

"My volunteers have given me the green light..."

EDITORIALS

Defeating AIDS

Testing crucial for everyone's sake

As activists protest what they call inadequate government funding to combat the deadly specter of AIDS, several organizations in the Brazos Valley provide free HIV antibody testing in order to hinder the progress of AIDS here at home.

Both anonymous and confidential testing are available at little or no cost to the Bryan-College Station community. Anonymous testing provides the individual with a false name and destroys records after 90 days, but students do not receive a copy of test results. Confidential testing provides students with a copy of the test results. Contrary to popular rumors, neither of these testing methods places test results in a student's school records.

HIV-testing in the Brazos Valley

is provided by Planned Parenthood and Brazos Valley Health Services for free, and at the health department for a five dollar fee. In addition, Brazos Health Services provides testing on campus on Tuesdays through the Beutal Health Center.

If you plan on engaging in any sexual activities, get the facts.

If you are concerned that you might have contracted HIV, get tested. It is quick, free and relatively painless.

While "safe sex" is one method of AIDS prevention, monogamy and abstinence are the most effective. However, monogamy only works if both parties are completely open with each other -- and if both parties have been tested.

No dissent allowed in Aggieland

Only the unsure fear the free expression of opinion

For all three of you that haven't noticed, Texas A&M is an extremely conservative school. While nothing is inherently wrong with being conservative, I don't happen to be one.

And as someone with ideas differing from the majority opinion on this campus I am often led to protest in one way or another certain things that occur here.

All well and good, you might say, it's certainly your constitutionally guaranteed right. Unfortunately, it's not that easy at A&M.

I have only lived here about a year, but in that short time I have been overwhelmed by the fear and opposition to protest that exists here. This university is permeated by an atmosphere of mandatory conformity which is just downright unhealthy.

Let me be very clear about this issue -- this is not an article comparing conservative and liberal viewpoints. I am not talking about the fact that most students hold conservative beliefs. Rather, I am referring to the reactions of conservative students to other students who do not share their beliefs.

What worries me is the difficulty students with liberal viewpoints encounter when trying to express themselves. The difficulties I am referring to even include physical violence, or more often threats of violence. Obviously, fear of being physically hurt is a pretty good deterrent against protest.

Aside from physical violence, protesters meet with attempts to stifle dissidence in other ways. Signs are ripped from people's hands at protests regularly. Literature expressing liberal viewpoints is stolen from tables and boxes where it is being freely distributed. Indeed, the distribution boxes themselves have even been stolen.

So, you might say, it's a conservative campus, you've got to expect such actions. Perhaps you do expect it here, but you certainly shouldn't have to. The fact that people



SHAWN RALSTON
Columnist

attempting to express their political views often fear some type of retaliation is a fact that should embarrass every student.

People who believe in the American system of government do not attempt to stifle protest, whether they are liberal or conservative. For campus conservatives, in particular, A&M's stifling atmosphere should be something to worry about. In order to truly understand and adhere to a particular belief system people need to understand options and alternatives. A system with only one viewpoint allowed is not likely to have strong well-informed supporters. It is to everyone's advantage to have well thought out debates going on our campus at all times. This isn't often possible at A&M, where the words "it's a tradition" seem to be enough to quell any dissent.

If a group fears expression of any dissenting point of view, it makes that group's own viewpoint appear very weak indeed. A&M conservatives, if they are thinking conservatives, have nothing at all to fear from the expression of liberal viewpoints on campus.

If you don't like what I am saying about an issue, engage in the expression of your own opinion somehow. If you disagree with protesters, get your own sign and march right next to them. But know that attempting to prevent another person from expressing his or her opinions is a disgusting and odious act unworthy of anyone who believes in democratic government.

It is amazing to me that I actually felt compelled to write that previous sentence. It's something we have all known was a principle of our society since we were in kindergarten. Why do A&M students seem to have such a hard time with that idea?

As Bonfire season fast approaches, I expect another outbreak of nasty run-ins between protesters and the drunken revelers protecting the sacred log pile. For this occasion, maybe we should recall a short remark made by Thomas Jefferson. He once said, "A little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing." Yeah, but I bet he never tried to convince A&M students of that idea.

Ralston is a graduate student in English

Unfounded notion

A&M, B-CS no 'cultural vacuum'

To hear many speak, one would think that Texas A&M is a cultural vacuum when in fact, culture abounds both on and off campus. Like other large and reputable universities, ours has become a popular place for the arts.

