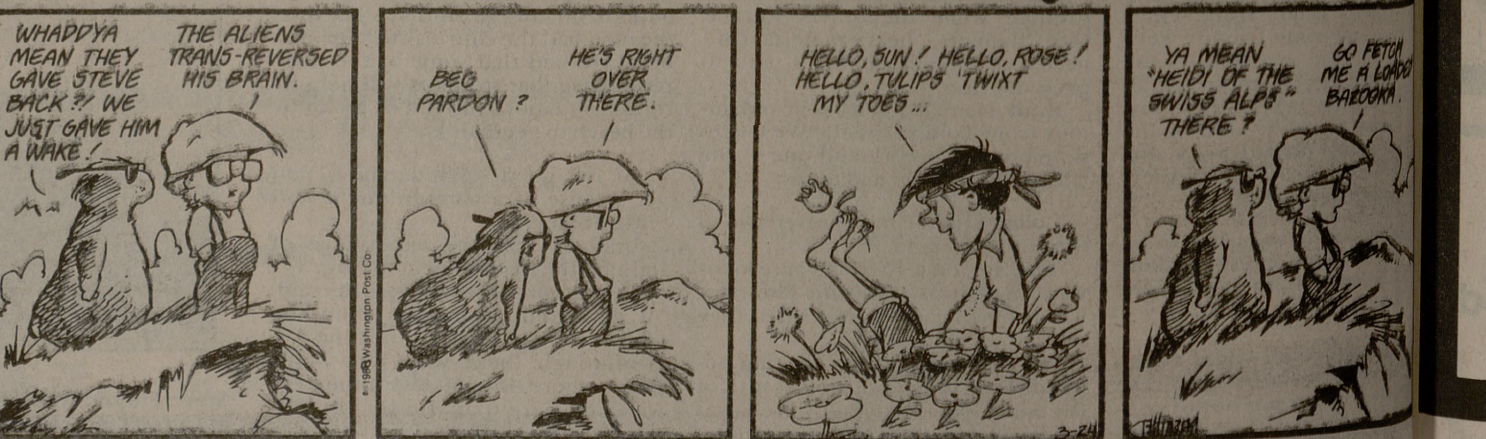
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