

Usual solutions to social problems aren't working

The greatest prayers of men have always been for light and love. We cannot buy light and love in the marketplace of men; but they are given to us without money and without price.

To some, Bryan/College Station may seem like an idyllic haven far from violence and social illness. But appearances can be deceiving. In a three issue series, the Eagle focused several stories on "at least 100 juveniles running in 15 local gangs."

In my opinion, this community problem towers above every other issue we have recently dealt with. The MTV scuffle seems like a kindergarten issue in comparison. The annual conflict over bonfire is relatively inconsequential. And identifying any elements of fascism in local shopping malls is merely an exercise in sophistry.

Controlling gang activity is almost as difficult as combatting guerrilla

warfare cadres. Gangs and guerrillas have much in common. Both use terrorist tactics, and authority structures tend to be very flexible. Both punish disloyalty swiftly and seemingly impulsively. Both kinds of groups require deep commitment. According to one gang member, "there is only one way out of a gang ... dying (is) about the only way."

Unfortunately, the Eagle recommends a combination of "law and order" and liberal programs that have never worked in larger cities, and which will never work here. The "law and order" approach centers around "getting tough on crime." It calls for a "no tolerance" posture, beefing up police patrols and handing out stiffer sentences to those convicted of gang-related crimes.

This approach attempts to treat the symptoms of society's illness without discussing the disease. This tactic is as ineffective as fighting guerrilla forces with conventional tactics. We may win battles, but we won't win the war for people's hearts and minds by using these tactics.

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Columnist

The liberal agenda has failed just as dismally when it has been implemented. This approach claims that the problem is a lack of mental health and education, or lack of a male role model. Liberals claim that counseling and education will save our society's gang members. But these methods fail to address the reasons kids find gangs attractive: personal attention, loyal friends, a sense of belonging and easy money, which is used to provide a sense of acceptance and power.

Even if these kids reach a higher socioeconomic class (and learn to steal with politics rather than machine guns,) will that solve the problem? I hear that in Houston some of the most vicious gang activity goes on in Clear Lake, an affluent community.

As Ellen Hobbs' Tuesday column

so clearly demonstrated, gang violence is not limited to fatherless lower-class youth. I doubt that any of Paul Broussard's 10 murderers have ever known hunger in their Woodlands homesteads. And if the affluent Woodlands can't offer positive role models, then we may as well head for the hills.

After all, gangs aren't just minorities who call themselves "Crips" and "Bloods." According to Webster's, gangs are "organized groups of criminals," and groups "of children or youths from the same neighborhood banded together for social reasons."

The "law and order" approach fails because it treats symptoms without addressing the problem. And although the liberal approach may attempt to treat problems, it doesn't offer any solutions that actually work.

So what is the answer? Jesus is the answer. I'm not talking about some creation of a swindling TV preacher out to make some money. I'm not talking about some image formulated by the powers-that-be to keep people under control. I'm not talking about

what Marx called "the opiate of the people" used to keep everyone in his place.

I'm talking about the life-transforming, full of mercy, loving Jesus. I'm talking about the Jesus who sent a skinny midwestern preacher by the name of David Wilkerson to the toughest gang of New York City to tell them that God loves them. I'm talking about the Jesus who claims to be "the way, the truth and the life."

The truth is that just like in the fairy tale, all the king's horses and all the king's men can't put society back together again. Through police, schools and social programs, the government has had its chance to save human beings. It has failed. Up until now our efforts have failed because man at his very essence yearns for light and love, not a B.A. and a Miata.

Jesus Christ claims to be the light of the world. He also claims to be love personified. No one else has had such success saving society from a living hell. Why don't we give Jesus a shot?

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Decision not to adjust census is an injustice to minority groups

Commerce Secretary Robert Mosbacher's decision not to adjust the 1990 census will unfairly take away \$1 billion in federal funds from Texas over the next decade.

According to a review by the Census Bureau, census takers missed 3.2 percent of the state population; yet, Mosbacher said an adjustment would "abandon a 200-year tradition of how we actually count people."

Mosbacher obviously is following the old cliché "if it's broke, don't fix it."

The census bureau says 1990 census takers missed 5.3 million people nationwide, including 560,000 Texans. Thus, all federal funds Texas receives based on population will be less because of this misrepresentation in the census.

Unfortunately, Hispanics, blacks, Asians and American Indians bear much of the burden of this miscalculation. Mosbacher even admitted that minorities have endured the worst undercounts, while whites enjoyed the highest accuracy.

