

MAIL CALL

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers and welcomes all letters to the editor. Please include name, classification, address and phone number on all letters. The editor reserves the right to edit letters for style and length. Because of limited space, shorter letters have a better chance of appearing. There is, however, no guarantee letters will appear. Letters may be brought to 216 Reed McDonald or sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111.

Misunderstanding causes furor

EDITOR:

I always have had strong convictions about preserving the rights of individuals in our society.

But I did not get directly involved in the dialogue concerning the removal of "sexual orientation" from the Statement on Harassment and Discrimination until last week, when one of my students asked for permission — which I gave — to circulate a petition during a review session in favor of keeping the original wording.

Later, a few students and I discussed the petition. One said that she was a Christian and therefore totally disapproved of homosexuality and favored Mobley's decision on the new wording.

I respect her convictions; however, our conversation and The Battalion's coverage of the controversy made me realize that many people are wrongfully confusing the legal rights of the gay person with the legality of homosexual behavior.

The original wording in the statement specifically listed the characteristics of a person which are not to be used as a basis for discrimination and harassment, for example, a person's sex, race or sexual preference.

These are attributes that a person cannot choose, but are chosen for him/her at birth. One cannot hold a person accountable for being born male or female, African Ameri-

can or Anglo, Hispanic or Asian, with disabilities or not, straight or gay. These qualities are innate and cannot be used to decide a person's worth.

The laws against discrimination were made to protect individuals, to give them as equal a chance as possible to succeed or fail in life on their own merits and deeds, on their strength of character and not on some twist of fate. We as a nation must protect the rights of all people. This is possible without necessarily condoning their behavior.

If you consider homosexual acts crimes (I do not; I believe that what goes on between consenting adults in private is nobody's business but theirs), keep in mind that (1) a person who is gay, like a heterosexual individual, may not be sexually active, and (2) that under some circumstances, heterosexuals can partake in homosexual activities.

To conclude, we must not allow our inner, learned prejudices dictate how we treat others.

It is clearly President Mobley's duty to take the lead in unequivocally stating that no form of bigotry will be tolerated on this campus, and to reinstate the original wording in the Statement on Harassment and Discrimination.

Dr. Wendy L. Keeney-Kennicutt
senior lecturer in chemistry

Compassion helps more than violence

As a Christian, I am required by God to love my neighbor. If you love your neighbors, then you don't tell them they're living a normal and healthy lifestyle when you know they're not.

People involved in homosexual behavior need compassion, not abuse. Violence against homosexuals is reprehensible. It is against the law to assault any individual.

Studies show that homosexuality is an unhealthy lifestyle and that it is a learned behavior.

In February 1990, the University of Chicago reported that only 1 percent of Americans identify themselves as homosexual; a 1989 study in Science magazine said 1.6 to 2 percent of the male population had engaged in homosexual behavior.

Yet this small group, 1 to 2 percent of American society, has 50 percent of the syphilis cases and 60 percent of the AIDS cases.

During the first 10 years that homosexual rights laws were in effect in San Francisco, the city's venereal disease rate rose to 22 times the national average.

What does the law say about homosexual behavior? Homosexual behavior is against the law in Texas and 23 other states.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1986 in Bowers vs. Hardwick that the Constitution does not provide a right for homosexuals to engage in sodomy.

Chief Justice Warren Burger wrote: "To hold that the act of homosexual sodomy is somehow protected as a fundamental right would be to cast aside a millennia of moral teaching."

In summary, why not show people involved in homosexual behavior real compassion by telling the truth, that is, that homosexual behavior is a destructive and unacceptable lifestyle? Some people condone homosexuality, praising it as a "diversity."

Some people drink excessively; others don't. Few informed people praise excessive drinking as a healthy lifestyle or as a "diversity."

If enough people praised excessive drinking as a healthy lifestyle or as a "diversity," more people likely would

Dr. Murphy Smith

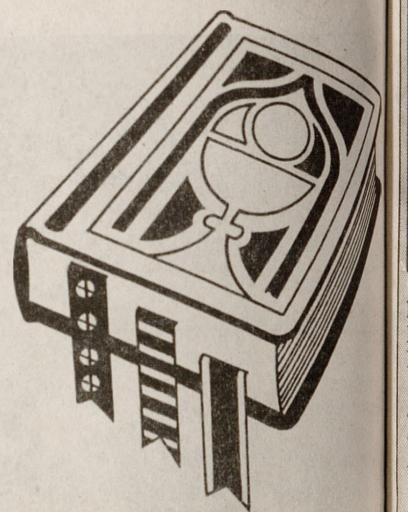
Reader's Opinion

become alcoholics and drunk drivers. However, excessive drinking would remain the unhealthy behavior it is, notwithstanding such Orwellian "truthspeak."

On a final note, more than 100 professors have gone on the record supporting the University Statement on Harassment and Discrimination as recently enacted by President Mobley and unambiguously approved by the Committee for a Discrimination-Free Campus.

