

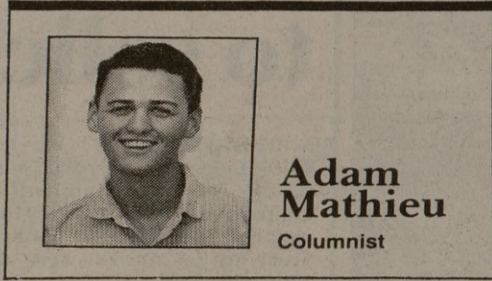
Homosexuals deserve respect, not prejudice

Last week I questioned the tolerance of the American people and of the readership of this newspaper. Today I would like to test that tolerance by writing on a subject that I feel deserves immediate attention, the question of homosexual rights.

The time to view the homosexual as an acceptable member of society has come. I think that we have all seen the devastating effects of ignoring this important segment of society. The AIDS concern never reached full tilt until heterosexuals started being infected. The virus had already existed for several years among the (primarily male) homosexual population. But then it was fine because it was simply killing "fags". Some went to the absolutely ridiculous extreme and said that God was in some way involved. This ignorance is perhaps the greatest culprit in the spread of this terrible disease.

Homosexuals deserve equal rights. In fact, I do not see how we can deny rights to these people. *Homosexual Behavior: A Modern Reappraisal* states that between five and ten percent of all adult males in Western culture are homosexual while between three and five percent of all adult females are homosexual. These figures show that homosexuals by no means constitute a small segment of society. They are a group that demands consideration.

This book makes another interesting, well-supported point — homosexuals



Adam Mathieu
Columnist

do not choose their sexual orientations, just as heterosexuals do not choose theirs. Apparently, the roots of a tendency toward homosexuality are present before the age of six. Homosexuality is as normal to a homosexual as heterosexuality is to a heterosexual.

I included the facts about the origin of homosexuality for the benefit of the less easily persuaded members of the readership. From a political standpoint, it is absolutely unimportant whether the homosexual chooses his or her sexual nature or not. Homosexuals should not be apologetic to anyone. Their lifestyle is not harmful to anyone, except themselves, thanks to an intolerant, puritanical society. Society has no right to intervene in the romantic affairs of two adults. It also has no right to make a loving relationship difficult. It would sooner allow a person of one sex to marry an abusive member of another than to allow two kind members of the same sex to perform the same act.

This is a sad fact. It is far easier for a

person to be abusive to his or her spouse than it is for a person to be a homosexual. When Nazis or the Ku Klux Klan march, they get less heat than when gays march to declare their rights. In many parts of this country, the beliefs of vicious organizations like the two just mentioned are more acceptable than homosexuality. This is an excellent comment on the state of American society.

We live in one of those parts of the country where racism is more accepted than homosexuality. I would now like to salute, in this public forum, the 11 members of the Gay Student Services who had the courage to appear for that organization's picture in the *Aggieland*. I think everyone, regardless of sexual orientation, should at least respect their courage. That these people would risk the terrible alienation and abuse that their action surely generated, impresses me. How can one say that homosexuality is a trivial thing if people like these are willing to suffer grave consequences so that they will gain just a modicum of respect?

Homosexuals are deserving of all the rights of heterosexuals. They should be allowed to marry, share property, and generally live without discrimination. They are a significant section of the American population and should be accorded all the rights that this supposedly entails.

Adam Mathieu is a senior chemistry major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Mail Call

Equality should start early

EDITOR:

Affirmative action has a place in today's America, in Texas and at A&M. The place is at the beginnings — the starting line.

Some Texas high schools are pretty good. More are pretty bad, and not many of the good ones serve predominantly black or Hispanic neighborhoods. There is a good case for easing admissions standards for students from such backgrounds, despite all of the disadvantages, this student is anywhere close to ready to attend A&M, he or she probably has more brains and grit than a marginal prospect who had all the opportunities but made little of them.

It makes sense to provide these students extra help in the summer before they start and during their first year. After all, the state is just making up for its failure to provide a good secondary education the first time around. It even makes sense to provide financial help all the way to graduation. The wider world of jobs and wealth has a poor record as far as fairness to blacks and Hispanics is concerned. Scholarships can offset the damage this does to these students' opportunities in higher education.

So where is affirmative action out of place? At the finish line, of course. It would be farcical to extend the dubious practice of "curving" the grades of minorities on civil service exams into the classroom or the registrar's office. There is likewise no good case to be made for affirmative action decisions on promotion and pay for persons who have been on the job long enough for their individual merits and weaknesses to show up.

What this means for you at *The Battalion* is that you ought to reconsider your "merit only" policy for taking on beginners. You may well be missing somebody with more ultimate potential. As members of your staff mature, or fail to do so, you will be able to make decisions on the basis of individual merit.

Douglas A. Hensley
Professor of Mathematics

Fencing needs higher priority

EDITOR:

Mr. Thomas's cartoon of October 2 has pointed out some of the many incongruities at Texas A&M University. The current condition of the fencing room and fencing in general are good examples supporting his pointed portrayal of funding priorities on campus. The University prides itself on its traditions, and yet a martial art sanctioned by the NCAA is treated, at best, as an afterthought.

It is curious that the Corps carries sabres which they are not even trained to properly use, because the Athletic Department offers neither sabre nor epee.

As proof of this contention, one has only to look at the floor in the fencing room. The surface is slick, and therefore dangerous. Aside from the fact that it prevents students from practicing the sport correctly, it creates the potential for someone becoming seriously injured. The surface is in poor condition by any standard, and yet the only action the Athletic Department has committed itself to stop waxing the floor!

