

EDITORIALS

Insurance injustice

Benefits cut after illness diagnosed

The Justice Department is scheduled to file a memorandum urging the Supreme Court not to review an extremely important case involving the reduction of the insurance benefits of persons diagnosed with costly illnesses such as cancer and AIDS.

The case involves a Houston man, John W. McGann, whose maximum health insurance benefits were cut from \$1 million to \$5,000 after he was diagnosed with AIDS.

Under a 1974 law companies which serve as their own insurers are allowed to slash employee coverage after the employee contracts a disease.

Statistics indicate that more than half of all employees in the United States work for companies which self-insure, or use their own assets to pay health insurance claims.

Often employees are not even aware of this fact because their employers contract with insurance companies to handle the paperwork.

The major benefits of self insurance for companies include the fact that there are very few regulations on such plans and that a company is exempt from state taxes on premiums.

The Justice Department position against reviewing the law has been opposed by the American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association and the National Commission on AIDS, among others.

This case appears to be little more than a breach of contract, and would be considered as such under state insurance regulations.

However, since a self-insured company does not fall under state regulations and, indeed, is practically unregulated, the company in question was acting within its legal rights according to the Justice Department.

If the Supreme Court refuses to review this case, they will be paving the way for further abuses like the revocation of McGann's insurance benefits. It is too late for John McGann, who died in June of 1991.

However, it is imperative that the Supreme Court review this law or that the Congress amend it to prevent such flawed insurance agreements from hurting the millions who are covered by them.

Allowing self-insured companies to slash benefits after the fact of illness amounts to nothing more than condoning bad-faith contracts and must be stopped.

Ideas, not actions define racism

Unintentional acts minor next to malicious motives

Racism comes in many colors. Once it was a simple issue, as plain as black and white. These days it's a gray matter, requiring careful thought to avoid inadvertently exhibiting racism simply out of ignorance.

Last week an A&M fraternity came under fire, accused of racist activity at a jungle-themed party where potential members, called "pledges," painted their faces black and carried spears. One outside observer said the fraternity's active members chased the pledges around, re-enacting an African slave-hunt.

After the fraternity's activities were reported in The Battalion, the proverbial poop hit the fan, causing a big stink. The Interfraternity Council (IFC) was inundated with calls, and The Battalion with letters, denouncing, condemning, supporting and defending the fraternity's actions.

The fraternity was fined \$1,000, and it received sanctions placing the fraternity on probation through 1994 and eliminating mixers for 1993. The sanctions must be approved by University administrators.

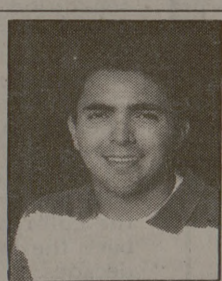
Discussing the events of the week, an IFC representative said the fraternity members were not to blame. He said the fraternity merely exhibited an ignorance of racial sensitivities, common in today's melting pot society. He suggested that the University was to blame; maybe even parents were responsible for the actions of the fraternity members at the party. Education, he said, must be provided to prevent future racial indiscretions.

Maybe he's right. My parents never taught me about racial differences. They taught me to say "please" and "thank you" and to be polite to others. But they never told me that black people and white people were different.

They taught me to consider other people's feelings before I said or did anything that might offend them. But they never told me there was a difference between Latinos and Asians.

In fact, my parents never referred to people as "Mexicans" or "Anglos." It was on a trip to Georgia where I learned that some people were considered different because they were born with different skin colors.

I was 10 years old when a 14-year-old boy called me a Puerto Rican idiot. I was completely caught off guard. I stood there, quietly wondering what he meant. I had heard the word "idiot," but what did he mean by "Puerto Rican?" My mom and dad once told me that my grandma's mom



ROBERT VASQUEZ
Columnist

moved to Texas from Mexico. Did that mean that I was Puerto Rican? My education in racial differences grew slowly from there.

I've heard, surely, all the jokes about Mexicans. "What did the Mexican do with his first 50-cent piece?"

"He married her."

"What is the most confusing day in Mexico?"

"Father's day."

I've been called everything from "spic-and-span" to "white trash." And that was by my friends and family. I usually laugh at the jokes. Do you know why? Because they're usually funny — and often too ignorant to be taken seriously. Raised as I was, and talking with the friends I choose, race is usually not an issue. I've met a lot of people from various backgrounds who consider race a "non-issue."

I don't look for racism, I often overlook it; some might say too often. But I know it's still out there. Standing in line to use a phone on campus, I once heard two guys, standing two feet behind me, begin telling a Mexican joke.

I couldn't understand it because they were drunk, and though their slurring was clearly audible, their words were unclear. I turned to see who they were — maybe I knew them. They started laughing and ran off. I didn't laugh. It wasn't funny. All I saw was their white T-shirts with Greek letters on the back.