The Battalion's front-page article Friday and news summary Monday implied that only a handful of professors had done so.

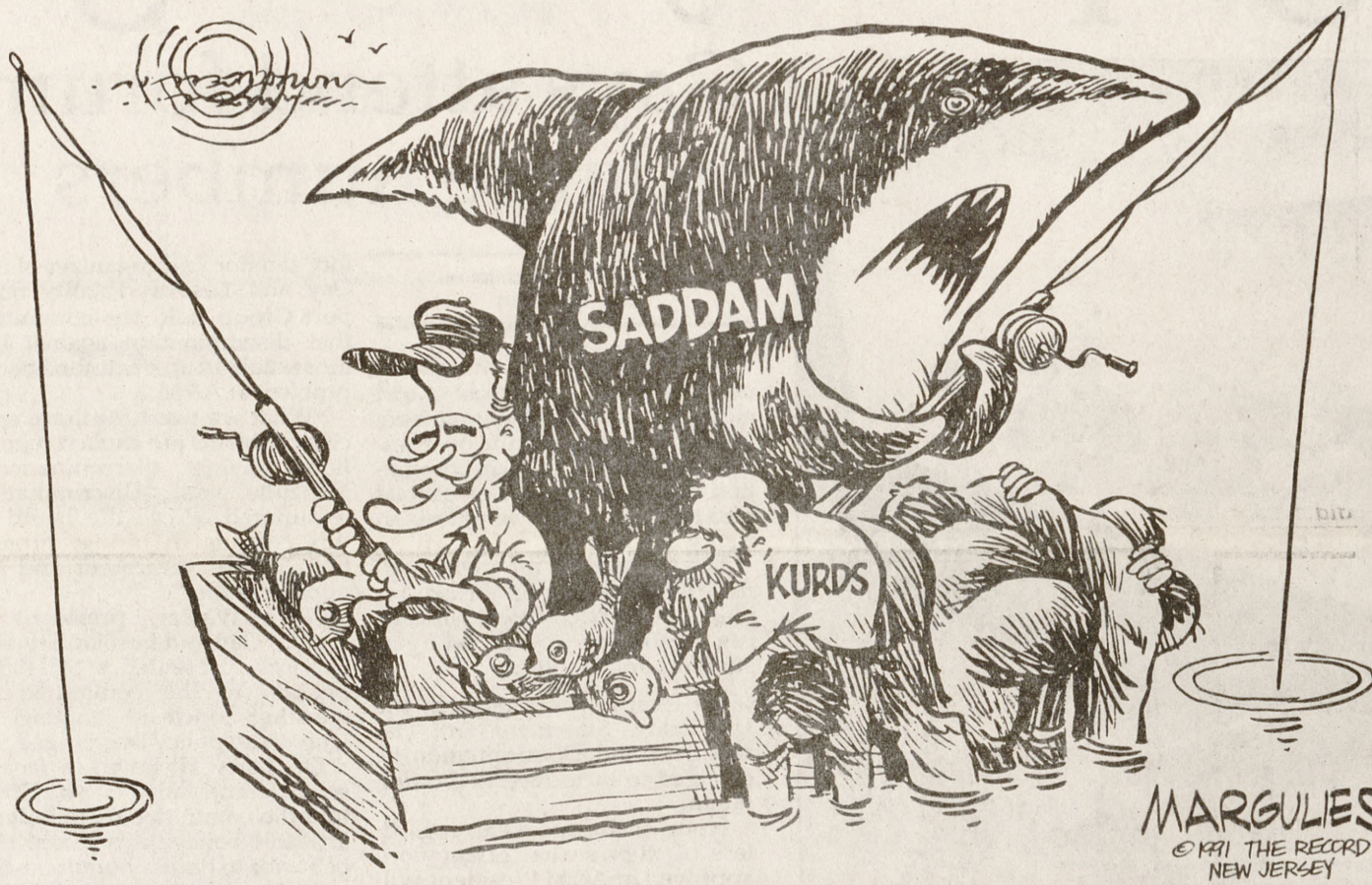
The new statement is fair and protective to all groups, not just homosexuals. Homosexuals are not the only people receiving abuse on this campus.



My friends and I have been the victims of abuse because of our moral and religious beliefs.

If homosexuals continue to be assaulted, we don't need special privileges just for them, we need better law enforcement for everyone.

Dr. Murphy Smith is a Texas A&M professor in the accounting department.



Liberals, conservatives lack insight on underclass

An interesting new study on America's underclass, the people liberals make excuses for and the conservatives bicker about, has revealed some evidence that shatters many contemporary stereotypes.

The research, which was released Monday by Washington's Brookings Institution, was previewed the same day in the Los Angeles Times.

