

COLLEGE STATION, TX
APRIL 16
1993
MAIL CALL

This issue is old hat:

I think that it is absolutely ridiculous that certain minority students refuse to remove their hats out of respect upon entering the MSC. The reasons listed in the article include Texas A&M being an all-white university at the time of World War II and that all of the Aggies listed on the wall are white. The people who died in World War II gave their lives for former, fellow and future Aggies and Americans. If one happens to be black, Chinese, etc., they gave their lives for you, too.

Also, isn't the topic of the semester multiculturalism? If these students want this campus to be accepting of all races, it seems that the best way to achieve this is by focusing on race. They are hindering multiculturalism, not enhancing it.

White people are told time and time again to respect "black" traditions. How can you ask us to respect your traditions when you won't respect an Aggie tradition that you perceive as being all-white?

I'd like everyone to imagine this situation: What would happen if white people refused to remove their hats in a building erected as a memorial for black men who died for this country

Andi Davis
Class of '94

I am personally outraged at the fact that some people, minority or not, refuse to honor those Aggies who gave their lives for this country. They were Aggies and despite the social practices of their time; they fought and died so that Americans like us can have the opportunity to attend a university as great as A&M.

I am tired of multiculturalists trying to divide us. We are all Aggies, and while it's true that we can't expect everyone to abide by every tradition we hold dear, taking one's hat off in the MSC displays more than recognition of tradition. It is an act of respect.

I am not proud of the way past generations of Americans treated minorities, but if one wants to heal the wounds they caused, then it is important to emphasize what we have in common, not what separates us. What we have in common is the fact that we are Aggies, and this fact binds us together no matter what color we are. For those who insist on dividing us, there is that school in Austin.

Also, those who don't want to remove their hats in the MSC because it would reveal hair which is not in perfect order, really need to reorganize their priority lists and place vanity a little closer to the bottom. I can assure them that more people will be disgusted as a result of their wearing hats than with disoriented hair.

Ags, next time you're in the MSC and see a guy, or girl, who was wearing a hat but has removed it proudly and now displays their messed-up hair, give them a warm "Howdy!" Oh yeah, for those of you who think I am a unsympathetic racist, here is little factoid for you. My mother's maiden name is Banuelos, and I am one half Mexican.

Chad Ellis
Class of '95

I have come to believe that respect should be given to every man or woman and his beliefs, until that respect is betrayed. Then that man or woman must earn your respect.

The people of the Multicultural Services and all others who refuse to remove their hats in a place memorializing students who fought and died for their country have lost any amount of respect I may have had.

The request to remove hats upon entering the MSC is not merely some nifty college tradition. It is the accepted tradition upon entering any building, but more specifically, any memorial to the dead. The whine that "none of my people are memorialized here" is a crock! They were American, and so are you! If you're not then at least keep in mind they were human beings who made the ultimate sacrifice for what they believed in!

Even the few Americans touring Russia during the worst stages of the Cold War, removed their hats and walked in the silence in review of Stalin's Tomb, if not out of respect for the man, then respect for the feelings of his people. These people are dead! They never harmed you or insulted you in any way, shape or form. Dead people can't do that!

Respect! I see this word printed all over the place in reference to the activities of the Multicultural Service. If you cannot give respect to others, don't expect it in return. Those who complained about messing up their hair when they take off their hats disgust me 10 times worse. But that is another letter for another time.

Daniel J. Hartly
Class of '94

The April 14 article on minorities not wanting to uncover in the MSC is a disgrace to this University. Aggies are just that, Aggies! There is no race or color designation to an Aggie (well, maroon). Every time I see someone in the MSC wearing a hat, I politely ask them to remove it and explain the tradition.

When certain individuals don't remove their hats after being asked nicely, it really hacks me off! They didn't earn

the right to wear a hat in there; it's nothing but a sheer lack of respect for those who have unselfishly given their lives for their country.

Not uncovering shows their own racism and lack of upbringing. Joseph Gourrier stated "Blacks can't run their fingers through their hair to straighten it out." So if you don't want to go around with your hair messed up, you leave your hat on." I must say that is the weakest excuse I've ever heard for not respecting an Aggie tradition!