This country has a fundamental

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Columnist

duty to protect the minority groups in this nation. As a representative government, the United States will have failed to represent all groups accurately if some type of adjustment isn't made.

Census figures are used to allocate congressional seats to states and to distinguish boundaries of political districts. When such important aspects of the U.S. system of government rely on the census, accuracy becomes monumentally important.

Still, Mosbacher is concerned that any adjustment could "adversely affect the integrity of the census." When the census is already inaccurate by a count of 5 million people, what integrity is left to protect?

Ironically, Census Bureau Director Barbara Bryant, along with seven of the nine members of the bureau advisory panel, said the census

should be adjusted. But control over the Census Bureau falls under the jurisdiction of the Commerce Department and thus, Mosbacher. How can Mosbacher blatantly ignore census experts?

Democratic leaders claim Mosbacher's decision is political. Adjusting the census would give a higher minority count. Most experts agree that a higher number of minorities would add more Democrats in voting districts — an obvious advantage for the Democrats.

Since the majority of minorities are Democrat, and Mosbacher's boss (President Bush) is Republican, there could be some truth to these accusations.

But politics aside, Mosbacher bears an enormous responsibility to the American people to produce an accurate and fair census. Without an adjustment to correct these obvious inequities, Mosbacher will have failed to uphold this country's basic principle of fair representation.

Todd Stone is a graduate student in business.

Aggies should seek out other media

Our world of vacuous five-second sound bites and lengthy discussions by expert talking heads — oftentimes just as empty — make it necessary to seek out meaningful information on the issues of the day. This is true regardless of what your general outlook on issues is.

Depending on a single source for news is like listening to music from only one radio station. Some people may be content listening to only country music, but they are not up to date with music in general.

Similarly, people who get all their news from the Houston Chronicle are only up to date with the world as seen by the Houston Chronicle, not the world as it really is. As a division of the Hearst Corp., the Chronicle has a biased outlook reflecting that of capitalist William Randolph Hearst Jr.

To understand why this is so vital, read the Village Voice articles (May 21, 1991, June 25, 1991) in the Sterling C. Evans Library on the "October Surprise" allegations. Then read the July 8, 1991, editorial in the Houston Chronicle that strongly ridicules the allegations and their sources.

The July 8 editorial overlooked substantial evidence in the Voice, U.S. Senator Al Gore's resolution seeking an official investigation, and even ignored an article in that same day's Chronicle, in which Congressman Lee Hamilton says the allegations are "exceedingly serious" and called for an investigation.

Not coincidentally, a recent column by Hearst in the Chronicle openly supported President Bush, allegedly involved in both the "October Surprise" and the Iran-Contra scandals. Clearly, we can't expect objective or probing coverage by the Chronicle on the incredible "October Surprise" story.

To alleviate this, I will give some examples of where "alternative" and investigative news sources can be found. Be careful, however, as any source can have a bias.

Some very good progressive/liberal sources available in the Evans Library include The Nation, The Progressive, Mother Jones and The Guardian. While progressive journals tend to do the best investigative journalism, the ultra-conservative National Review contains some information not always found elsewhere.

Media watchdog groups exist whose sole purpose is to expose the biases and correct the mistakes of the "mainstream" media. "Lies Of Our Times" focuses on the strongly pro-Israeli and other biases of the New York Times. Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, a similar group, publishes "EXTRA!" From another angle, the Media Research Center's "Media Watch" purports to uncover liberal news biases.

For investigative Texas reporting, the Texas Observer (also in Evans) is tops. The Austin Chronicle, Dallas Observer and

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Polemicist (available at the University of Texas) are free weeklies. The Opinion Page of The Battalion presents alternative viewpoints to the A&M administration, TCA cable and Battalion articles.

One more important source doing sharp investigative reporting is the weekly "In These Times." Call 1-800-435-0715 for a free sample copy.

While alternative views from within a country are healthy and necessary, views from outside a country are useful, too. For instance, the rest of the world has a different vantage point of U.S. foreign policy actions (like Operation Desert Slaughter).

There are English versions of many foreign-based newspapers and magazines in Evans. Be forewarned, however, as some are censored or controlled by their governments.

Other exciting sources of information also available right here on the A&M campus are the computer newsgroup networks, which are accessible to all students, staff and faculty.

There are about 1,000 different newsgroups discussing every topic imaginable. There are newsgroups devoted to A&M (recently dominated by MTV postings), the environment, Monty Python, computers, Austin, politics, vegetarianism, sports, guns and many different cultures. I'm told you can also start other newsgroups.

