

EDITORIALS

Resurrect debate team Program vital to world-class status

Five years ago, the speech communication department decided against renewing funding for the debate team. According to Professor Kurt Ritter, the primary objection of administrators centered around what they considered a lack of educational enhancement. Instead, the department threw its support behind the Texas A&M Debate Society, a campus organization.

The official debate team was a traveling squad that competed at campuses around the country. The A&M Debate Society differs from the University-sponsored debate team in that A&M students constitute the society's audience in a public forum. The speech communication department found that the traveling squad spent a lot of money on a few members. In addition, the department thought that the team debated in a manner that was illogical and lacking in persuasive skills — though this style of debate was popular among other competitive collegiate debaters.

Unfortunately, officials went no further in their study; instead, they simply cut the team and opted for the on-campus group.

Though reasons for an on-campus

group exist, the two organizations are not mutually exclusive.

While open to the public, the Texas A&M Debate Society forums are attended primarily by Speech Communication 203 students, who are required to do so. By contrast, official debate team participation would be voluntary and not compulsory.

In the wake of the current budget crunch, officials might argue against the rebuilding of a team. However, Texas Southern University, a smaller school with a smaller budget, has gained international acclaim with its high-profile debate team.

Surely, our University could compete with a smaller budget than that of TSU.

Texas A&M should renew funding for the debate team. Instead of cutting the entire team's funding when the team does not compete in a manner that administrators favor or when the team is not fiscally responsible, the speech communication department should exercise more control over their debate team.

Officials here must realize that a world-class University without a functioning debate team is no world-class University at all.

Give your attitude some latitude New semester offers students chance for new outlook

Attitudes. The word "attitude" often gets a bad rap. It seems most people use the term in a negative sense. For example, when was the last time you heard a person say something like, "Well, 'so-and-so' just has a bad attitude."

Unfortunately, it was probably pretty recent.

But how many of us really know what the word "attitude" means. Philosophically speaking, there are as many definitions as there are individuals. Fortunately, we have Webster and his good ol' dictionary to keep us all on the same track: "attitude - one's disposition, opinion, mental set."

Pretty powerful, personal stuff if you think about it. Truth is, attitudes affect just about every aspect of our lives. Everything from the family and dating relationships we are involved in, to the organizations and clubs we are members of, to our relationships at school and work, and especially in the way we treat people we don't even know.

Think about it for a minute. When was the last time you ignored people because they weren't, in your opinion, "good enough" for you? We do it all the time.

For whatever reason we did not talk to them or sit by them. Maybe we didn't even like them. And yet, we did not even know them.

Was it because these people were too fat or too ugly for us? Is it possible that we do not like them simply because of the Greek letters they are wearing, or the Corps uniform they have on? Maybe it's their religion? Or maybe they have the "wrong" color hair or skin? No, wait, it's the kind of car they drive — or don't drive as the case may be. Or maybe...

Attitudes. Attitudes are either beneficial or detrimental to our relationships with others. The tricky part about attitudes is knowing when your attitude — your opinion, your mental set, your disposition — is hindering your ability to relate to people.

All people. Our mind-set is a powerful tool. But when it is uninformed or misinformed it becomes a dangerous weapon; and this is one weapon we do not need in today's society. There is a simple solution, however: Educate yourself in order to open your mind before you open your mouth.

Hmmm... Sounds logical. Perhaps there is nothing more irritating than an uninformed opinion. Think back to the last time you had a disagreement with someone who had no knowledge or experience on the topic whatsoever.



JULIE POLSTON
Assistant Editor

It probably wasn't too long ago, people do it all the time. More than likely, you were pretty frustrated and probably wanted to ring the person's neck. But wait. Think back to the last time you made somebody want to ring your neck for the very same reason. And we do it all the time.

Humbling, huh? You see, the danger with uneducated opinions is that they begin to dictate what we say and do, and the result is resentment.

As you and I both know, this world has far too many problems already, and we don't need to add resentment to the list. Ironically, some of those problems — especially "people problems" — could be solved simply by a change in attitudes.

Changing one's attitude can be a scary thing. People generally don't enjoy admitting that they need to change something about themselves — especially something as personal as their attitudes.

We don't like to admit that we are wrong, or at least, misinformed. Fortunately for us, there's nothing wrong with being wrong as long as you learn from your mistakes.

