

EDITORIALS

The following opinions are a consensus of The Battalion's opinion staff and senior editors.

Families at fault

Asian successes show failures start at home

A habit has developed in the process of criticizing and renovating America's public school systems. Politicians and much of the general public blame our students' plummeting performance level on teachers, school districts, neighborhoods and money distribution. While all of these variables are significant, it is time for families to take more responsibility.



Researchers at the University of Michigan recently conducted a study that focused on the academic achievements of the children of immigrants from Southeast Asia. The study shows public schools are not solely to blame for students' poor performance.

The researchers studied 536 students from 200 Indochinese families. The average time the families had lived in the United States was 3 1/2 years. Some of the families had spent months in refugee camps. Few spoke English. The students attended low-income, urban schools with marginal academic programs.

Given such handicaps, one in four of these children score A averages and half sport B averages. In math and science, where their lack of English proficiency hinders them less they excel. This study demonstrates the ability of any student to perform well given a less than ideal situation.

The average American student fails to boast such achievements despite greater opportunities, and Michigan researchers blame the lack of importance our culture places on schooling. "It is clear that the U.S. educational

system can work — if the requisite familial and social supports are provided for the students outside school," the researchers concluded.

They emphasized the need for American families "to become committed to the education of their children" and the importance of the family's role in motivating students.

Asian cultural and family values place an enormous amount of stress on the education of their young. These children, along with the help of their families, surpass their American counterparts in hours spent studying by up to three times.

While the underprivileged immigrants regard learning as an opportunity, American students generally lack this attitude because it is not handed down to them through the family.

It is time for such families to take an interest in the education of their children. Parent-teacher meetings are infamously poorly attended, discipline is left to the school district and more time is spent before the television than the books.

While school quality and other social ills contribute to education failures, the solutions start at home.

Until attitudes change, no amount of busing, refunding, court decisions, or rewritten curriculums will improve poor performance.

Teachers are not babysitters or substitute parents. No matter how ideal the educational environment may be, the only way a young person will learn is if the desire to do so has been planted at home.

U.S. bashing

Official's remarks show shared racism

The inflammatory remarks made Monday by a senior Japanese legislator offers a perfect example of how the relationship between the United States and the island nation has soured.

Cooler heads on both sides of the Pacific must make sure that the citizens of both countries remember they are competitors, not enemies.

Yoshio Sakurachi, speaker of the lower house of Japan's parliament, said America's economic problems stemmed from workers who are too lazy and illiterate. Though he later retracted the statement, he showed perfectly how pervasive the stereotypes exist in both countries.

To many Americans, Japanese are little, slant-eyed workaholics who refuse to play fair. To many Japanese, Americans are uneducated, lazy whiners who want to play instead of work.

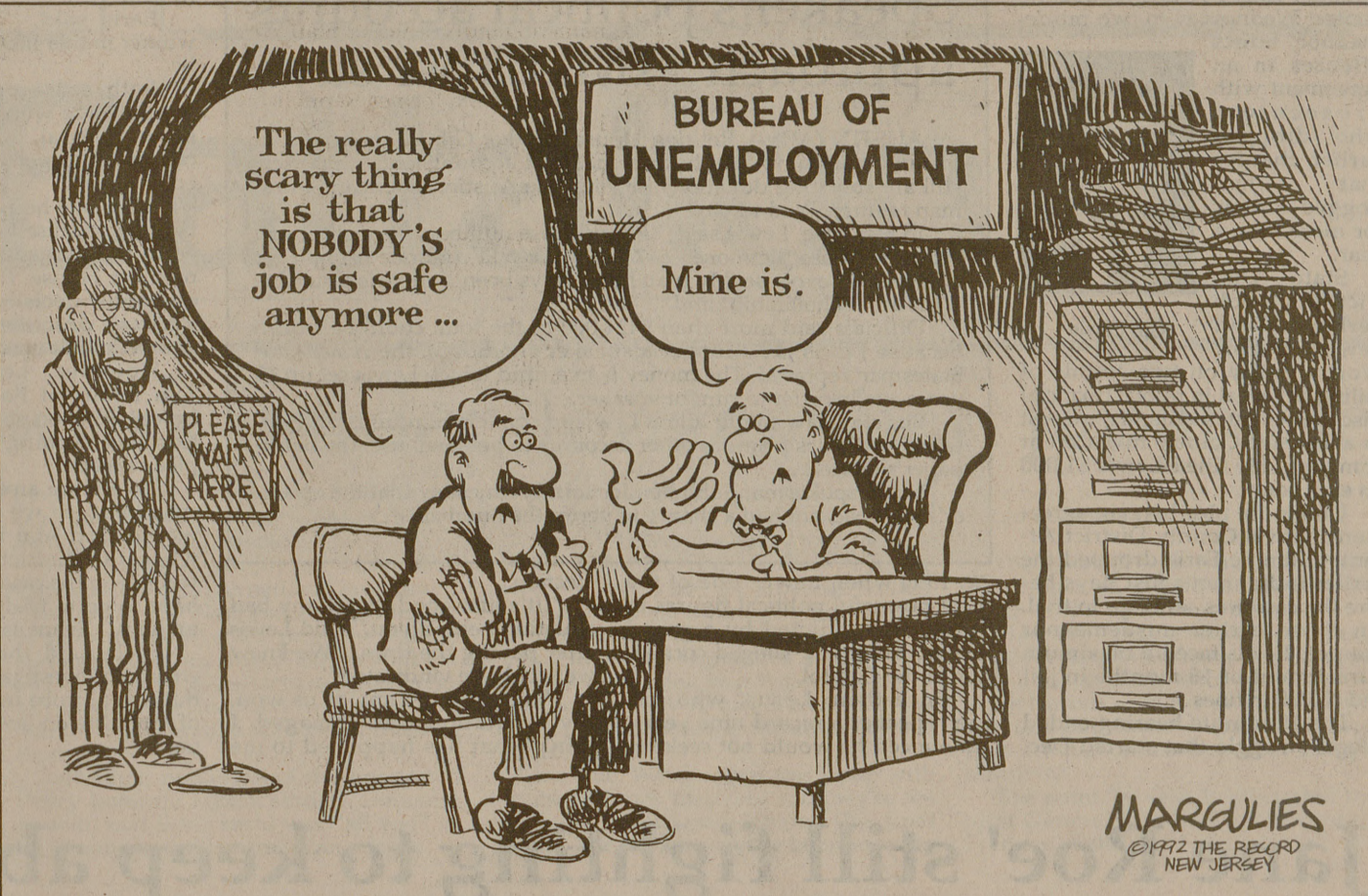
These attitudes detract from the very real trade problems between the countries.