Many of the newsgroups are accessible and receive postings from all over the world, while some are limited to the United States, Texas or just A&M. I have used the Active-L newsgroup for Battalion columns, and to receive free information about malathion (which Bryan is spraying unannounced in the middle of the night for mosquito control).

You will need to go to a computer help desk on campus to learn how to access the networks, post listings and get printouts. Using the networks is free up to a certain point on student accounts.

There are numerous other sources of alternative information available in print form, including Utne Reader and Z Magazine, as well as sources in commercial radio, short wave radio, and video mediums.

Recognizing the wide variety of information sources available, you need not and should not limit yourself to mainstream news sources, which as a rule repeat the official White House administration position. The standard media outlets may be more easily accessible, but they do not make possible a truly informed citizenry, which is, as Thomas Jefferson wrote, the best defense of democracy.

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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. There is no guarantee letters will appear. Letters may be brought to 216 Reed McDonald, sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111 or can be faxed to 845-5408.

Worsham's views on issues are off-base

EDITOR:

Michael Worsham: The name produces feelings of pride for those poor souls who have trouble finding and supporting a point and feelings of fear for those who read The Battalion. After reading several of Worsham's "articles" I decided I just couldn't sit still and let him repeatedly subject me to his unintelligible tripe without some sort of reaction. So here it is; for what it's worth.

In your article in The Battalion on July 12, you mention black Americans being "victims of the United States' economic draft." I have had numerous history classes and political science classes, and I have never run across any mention of an "economic draft" for blacks.

With decaying societal morals, the last hope black Americans have is to be victimized by the government and forced to enlist.

Hey, Michael; what about the white guys and the brown guys and the yellow guys and any other color serving in the armed services I may be leaving out? Are they victims as well or are they exceptions to your ridiculously moronic point? Do you think Gen. Colin Powell would want to be lumped into your hasty categorization of minority victims?

When those young men and women sign on the dotted line and swear to lay down their lives to protect their country and democracy, they are all the same color. The U.S. armed services enlists citizens and allows them to go as far as their individual abilities will carry them. If they serve domestically or if they should end up in a foreign country to defend a democratic country from ruthless greed and aggression, then so be it. That's what they chose to do, and that's what they're paid for.

You also refer to the military operation in the Middle East as a "massacre" for oil. Wrong. Desert Storm was a military action to remove a hostile aggressor from a democratic country. Saddam Hussein wanted something that did not belong to him, and we wouldn't let him have it.

Anyway, after negotiations failed, Hussein knew the risks involved and subjected himself and his people to the greatest military power on earth. I would challenge you to speak to a very good friend of mine who served proudly and honorably in Desert Storm. He is black, and he is hardly a victim. He also is upset at the publicity that a WHITE conscientious objector received while he and other BLACKS were upholding their oaths and serving their country in the Saudi Arabian desert.

He couldn't get into college, but he stayed away from drugs. He enlisted and served his country and now the Army is rewarding him by paying for him to go to college. Help! He's being victimized! Please ...

You said the NAACP has "its hands full" considering the nomination of Clarence Thomas. Michael; the president nominates and the Senate confirms. All the NAACP can do is consider. What's the problem?

As far as your boring, bleeding heart dribble about Luther L. Taylor and his unfortunate situation, I have one word — phooey. Ron Cobb was attempting to bribe legislators. Taylor wasn't singled out. Taylor took the bribe. Taylor broke the law. Taylor goes to jail. Oh, I'm sorry, Michael, he's black. DISCRIMINATION! I guess it's obvious. If you're white and take a bribe, you're a criminal, but if you're black and take a bribe, you're a helpless victim of a discriminating criminal system.

Get real! Stings like this have been going on for years. A good example is that of John DeLorean.

You say we should solve this victimization through "intense activism like the 1960s" and "instill the racial equality synonymous with true democracy." Golly Mike, what a swell idea. If you remember, the protesting of the 1960s forced the government to intervene regularly and quite often violently. The 1960s ideals of peace, love and understanding, free love and excessive drug use don't mesh with modern-day realities like gang violence and AIDS.

Michael, you may be one of the last of a diminishing breed. It is admirable, but I think your words may be falling upon deaf ears. Preach your ideals to those who will listen and with action, and a lot of luck, you may see results. But put them in The Battalion, and you will see opposition.

Gary P. Carroll '90



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