Given the problems caused by the jungle-themed party, fraternities are wondering what's allowed anymore. Should they cancel Fiesta parties? Is an ethnic theme necessarily an insult to that ethnic people?

I say no. What people wear and mimic doesn't concern me; the ideas and sentiments promoted and encouraged by a large group of peers does. Those two drunken sprinters learned sometime, somewhere to tell racial jokes behind the backs of strangers. As the fraternity representative said, education is important.

When my mother was a child, racism meant watching her father being turned away from a restaurant as the family waited, wishing to eat there.

These days racism means listening to jokes and wondering more about motives than actions. The gradual decline of racism displays a growing sense of awareness, but racism still stinks.

Exactly what is it that the various ethnic groups want? Pretty much what the fraternities have expressed by quickly correcting a thoughtless incident. Consideration, understanding and respect — that's what everyone wants. Why? Because they're only human, just like you and I.

Vasquez is a senior journalism major

MAIL CALL

Will take education, action to end racism

I am tired of the unnecessary hostility which lurks on the Texas A&M campus. I am tired of people disliking others simply because of the color of their skin. I am tired of racist remarks and "racist themes."

It is time for us to discontinue this hostility. Racism is unnecessary, insensitive, and damaging. Furthermore, it hurts all people and its effects can be permanent.

Additionally, I have vowed to no longer remain silent about this negative situation. I will educate myself and my peers so that we can conquer racism and not allow it to continue to conquer us, because I strongly believe that "If you are not part of the solution, then you must be part of the problem."

Further, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. strived to unify all races and died attempting to demolish racism, but as we know, it continues to exist. Dr. King, your deed will not be held in vain. I, and many others, will continue to spread your ideals and philosophies in a nonviolent manner until these malicious walls ... walls of racism ... come tumbling down.

Tamica Gaines,
President,
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
Student Coordinating Committee

Unfair to jump to conclusions of guilt

In reference to the past week's letters in Mail Call, I feel that many people are jumping the gun in accusing Sigma Alpha Epsilon of being racist. When I hear people who were not even present at the party jumping on the bandwagon

of accusation, I have a difficult time believing that they (the accusers) know what went on at the party.

By no means am I defending Sigma Alpha Epsilon, but as a non-Greek student here at A&M, I feel that as Aggies none of us have the right to charge anyone of being a blatant racist without substantial evidence. The social function at the house may have had racial undertones, but no one has the right to accuse anyone of the basis of hearsay. Let Joe Salem and the one or two others who were present and complained present their case showing why Sigma Alpha Epsilon is a racist organization.

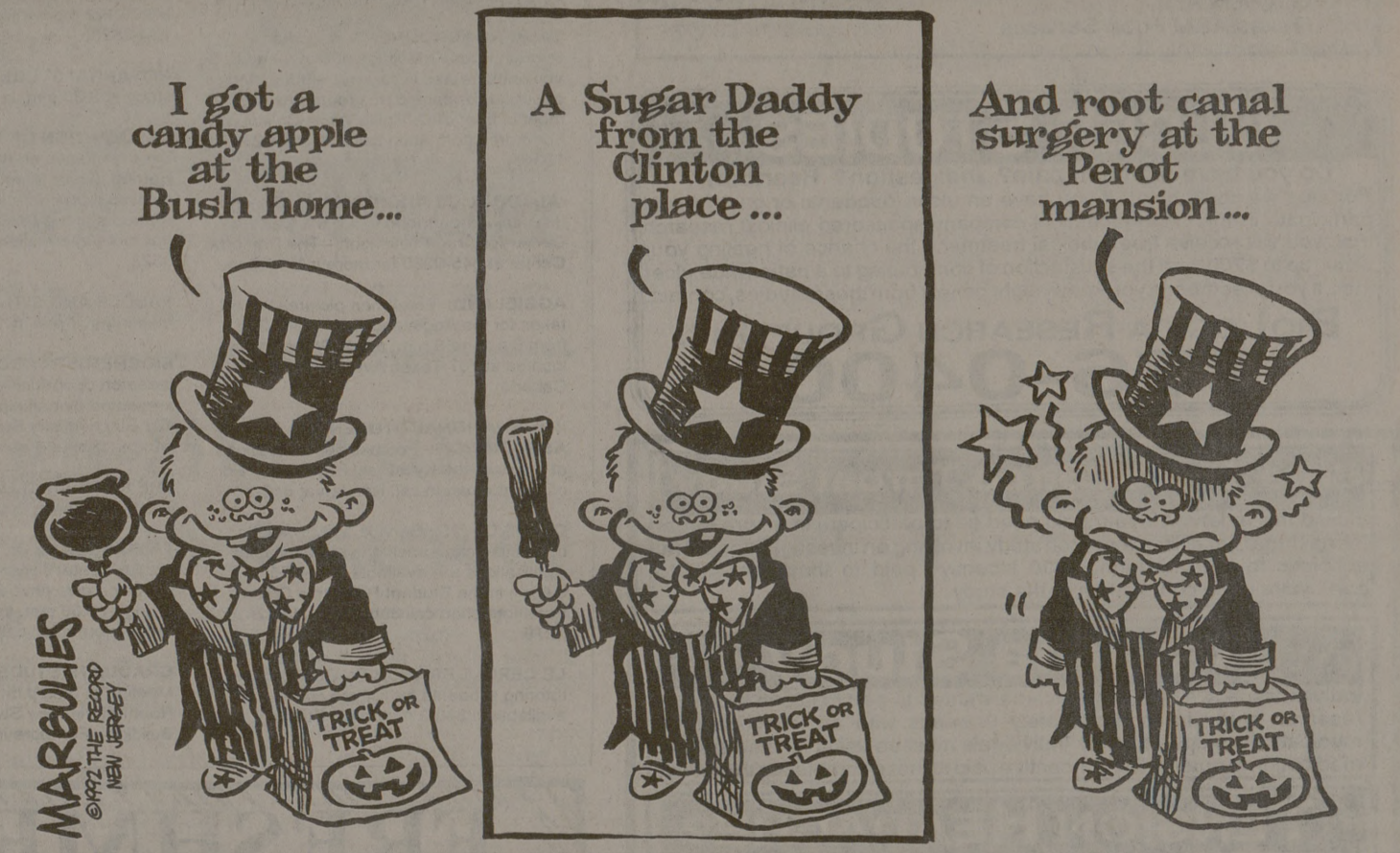
If in fact the party was racially motivated, then I think the fraternity should receive adequate punishment. On the other hand, I also feel that in the meantime the Aggies who were not present at the function should refrain from accusations of racism until the proper action or decision is handed down.