People who tend to blindly classify themselves as either liberal or conservative always have puzzled me. I cannot adhere to either train of thought without becoming derailed at one time or another. Liberals and conservatives basically have a set group of opinions on particular issues. Anyone who follows what he thinks he is supposed to follow without examining each issue independently

Matt McBurnett
Columnist

cannot be counted upon to concoct any reasonable opinions, much less solutions.

The condition of the underclass is an issue that particularly cannot be judged following a rigid set of standard liberal or conservative arguments. This new research clearly validates this fact.

For instance, we have been bombarded the past few years by propaganda on teen-age pregnancy. This new research indicates that pregnancy rates among teen women have fallen by about one-third since the mid-1960s. Urban high school dropout rates also declined considerably during

the 1980s. One of the principle architects of the new report, Christopher Jencks, claims that the perception of urban school failure "may reflect a revolution of rising expectations" more than any change in school performance.

So the "problems" of teen pregnancy and school failure, for which conservatives and liberals alike have pinpointed as problems, are not as problematic and are not in such immediate need of solutions as was once thought.

Many research studies emphasize the importance of individual behavior in determining who stays poor and who does not. This tends to follow the conservative viewpoint and refute the idea that many problems of poverty can be traced to a decline in the number of "good jobs."

The report also denounces a decline

in traditional family structure in both poor and middle-class households. Paul E. Peterson of Harvard said "The most powerful force contributing to the formation of an urban underclass, perversely enough, may be the changing values of mainstream American society."

While condemning the fall in traditional families, the report also disputes a widely held conservative notion that welfare benefits have created a "culture of poverty" that despises work. Poverty spread somewhat during the 1980s even though welfare benefits fell sharply.

In fact, in areas that had a shortage of workers in the 1980s, low-income people readily left welfare even for relatively low-wage employment and poverty fell rapidly.

In addition, the report disputes the

notion that women often can benefit having children and going on welfare rather than working.

Overall, poverty in America has improved rapidly from the end of World War II through the early 1970s. The research also indicates that the poverty rate has remained roughly at 13 percent since then.

Because this report has chosen no socio-ideological path to follow, I tend to believe it. Judging from its content, the liberal and conservative illuminations actually have no insight on the problems of the underclass. This only underscores my idea that individual examination of social and political issues is necessary if these issues are to be treated fairly.

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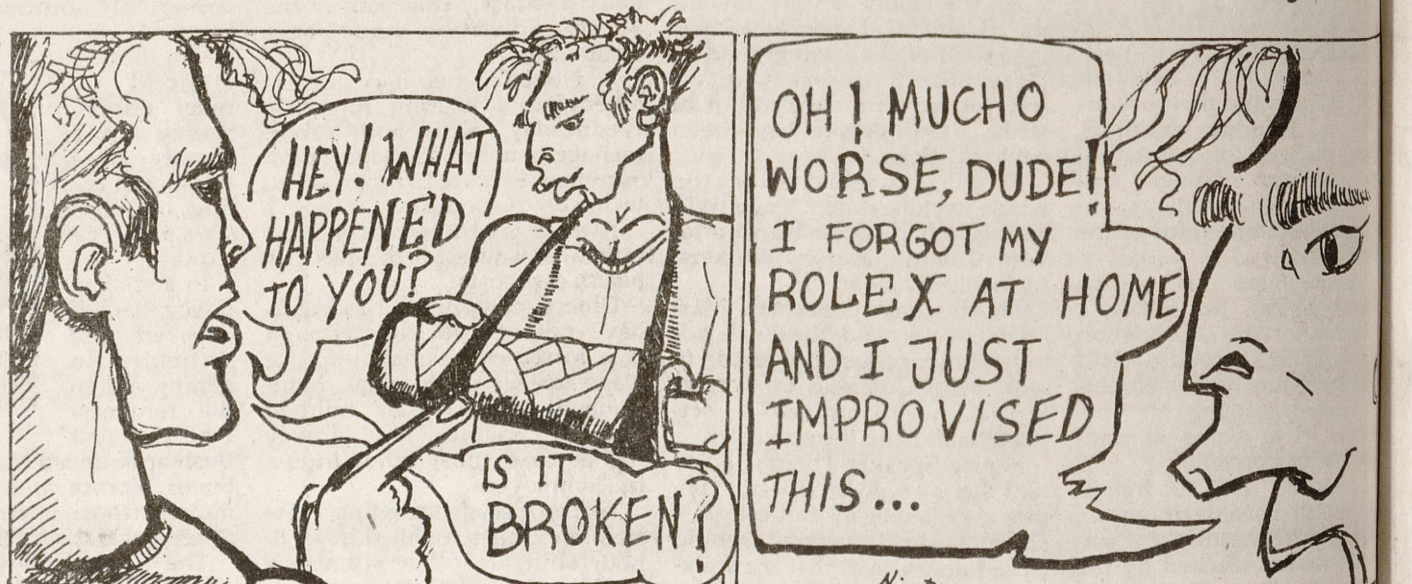
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