The MSC alone boasts three visual art galleries. Just last summer, the University Center gallery hosted an exhibit of Ansel Adams prints.

Musical groups playing around town run the gamut of styles. From choral to gospel to folk to acid rock, someone around here performs it. The regional symphony orchestra performs right here on campus.

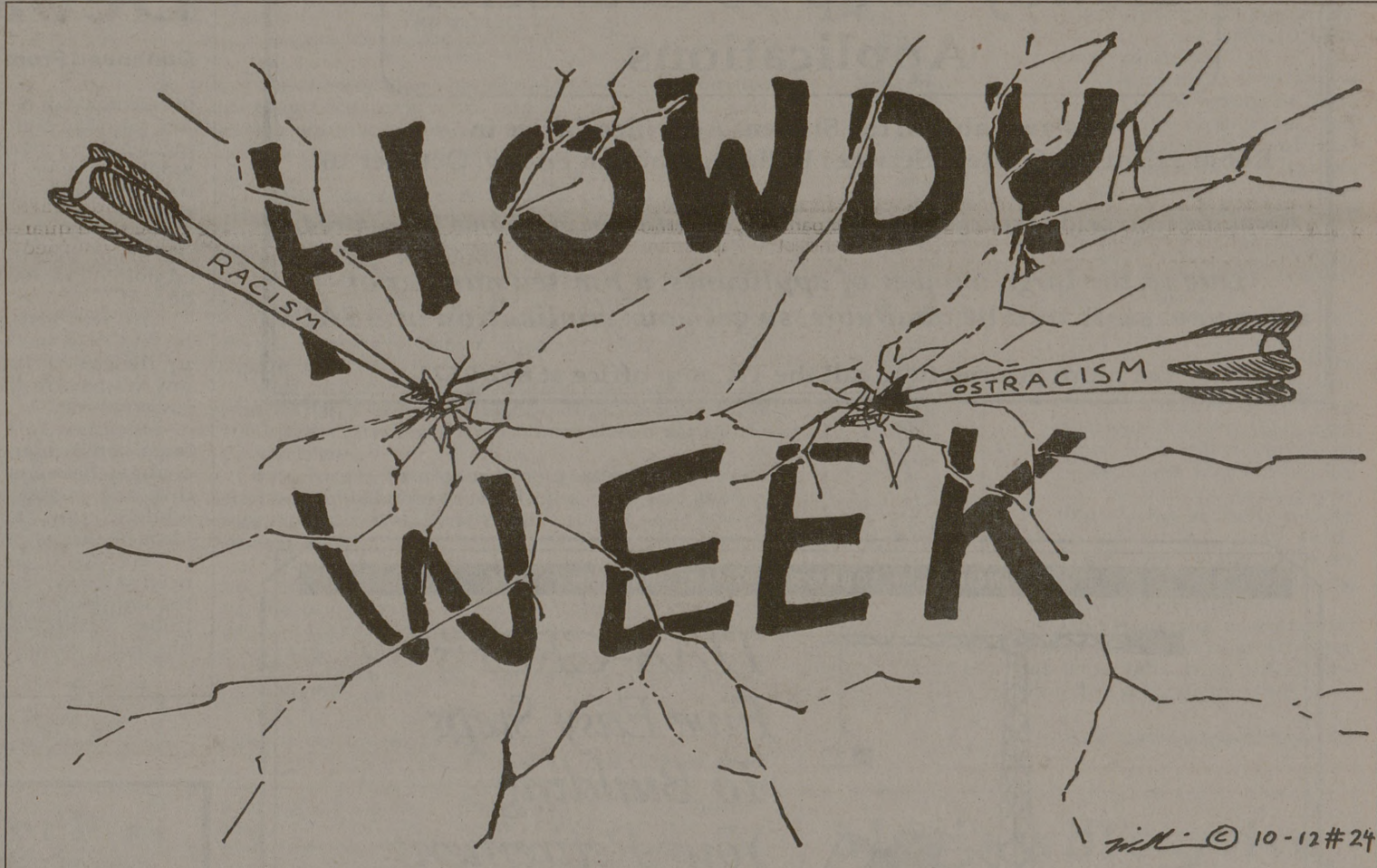
If that weren't enough, nationally and internationally-known artists often stop in College Station for concerts. Weekly, one form of musical concert or another is presented on campus.

Students can view or participate in several student plays each semester. They can also see some of the biggest names in opera, ballet, even comedy as traveling groups stop in Rudder Auditorium.