People of different nationalities must learn to deal with each other on an even level, without the bigotry and prejudice their differences cause. Only then can they solve their differences.

Younger generations, who do not bear the deep scars caused by World War II, must take the lead in this effort. Texas A&M students, as well as college students at universities in the United States and Japan, must set an example.

Without a doubt, trade problems continue to polarize the two countries. There are grains of truth in the criticisms leveled by both nations.

But the citizens cannot continue to bash each other. They must attempt to understand one another.



Reflections of racism, hate

Government cannot legislate the goals of Martin Luther King

THIRTY YEARS ago a man was in the spotlight of America. He was not a politician or a soldier. He was not a singer or an actor. In fact, he was not really anything special.

He was just a man.

But he was a man who dared to dream. He dreamt of a place where things such as freedom, equality and justice were not lofty ideals, but a way of life. And he did more than just dream, he spoke of this dream passionately and eloquently.

In so doing, he inspired others to dream as well. Perhaps more importantly, he inspired them to look beyond their past and toward their future.

For these things, he was killed. This man was, of course, Martin Luther King Jr.

THIS PAST WEEK we celebrated his life as is appropriate in our modern world. We read his speeches. Plaques were dedicated. Streets were renamed. Specials were seen on television about his life. And now we will go on with life as usual.

Occasionally, a new piece of legislation, a new court ruling, or a new proposal will be made to counter racism. Without fail, a commentator or speechmaker will say that this new thing is the result of King's leadership, dream and foresight.

And yet the the hate continues to grow and the violence seems to worsen. Just four days ago in Denver, violence erupted. People were injured and property destroyed. All because of a difference in skin pigmentation.

EXAMPLES can be found closer to home. In Houston, several were killed

King left a dream of basing who we are as people not on what others say or even by where our ancestry lay.

Tuesday, race being the main issue. In San Antonio, ethnic gang violence is erupting like never before, with innocent victims caught in the crossfire.

And we ask "Why is it that these things happen?" Don't we have laws and rules to stop these things? Isn't this the '90's? Why?

BECAUSE at every point we have forgotten what Dr. King meant. We forget what he lived for and died for. It was something beyond race and culture. It was about respect, compassion and love. Things that cannot be legislated or governed.

But unfortunately, that is the easy way out. It is easier to change the words on a piece of paper than it is to change people. And sadly, no matter what laws we make, the racism and hatred and violence will continue until we change ourselves.

It is a change that must occur in all of us — white, black, Asian, Hispanic and on.

You see, racism is based on fear. Not a fear of other cultures or ideas, but a fear of ourselves. When we open ourselves up to something new, a mirror is placed before us. It is a mirror that can show us our weaknesses and faults. They are things that no one wants to see.

INSTEAD of confronting and learning from these weaknesses, we build up walls to protect who we perceive ourselves to be. It is easier to hate that which is different and challenging.