I am a member of the Corps of Cadets, and going to the MSC requires a lot more than removing my hat. Cadets must wear the khaki uniform which means that we must have shined shoes, brass, etc.

With this in mind I think the least you could do is remove your hat, don't you? Sounds really ridiculous doesn't it? What is so hard about removing a hat anyway? It's one simple motion: you raise your hand, grab your hat and take it off. If that is too difficult, then don't go in the MSC! If you're that incompetent there is nothing for you to do in the MSC anyway.

This is an old topic for which there should be no debate: Uncover in the MSC. In short be an Aggie not a two-percent. Respect those who have made being here possible for all of us!

Clint E. Tracy
Class of '95
Accompanied by 115 signatures

Well that's the last straw. I'm talking about the absurdity of black students feeling they don't have to follow the sacred tradition of removing their hats in the MSC. This is to honor past Aggies who have given their lives in defense of this country. As present day Aggies, black, white, green or purple, it is our duty to show respect for these fallen heroes.

This separatist bull has gone on long enough. Blacks are already given special privileges in regards to acceptance and scholarship opportunities at this school.

Special privileges based on race is exactly what Martin Luther King marched against. Many equally disadvantaged white kids who are sometimes better qualified are passed over each semester simply because of the color of their skin.

On another note, I believe it's a disgrace how the hierarchy of this institution kisses the feet of blatant racists like Ron Wilson, Quannell X and even Spike Lee - all in the fear of being branded racists themselves. All racism should be disavowed, black or white. It's time to put all this separatist crap behind us and get on with the business of being Aggies.

The fact is if you choose to come to this school, great. But please have the decency to honor the traditions that have made this school what it is. If you feel you can't do this, you should have gone to school up there in Austin with all the bleeding heart liberals in Austin that don't give a damn about tradition.

I'm sure I'll be branded a bigot or worse, but those who would say this, haven't even heard a word I've said. I'm just very tired of being made to feel guilty about events that either took place before I was even born or take place today be-

yond my control.

Let's face the facts, hatred and misconceptions exist in both races. It's up to us, the future leaders of this country to turn things around. And showing heinous disrespect for fallen Aggies is not the way to do it. The truth is folks, the melting pot hasn't melted. Maybe it's time we turn up the heat.

Freddy Calhoun
Class of '93

A new and deadly specter has reared its head at Texas A&M. I am speaking of the "MSC" hat controversy, where certain students have refused to remove their hats upon entering the MSC. Though this may seem a trivial gesture to many, it becomes disconcerting when the roots of the tradition are examined.

The opponents of the MSC tradition offer spurious reasons for their protest, but the most ridiculous to me is based on perceived racism. The men we honor by removing our hats fought gallantly to preserve the Constitution, and the very Constitution they fought to protect now guarantees the right of equality to every citizen of the United States.

While men were fighting to uphold the integrity of our democracy on foreign shores, men were fighting to ensure equality on American soil. It is utterly illogical to believe that requesting that patrons remove their hats when entering the MSC is in any way motivated by racism or sexism.

Those who bring forth such charges are unintentionally tweaking the hearts of Aggie traditionalists, and injecting a feeling of ill will which does nothing but worsen race relations on campus.

Perhaps the most inflammatory justification for leaving one's hat on came from Joseph Gourrier, who stated that "Blacks can't run their fingers through their hair to straighten it out after they've been wearing hats." It is simply not reasonable to infer that a white person's hair will be groomed with the stroke of a hand, while a black person's will remain mussed. Even if this was the case, it is beyond my comprehension to hear such an objection.

Enduring a few minutes of unkempt hair is a small concession to the men who paid for freedom with their lives.

I would just like to plead with those who consider leaving their hats on to consider some of these points, and to either remove their hats or not enter the MSC. This Aggie tradition is one which is binding not only to all Aggies, but to every visitor who enters the MSC. It is a sacred tradition, and one that should be respected by all, regardless of race or sex.

Brian Beckom
Class of '96

I cannot believe the things I am seeing at Texas A&M. People are walking on the grass and not saying "Howdy." Now they do not want to remove their hats in the MSC. I agree that these are traditions and not laws, but they are traditions that should be embraced and respected by every Aggie. I have many

friends at different schools, and they tell me they have never seen a closeness between students like they do at Texas A&M. Part of this closeness is derived from the traditions on campus.