Unfortunately, students often don't take advantage of these opportunities. The arts represent the expression of our common humanity. To participate in art, as a viewer or creator, is to share personal truth.

Besides, it's fun. Strolling through a gallery can be a relaxing yet interesting afternoon break. Performances make great dates.

We should be proud of the fact that our community hosts such varied and frequent cultural events. However, we should also continue expanding cultural opportunities by encouraging more students to enjoy the benefits.



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MAIL CALL

Fraternity responds to charges of racism

In the Mail Call section of The Battalion on Monday, Oct. 12, a letter was printed from Joe Salem which stated his feelings about a party which was given by Sigma Alpha Epsilon.

Salem is a member of the band, The Love Squad, which played at our party on Oct. 2. In his letter, Salem referred to the theme of our Jungle Party as racist, and he believes that our party signified slave hunts in the African jungle.

First and foremost, Sigma Alpha Epsilon, both at Texas A&M and nationally, does not condone, nor premeditate any racially motivated actions or activities.

In fact, Sigma Alpha Epsilon, along with other fraternities, is comprised of members representing a variety of ethnic groups and backgrounds.

The members of Sigma Alpha Epsilon are leaders both on and off the

Texas A&M University campus. We have brothers that are involved on campus in the Fish Camp program, Student Government, Orientation Leaders, and many other student organizations which strive to make the campus a more unified one rather than a separated one.

Off-campus, our brothers work with the Big Brother program helping to guide young children and better their lives.

We also participate in an annual ChiliFest with the Muscular Dystrophy Association to raise money for Jerry's Kids.

On the night of Oct. 2, Sigma Alpha Epsilon did in fact host a Jungle Party in which the participants dressed in a variety of costumes.

For Salem to blatantly associate our party with slave hunts is both unrealistic and completely unsubstantiated.

Salem obviously knows nothing about our chapter, or the fraternity system as a whole.

I do not understand how a person could be so adamantly opposed to a situation, yet still participate in the party.

The members of Sigma Alpha Epsilon do sincerely apologize for the misinterpretation of our party.

We will, in the future, strive to plan our activities so that this does not happen again.

Michael A. Hebert
Class of '94
President, Sigma Alpha Epsilon

Cost cutters should consider the disabled

I would like to make a few comments to Jeff Magill concerning his guest column in Friday's Battalion.

Magill, how would you like to open dozens of doors a day in a chair that has two wheels and can be precariously unstable at times? If you have not tried this in a while, sir, I think it would do you good to do so.

I am not in a wheelchair, but one of my best friends is. I borrowed his chair one day at a hotel in Dallas and went for a spin in the hotel to see what it was like. Every door I came to involved a complete balancing act in order for me to get through it.

Most people that are confined to a chair are not there by their own devices; they would much rather be physically able, but God in his infinite wisdom placed them in that situation, so they must learn to cope with it.

They cannot take two Tylenol and be better in the morning. They must learn to handle their situation for the rest of their lives.

I realize the fact that one way to streamline an establishment, such as a company, small business or even a university, is to cut costs, get rid of certain wastes, and other things I agree with, but there are a few extra things we all need to come to a realization about.

As much trouble as these people already have to go through in their lives,

such as urinary catheters, drinking 1.5 gallons of liquid a day, avoiding bed sores, and other personal things, it would seem like it would not take our World Class University a whole extra lot of time and money to make life for these people a tad bit easier.

Think about it. And seriously, Magill, you, and all of us for that matter, need to try the "wheelchair thing."

Charles L. Ake, Jr.
Class of '94

Strict abortion-based voting ignorant

This letter is in response to Damian J. Krahl's preposterous letter that was printed in the Oct. 12 Battalion, and it goes for anyone who is thinking of voting straight-ticket.

I cannot believe that someone could be so incredibly closed-minded when it comes to choosing the leaders of the world around him.

I can say that, yes, I do feel that the abortion issue should be left up to the individual and is not an issue that a body of nine justices or even 535 congressmen can decide for an entire nation.

It is an issue that is simply too close to the heart. There are too many different sides to the issue for abortion to be

viewed as a black and white determinant.

When I vote on Nov. 3, I am not going to take any news article to the voting booth with me.

I am going to choose the best candidate for the job, whether they be pro-choice or pro-life.

I do not allow simple, stupid, one-sided issues interfere with my judgment of who would be the best leader. I think we should each look at the leadership qualities of the candidates and then decide.

Aaron M. Herndon
Class of '96

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The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows in the Mail Call section. Letters must be 300 words or less and include author's name, Social Security number, class, and phone number.

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