A look at our archrival, the University of Texas, is also instructive. UT is the favorite whipping boy for the Corps and others, because it supposedly lacks tradition and spirit. While A&M continues to only adequately fund a few sports benefiting few, UT has hired a fencing master to provide full, well-rounded program for the student body in general. It is a sad fact that many universities the size of A&M provide much more varied and complete programs for the student body in general. But again this is only proof of what Mr. Thomas hinted — the Athletic Department, like several other institutions on campus, is for the alumni and not for the students.

Lawrence Mott
Graduate student

A&M is family

EDITOR:

In response to Kevin Thomas' article in the October 2 issue of *The Battalion*, would like to say that not all traditionalists attend Texas A&M for its great traditions. I am a Hispanic, non-reg, sophomore mechanical engineering major who came to A&M to receive a top notch education. The fact that A&M has many great traditions was just another selling point for the University. I have friends who attend other schools and in no way do they experience the feeling of family that we as Aggies feel for each other.

You seem to think that traditions such as bonfire and Silver Taps are taken movements we endure only because they are the "norm." Well, let me set you straight on the feelings of many others who hold these and other traditions sacred. Many Aggies work on bonfire and attend Silver Taps because of our love for A&M and our love for each other. When we stand next to someone at Silver Taps or work side by side at bonfire, we feel the pain that often comes with the loss of a family member and the joy that comes from knowing a job worth doing is worth doing well.

Yes, Mr. Thomas, each and every tradition here at A&M has its own special place in someone's heart. For you to come out and slander the feelings of even part of the student body is not only wrong but is bad journalism as well. *The Battalion* should realize that the purpose of the opinion page is to present the feelings of both sides of an issue.

Michael Acosta '92

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

Affirmative action justified

Let me start by saying that I applaud Scot Walker's courage in discussing an important issue like affirmative action and his willingness to share his own beliefs. Too often people are afraid to touch on such issues because they are afraid of the conflict it can arouse and afraid of saying the wrong thing for fear of being labeled.

His pro-affirmative action statement shows he has been willing to listen to and learn about minority issues. Certainly women and minorities are very much "stuck" in the secondary job market (lower paying, less secure, less education needed) as compared to white males who dominate the primary job market (better pay, more secure, more educational demand, more power).

A model which has always helped me to understand the position of women and minorities in this country was put forward in the *1968 Civil Rights Digest* by Robert Terry. In it he refers to what he calls the "white male club." This club is firmly rooted in the infrastructure of our society by four strong forces. These forces are power, values, resources and control of resources.

First, white males tremendously dominate positions of power in this country. They are the leaders and administrators of both industry and government. Second, white male values permeate our society and are generally held to be superior to the values and beliefs held by women and minorities.

Third, white males possess most of the resources in this country. For instance, a few years ago it was found that the average white family had \$40,000 in savings, while the average Hispanic family had about \$1,200, and the average black family had about \$400.

Lastly, white males control the country's resources, because they both possess the resources and because they hold



Charles Howard
Guest Columnist

the positions which control the community's resources. If there is a pothole in a typical minority neighborhood and a pothole in a typical white neighborhood, which one will be filled first?

One way in which we can loosen the grip of the white male club is to use affirmative action. But, as Scot Walker pointed out in his editorial, there is a feeling that this leads to less qualified people getting the jobs and also leaves white males feeling frustrated over the loss of job opportunities.

As a white male I must admit that this was also my initial response. However, I have learned there are a couple of other points to consider when responding in this fashion.

First, there is a popular myth that every job or occupation has a specific or unique set of qualifications. In fact any job or occupation can be approached and successfully completed in a number of ways by different types of people. When a position becomes open the person responsible for filling that position makes their own judgments in regard to the qualifications needed to best fulfill the function involved.

Inevitably there are a number of subjective decisions made that reflect the values and beliefs of the person who does the hiring. Of course it is more than likely that the person doing the hiring is a white male and/or a person who has accepted white male values as the norm.

Additionally, once the "necessary" qualifications have been established there are usually a number of people who meet them. In other words, if 100 people apply for a job there will nearly

always be 10 or 20 who are "qualified" and should therefore be able to handle the work.

It is particularly at this point where racism and sexism rear their ugly heads, as very subjective criteria are used to choose who will be hired. In many cases the final ranking will be relatively arbitrary and in reality person number 20 can handle the job as well as person number one. By the way, this is where affirmative action usually occurs and so I must wonder if one can truly propose that less "qualified" or "unqualified" people are being hired as a result of affirmative action.

In regard to the frustration aroused by affirmative action programs I can only relate my own experience. I have lost an advancement opportunity or two because of affirmative action and I would like to think that each time it happened this society moved a little closer to true equality among people. Additionally, it is more than likely that as a white male I had an easier time finding another job or school than the minority or woman who was helped by affirmative action.

Charles Howard is a doctoral student in the Counseling Psychology Program and a guest columnist for The Battalion.



The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of
Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Conference

The Battalion Editorial Board

Scot Walker, Editor
Wade See, Managing Editor
Juliette Rizzo, Opinion Page Editor
Fiona Soltes, City Editor
Ellen Hobbs, Chuck Squatriglia,
News Editors
Tom Kehoe, Sports Editor
Jay Janner, Art Director
Dean Sueltenfuss, Lifestyles 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*, 230 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111. Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Battalion*, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.