Gourrier's comment "why should they take their hats off for people who would have lynched them if they were here at that time" is one of the most closed-minded, asinine statements I have ever heard. I am sure there were racists at A&M, but I doubt every one of them had that kind of low-class mentality. I agree that people have a right to their own viewpoints, and I would like to see a more diverse campus, but I do not see where complying with these time-honored traditions is detrimental to anyone. I ask everyone to think about what it means to be an Aggie and what it means to share that with others and decide for themselves if the traditions are worth it. Times change, traditions should not.

Shannon Marks
Class of '94

In reference to the recent article and following editorial about students wearing hats in the MSC, I feel that my, as well as many other Aggie's opinions, cannot go unheeded.

For gentlemen to remove their hats before entering the Memorial Student Center is perhaps one of our finest traditions. By doing so, we show respect for those brave men that fought and died for our country, and we do it out of respect for the freedoms that they preserved.

I was particularly surprised to read that many minority students insist on wearing hats in the MSC protest. These students would not remove their hats because it pays tribute to men that went to Texas A&M when it was an all-white college. I wonder if these people actually give much thought as to what they are protesting?

First of all, the men they protest were not school policy-makers, they were students (and alumni) like us. They had no more control over Texas state legislation and school policy than we have today. The only choice these men made was to defend freedom and democracy. The same freedoms minorities hold so dear today.

I realize that one of the most important freedoms is the right to protest ideas and policies that we think are wrong. However, I think that debates about racial problems at Texas A&M are better left to a political forum, not in a memorial for these brave men.

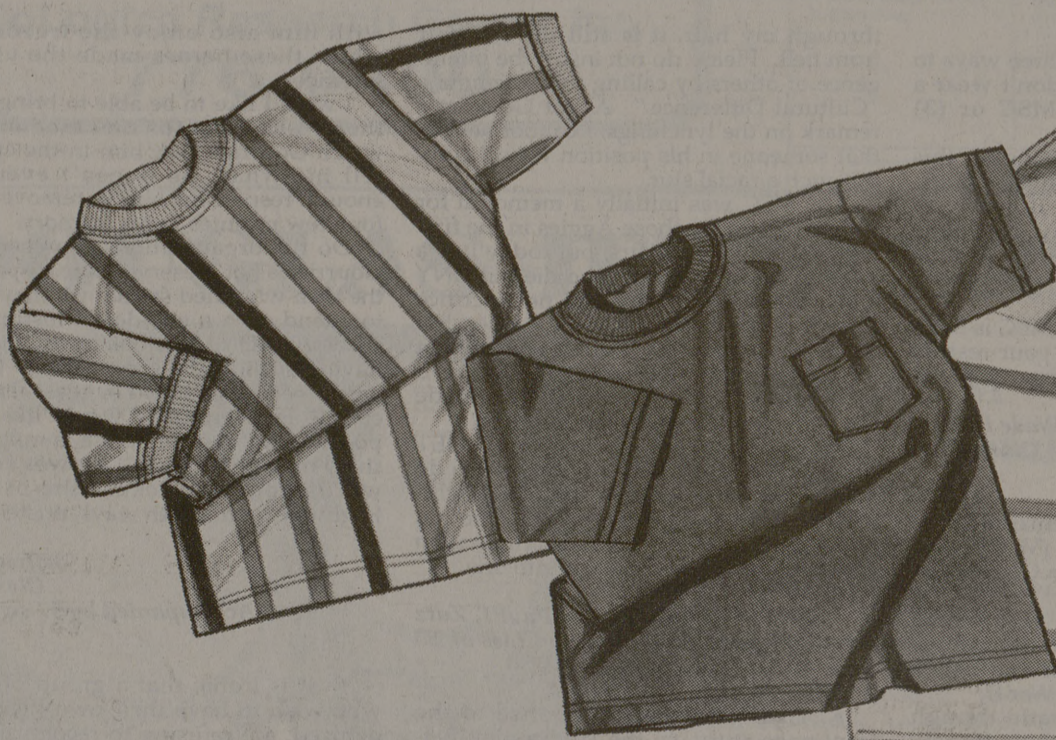
Scott Little
Class of '91

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