

Mail Call

Matthews needs to take off blinders

EDITOR:

I seriously doubt that rock guitarist Pete Townshend appreciates having one of his song lyrics used by Andrew Matthews in his recent column of Feb. 22. Andrew misspells Pete's last name, but worse than that he tries to associate Pete with his naive and uninformed argument supporting minority rule in South Africa. Pete, who is a charter member of Artists Against Apartheid and performed on the Sun City album, would be justifiably insulted.

But Andrew didn't stop with just insulting Pete Townshend, he goes on in his article to insult a whole race of people. In his article he asks the rhetorical question "How have blacks fared under black rule?" and then concludes that they have a "blemished record." This statement has unabashedly racist implications. I'm offended at what he is implying and I'm white. He seems to be implying that blacks are somehow incapable of handling leadership positions and therefore need whites to run things for them. To back up this specious argument that blacks are somehow too barbaric and backwards to hold positions of leadership, Andrew quotes a lot of casualty statistics (without ever giving the source of his information) from various civil wars that have taken place in many different African countries over the past 20 years. How many people died during the U.S. Civil War? Did the high casualty figures from that war somehow prove that whites, like Abraham Lincoln, were incompetent leaders and needed the direction of some foreign power? Something that Andrew does not mention is that in most of these wars one side or the other is being financed and armed by the U.S. via the CIA. Also, many of the military dictators that Andrew mentions came into power with the help of CIA backed coups that maintain their stranglehold on the country to this day and have the financial and military support of the U.S.

Andrew's view of the world is overly simplified. He sees a two dimensional world where everything is either right or wrong with no middle ground and no consideration for any other options. He worships the concept of capitalism as if it were a religion and closes his eyes to its excesses and abuses. I just wish that Andrew and people that share his views would take off their blinders and see the world from a broader perspective.

Mike Thomas '87

Ivana did have a real job

EDITOR:

In reference to Matt McBurnett's letter on Feb. 16, I feel compelled to comment on the following: Who do you think you are to downgrade the job of a wife and mother when you do not know the first thing about being either? To say that the job of a wife and mother is "nothing" is ludicrous, for that is practically everything in a marriage. If it were not for those women who are willing to stay home and take care of the children, you men would not have the opportunity to go out and make any money! Mothers get a place to live and that is it; they have no money of their own and are completely at the mercy of their husbands for financial support. If the marriage does not work out, many are left with nothing, except of course the children whom they cannot support without child support. (We certainly would not want you men to be burdened with the kids, as you would not be able to further your career if you had to stay home with them all day.) Many women have devoted their entire lives to raising a family. That is their career, and as with any career, when one is fired, one gets a severance pay of sorts, or at least is able to collect unemployment. Such is the case with Ivana Trump. If Donald had stayed home all day to take care of the children, do you think he would have had time to make all those million-dollar deals? I think not. (Of course he would not have had time to have those alleged affairs either.) Do not tell me Ivana did nothing "except be a wife and mom." It was because of her that he was able to conduct his business. And what does she get for her years of hard work but a mere \$25 million (not \$20 as you incorrectly stated), which is nothing compared to the billions she currently has. Donald is the one who has supposedly committed the wrong here, not Ivana, and he should pay for the mental anguish he has caused his wife — he certainly can afford it!

Indeed, many women, such as myself, are career-oriented and are able to take care of themselves, but some choose not to do so. Some find great reward in raising a family, and do I feel sorry for them if this is the kind of respect they get. Incidentally, I hope you do not feel your mother wasted her life doing "nothing" raising you. I feel sorry for her if that is the thanks she gets from you!

Coriene M. Case '91

Let's make it a 'Human Thang'

EDITOR:

Why do so many groups segregate themselves? The only way, I believe, to fight discrimination is not to isolate yourself from other groups but to join them. Don't misunderstand me. This is not just a black or white thing, male or female thing, Christian or Jewish thing. It's a human thing. And you're right: I don't understand. Some women feel it's wrong to allow all-male universities to exist, or, heaven forbid, a group of males to have a men's club. But I don't even hear any men whining over the existence of a female engineering society. What about the black engineering societies or minority engineering societies? Correct me if I'm wrong, but aren't we all engineers? Groups that are exclusive do serve a purpose (men's clubs, all-female universities, minority student groups). But let's not overdo it. Be proud of your heritage, your religion or your gender. But try not to be defensive. If people want to belittle you because you're black, white, overweight or because you're just different, ignore them. They're just proving their ignorance and insecurity. Let's make it a "Human Thang."