Andy Edwards
Class of '95

Racial hostilities turn to fighting at party

After reading Tiffany McEachern's letter in the Oct. 12 issue, I must say that I am disappointed, but not surprised by the blatant disrespect shown by Aggies, due to an experience I had the night of Oct. 3. I was at a party in Treehouse Village when, all of the sudden, I found myself in the middle of a racial battle zone.

Apparently, two black guys and a white guy were asked to leave the party because they were causing trouble, and they agreed. Well, one guest could not be satisfied with that, so he took it upon himself to bash one of the black guys over the head with a bottle. When the black person retaliated in defense, it started an all out racial war between various other members of the party



who were not even involved in the initial skirmish. I could not believe my eyes. There were about four or five different fights breaking out all down the street! All these stupid drunk guys were walking around without their shirts on cursing and threatening everyone and everything.

After being quite involved in Fish Camp, where we tell the freshman what a diverse and great place this is to be, it ticks me off when a few bad apples give the freshmen the wrong impression of what Texas A&M is. In my opinion, 94 percent of this institution is fine; the other 6 percent need to head the other direction on Highway 6! And one more thing ... I hope you not so pectoral studs caught a cold from walking around without shirts. On the bright side, at least you weren't at yell practice running across the field!

Tiffany Barnes
Class of '94

Christians cannot accept other religions

If one is to follow Christ's teachings, then one must accept the statement that Jesus himself made claiming clearly to be the only way to God. "I am the way,

the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) For me to claim Christianity and yet to also believe that other religions are equal would force me to hold a double standard. On the one hand I believe that Christ is the only way, as he said, and on the other hand I should remain open to believing that there are other ways, as you say that I should? This is a contradiction. I am not one to try to force others to believe as I do, but do not call me "blind" or "intolerant" just because I will not hold to a double standard.

Neil Burselon
Class of '92

Gay advertisement self-contradictory

Yes, there are different things for different people, but who are you to tell the rest of us what is right or wrong? Gays are constantly preaching to society how they are discriminated against and how no one understands them. When you start telling people what they should believe is right or wrong, we believe that you are slightly overstepping your bounds. While we realize that you are entitled to your right of

free speech, we do not believe that you should be telling us how we should believe. Society is made up of many different people; that is what makes our society unique. It is not our goal to put down your lifestyle, or to offend you in any way, but we think that you are creating a double standard. You are constantly stating how society should accept your beliefs and your actions. Now, through the picture published in Wednesday's Battalion it would seem to us that you are trying to force your beliefs upon us. This would seem to go against everything that you stand for.

Kirk Loren Weindorff
Class of '94
Jeff Zander
Class of '95

Accompanied by 17 signatures

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