However, this mirror will also show us our strengths and the heights to which we can soar. By finding the strengths in ourselves and learning from the strengths (and even weak-

nesses) of those who are different, we will grow.

No matter what we do, no matter what laws we create, no matter what rulings the courts make, we cannot force individuals to look into this mirror. We can place it in front of them, but they do not have to look. It is a personal decision.

When the decision is made and we face who we are, the walls will come down. The hatred and violence will cease.

Martin Luther King Jr. did not leave for us a legacy of convoluted laws and unfair legislation that only inspire more racism and violence. He did not quote numbers. He did not advocate placing one group's culture ahead, or separate, of another's. In fact the opposite is true.

KING SPOKE of dignity and freedom and equality. He spoke of peace.

The legacy he left for us was a dream. A dream of making tomorrow better than today. A dream of basing who we are as people not on what others say or even by where our ancestry lay, but by what is inside our hearts.

WE CAN be upset when we see racism or hear of its many forms. We can literally fight back.

Or we can honor a man who fought for us all and work toward making his dream a reality.

We must lay aside our petty squabbling over the number of past injustices perpetrated by either "side" and work together toward building a future for us all.

It is only in that way in which the dream of Dr. King will be realized.

Michael Quinn Sullivan is a senior English major

Letters to the Editor

Ags: Don't support the death penalty

A survey on television Tuesday claimed the 89 percent of the people, all living in this area, supported the death penalty. This, I feel, is the most ridiculous statistic. A college town should not have that high a percentage of morons living in this area. I have not yet heard a single reason from its supporters. Its very existence does more harm than good to society.

Many say that the death penalty would be a deterrent to murder. Now think about this. Murder is not a crime one commits even if they could get away with it. It is a crime of emotion or it is one committed by a person who is psychologically unstable. No law will deter any of these people from committing it.

Others seem locked onto the idea that the death penalty will save us a lot of money. What people don't realize is that it costs thousands of extra dollars in legal fees to get a person the death penalty. If savings are what they desire, then why not exterminate all animals. Then let's start doing away with away with everyone on welfare. And finally let's kill all students on

financial aid. the money could be used elsewhere.

There lies another basic and much more serious danger in instituting the death penalty. It is a serious blow to the struggle for civil liberties. It gives the U.S. government the kind of power British kings possessed when this country was founded. Once the government receives the right to carry out the death penalty, it can start to exterminate the other undesirables of society.

The final and most blatant blow to the death penalty idea is that it does not condemn murder. Instead, the penalty endorses it. A psychopath looking at a society that feels no remorse in putting on e of its own to death would naturally assume the same nonchalant attitude.

John Prashant Class of '93

Senior wins t-sip encounter

Hey Ags. What would you have done? On my way to dear old Aggieland last week, I encountered on the highway one of those irritating but sometimes unavoidable people, a t.u.

alumnus. This Longhorn was middle-aged, bald, and driving a Dodge(it figures) truck. I unknowingly irritated him in my packed-to-the-brim Hyundai Excel(hey, it's economical!) But, it wasn't my driving that peeved him, it was my Texas Aggies window sticker on the back window. I first noticed him after I had to pass him—he was one of those slow drivers in the fast lane. He didn't mind being passed by everyone else, but in my rear view mirror I saw his expression change. He revved up that ol' Dodge and pulled up to me in the slow lane, shaking what I thought at first to be a waving hand. Being an Aggie, I thought he was just being friendly, so I hastily waved back. My apparent lack of interest in his hand made him turn red and shake all the more what I finally realized to be a Longhorn sign. Then, satisfied that I had seen his Longhorn, he got ahead of me and slowed down again, watching for a reaction in his rear view mirror and still holding up that stupid Longhorn sign. I've never come across a Longhorn quite so brazen. And all of this just because he saw I was an Aggie! Well, I started planning what to do about it. When I saw that he was stuck behind another slow driver, I made my move. It was a while later so, being a Longhorn, his low attention span kicked in and he was watching traffic instead of me. But, he just didn't realize that an Aggie cannot allow a T-sip to have the last word! One of my proudest moments was

driving by this guy and speeding away, playing hullabaloo-caneck-caneck on my horn and giving the "gig em" sign-smiling, of course-I am an Aggie! He saw me a little too late for a good come back, and I had to laugh at his feeble attempts in the window. We both knew I had won. I don't play football, but I swear I heard a cannon fire... or was that a Dodge muffler?

Elizabeth Hensley Class of '92

Have an opinion? Express it!

The Battalion is interested in hearing from its readers.

All letters are welcome. Letters must be signed and must include classification, address and a daytime phone number for verification purposes. Anonymous letters will not be published.

The Battalion reserves the right to edit all letters for length style and accuracy. There is no guarantee the letters will appear. Letters may be brought to 013 Reed McDonald, sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111 or can be faxed to 845-5408.