Danny Collins '90

Have an opinion? Express it!

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. There is no guarantee that letters submitted will be printed. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer. All letters may be brought to 216 Reed McDonald, or sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111.

Corporate literacy programs could help get the word out

Many people can't read this article. Researchers estimate that 25 million American adults are illiterate. They don't have the skills to attain a meaningful job or perform simple literary tasks like ... reading a newspaper.

The illiteracy problem has always been with us and always will. According to some figures, it currently costs the United States \$20 billion in lost productivity and government support.

But actions from the corporate sector have helped curb the problem. And increased involvement from more companies will mean more benefits for America.

Until recently, the burden of trying to solve the literacy problem has been left to the federal, state and local governments. But these government programs have not taken a significant step towards solving the problem.

On the other hand, several corporate programs have shown that corporations, with the support of education systems and government, can have very successful campaigns against illiteracy. Several companies educate their own employees to help improve productivity, and others contribute to existing programs and youth education.

IBM, General Motors, Coca-Cola, RJR Nabisco and General Electric have contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to youth education. Pizza Hut and Jell-O Desserts have begun ambitious campaigns to get youngsters interested in reading.

In-house corporate literacy programs produce benefits for both the employee and the employer. The employee learns to read and write, and the company gets a much more productive worker, for certain types of jobs. In some cases, productivity has increased by as much as 50 percent.

Companies such as Polaroid, General Motors, Southland, Planters Peanuts, Ford Motor Company, AT&T, Unisys and Domino's Pizza have implemented literacy and education programs to differing degrees. Some companies make agreements with local community colleges or public schools. Others have their own completely in-house programs. One thing is universal: They have all been very successful.



Timm Doolen
Columnist

Some examples: Polaroid has one-third of its 10,000 employees enrolled in classes. In Boston, Mass., 600 companies are working with local government to prepare high school students to hold a job. The companies commit to hiring many of the graduates they helped out. Every company involved in literacy programs has shown a marked improvement in productivity.

Media companies need to get involved in publicizing literacy campaigns. Media companies, publication retailers and publishing houses all have a direct interest in having literacy increased.

Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS), a project of ABC and PBS, has been very successful in getting the word out about literacy programs. Newspapers have done a good job, but could do a better one, of showing the need for literacy in America, and spreading information about how adults can enter literacy programs.

Obviously, corporate help is needed in the campaign against illiteracy. The federal, state and local governments should encourage corporate help by offering tax discounts and other incentives to those companies who offer successful literacy programs.

The governments will not be able to handle the burden of illiteracy in America. More companies need to be encouraged to get into the campaign for literacy if we are to successfully decrease the problem. The government needs to start soon to encourage companies to develop literacy programs and support existing programs. The United States will never be able to eradicate the problem of illiteracy, but with help from companies, more people will be able to read the words on this page.

Timm Doolen is a junior computer science major.

Ronda Shepherd
Columnist

Take time to celebrate Black history

Month gave chance to learn about culture

February was Black History Month, a time for blacks and non-blacks alike to recognize the contributions blacks have made to our country and the world as a whole. For too many years the contributions that blacks have made have been overlooked. History was just that: his story.

Black History Month was designed to tell a more complete story of United States history. Formerly Black History Week, the month highlighted the significant contributions of the people who Ralph Ellison called "the invisible men."

It was only recently that blacks were mentioned at all in history texts. To the naked eye it would appear that blacks were simply mythical creatures who did not exist at all in recorded history.

When blacks did become a part of history texts, the textbook writers seemed to have a difficult time deciding what to say about them. History should be simple; all black and white, no gray. Social issues would complicate the way writers wanted to depict history. Thus, we had the abridged version of blacks' role in history.

Watered-down history texts taught American youths that blacks did nothing but were enslaved, freed and then fought for Civil Rights. It was as though blacks existed in a type of historical limbo; appearing and disappearing whenever their chapters came up.

Texts failed to include the "Buffalo Soldiers" who helped tame the wild, wild West. Teachers lectured for days about ancient civilizations and never once mentioned that Egypt is in Africa and the Great Pyramids were built by Africans. Children who were taught about Napoleon, never heard of Hannibal or the Queen of Sheba. While everyone knows Bell invented the telephone, do they know his assistant, who actually did the drawings, was black?

Yes, the text mentioned George Washington Carver. But blacks invented more than peanut butter. We invented the mop, forks, the traffic light, a machine that could manufacture shoes, the light switch, the iron, blood transfusion, open heart surgery and much more.