Besides, this whole idea of "being wrong and needing to change" is one of those life-long processes, so we might as well get used to it.

Changing an attitude will probably involve becoming more open-minded. For most people, this is really difficult because nobody wants to admit that they are close-minded in the first place.

Fortunately, there is hope — we can educate ourselves. And what better time and place to educate ourselves than here and now at Texas A&M University.

There are over 40,000 students walking around this campus, and you will only have the privilege of running into a handful of them today.

Students from small towns and big cities all across the country and halfway around the world are sitting next to you right now. Do you even notice them?

Many of these students are different from you. They bring with them different religions, languages, hobbies, majors, sexual preferences, skin colors and so on.

The fact is, there are as many differences as there are people. But that's all they are — differences. Believe it or not, these differences don't make anybody better or worse than anybody else, just different.

Do you have the courage — the wisdom — to take advantage of this "educational" opportunity before you?

The answer is in your attitude.

Polston is a senior journalism and political science major.

Save the planet

Take part in campus recycling

As a community, we all know that recycling is good. It saves space in landfills and dumps, decreases the amount of pollution in the environment and limits the amount of non-renewable resources we consume.

As individuals, we know that recycling can be inconvenient. We depend far too much on ease and accessibility.

Texas A&M has begun to realize these problems and has undertaken steps to implement a solution.

Several residence halls have started hall-by-hall aluminum can recycling programs, as organized by each hall council. The University also provides aluminum can recycling at various locations around campus.