No text taught that blacks helped build this country, so little black children felt like they did not rightfully belong. They were made to feel like intruders in a country their people helped build, develop and make great.

Black History Month was our month to shine. Our month to filter through the voluminous clouds of historical discrepancy. It was not to set blacks apart, but to make us a part of the grand scheme of things.

Blacks have worked too hard against seemingly unsurmountable odds to be denied our rightful place in history. What the texts won't tell, history won't let us ignore.

Ronda Shepherd is a senior journalism major.

Balloon releases endanger our fragile environment

A friend sent me an article which appeared in The Battalion release last Wednesday to call attention to the Designated Driver Program.

While I applaud the participation of the A&M students in this worthwhile program, I wish that they would find some way to promote the program other than releasing balloons in the atmosphere.

I also hope that all student groups would consider not using balloon releases to publicize projects. If they wish to have colorful balloons, perhaps they would consider having balloons delivered to nursing homes, hospitals or child care centers instead of releasing them to damage our environment.

We share this fragile earth, our island home, with God's other creatures. The

Gardener Osbourne
Reader's opinion

practice of releasing helium balloons has grown in popularity in our schools, churches, clubs and homes.

The balloons have been shown to kill many of God's creatures, especially birds, fish and many species of turtles when they ingest the balloons thinking that the balloons are food. The balloons are not biodegradable and remain a threat to wildlife for many years after the balloons return to earth.

Please help educate the students about the damage they cause when they release these attractive killers of wildlife.

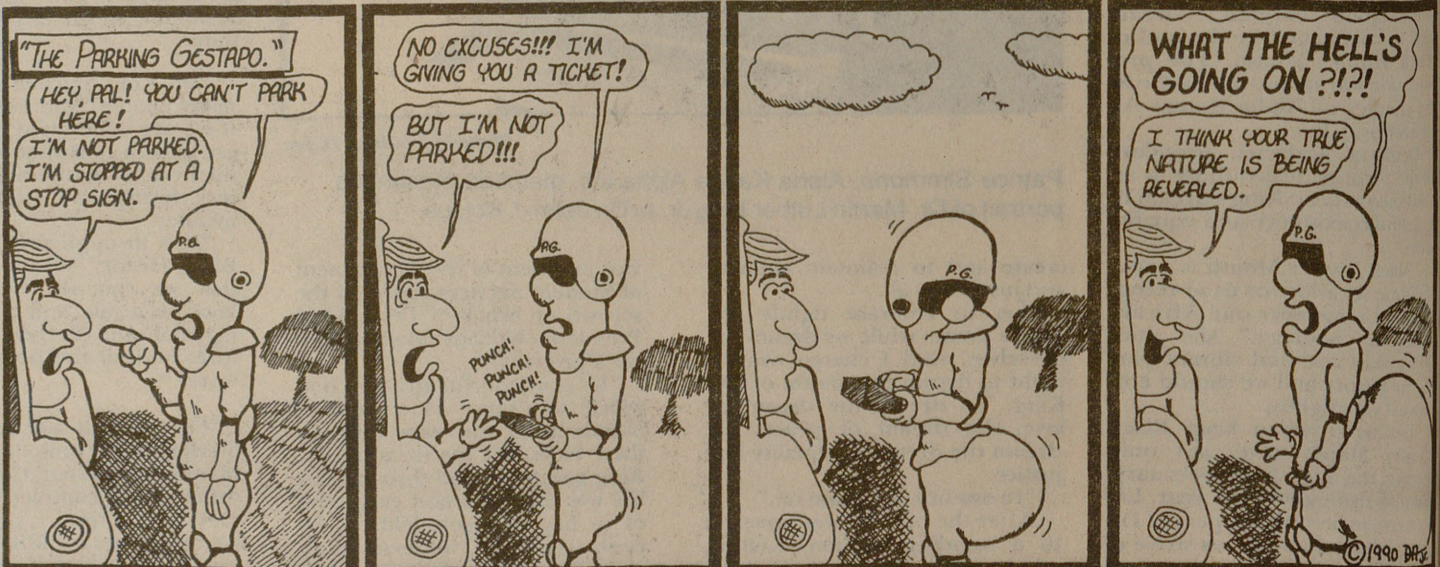
I'm sure that Aggies will stop this practice once they understand the impact of their actions.

Gardner Osborn was an Aggie Parent of the Year in 1983



Adventures In Cartooning

by Don Atkinson Jr.



The Battalion

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