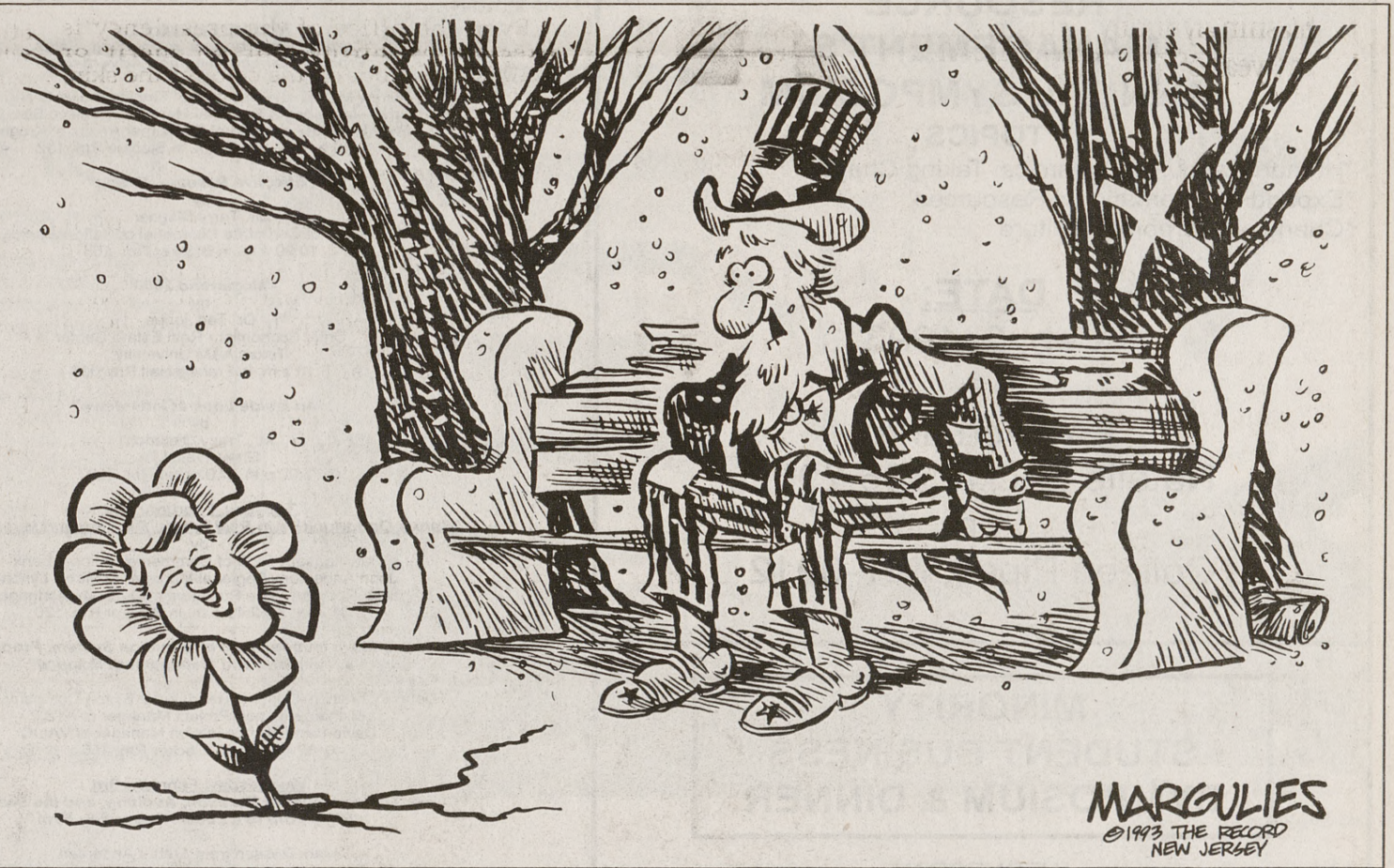
Now it is up to the A&M commu-

nity to prove to the administration that these efforts are not in vain. The students, faculty and staff must make that tiny sacrifice to walk a few more feet to those blue recycling trash cans. If some campus locations lack recycling areas, contact the University Recycling Hotline and request that one be provided.

If the campus community can prove how great an idea recycling is, possibly the University will expand the programs to include paper, plastic and other reusable goods.

A world-class University should care for the world in which it functions.

For more information about recycling programs, call the University Recycling Hotline at 845-7777.



MARGULIES
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NEW JERSEY

Poet dares generation to cross imaginary lines in life

Universal message of equality appeals to unlocked potential in all college students

Imaginary Lines.

Most times it seems we are crossing imaginary lines. I remember standing with my son, when he was about four, at the equator in Kenya. It was freezing. The people at the inn were wearing coats and hats. Snow was on the ground. I, like many people, had thought the equator would be hot and sultry.

But there we stood, smiling at the camera... in the cold.

The first time I flew across the country I braced myself for the Continental Divide. I just knew the plane would bounce around as we reached that all-important halfway point.

Last year I took a train out to see my mother, who lives in San Francisco. Knowing that the plane didn't bounce had no effect upon my



NIKKI GIOVANNI
Guest Columnist

"knowing" that something would happen to the train. I was asleep when we crossed the divide and felt not a thing.

You, the generation in college now, face an all important imaginary line: You will live most of your lives in the next century. Human beings have gone into space. There is a revolution in how we look at and communicate with our planet.

All too many of you are selfish; all too many of you are disappointed to think that you have to give something back to this world. And more than this world, your own history.

Many of you would like to think the struggle for equality should be over. You would like someone to blame that you still have battles to fight, pain to experience, sacrifices to make. You must, in my opinion, make a decision to dedicate your lives to something more than chasing a buck. We have come too far for you to be discouraged and give up.

The history of our people is an honorable history. It is not new; it did not start in the 1950s, and it

was not made by men alone. All of us have done our share.

The college students of today are potentially a great resource for this planet. You have scientific and social knowledge that can change the world.

I hope you do.

We, black Americans, have erased one imaginary line, the Mason-Dixon. We have changed the way America looks at itself and the world. There is still work to be done.

When you cross the rubicon, in a few short years, I hope you have used your time in school to be ready to face any challenge.

Sometimes a challenge is to sit down; sometimes to stand up. I hope you are using your education to learn to think for yourself.

You are the dream of a future. You, as a group, represent our best hope.

I know you can rise to the occasion.

Nikki Giovanni is an award-winning poet, recording artist and lecturer. Currently, she is a professor of English at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, VA.

Giovanni visited Texas A&M University Jan. 22 in conjunction with the fifth annual Southwestern Black Student Leadership Conference where she gave the keynote address.

The opinion page is honored to have Nikki Giovanni as its first celebrity guest columnist. Future celebrity guest columns will run on Wednesdays throughout the semester.

Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the opinion page staff and editor-in-chief only. They do not represent, in any way, the opinions of reporters, staff, or editors of other sections of the newspaper. Columns, guest columns, and Mail Call items express the opinions of the authors only. 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 the author's name. Due to space restrictions, guest columns will not be accepted unless the author contacts the opinion page for prior approval before submitting columns.