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Don't buy Generation X generalizations Media image of young adults more hype than reality

As college students in our early 20s, most A&M students are part of what is known as Generation X. We are the generation that can't find itself, the one having an identity crisis. Instead of being part of the baby boomer generation, we are included in the baby bust.



MELISSA MEGLIOLA
Columnist

According to Stanley Bing, a contributing editor at Esquire, we are the generation that "spends several years waking at noon, having a piece of cold pizza for breakfast, taking the dog for a walk, going over to see [our boyfriends or girlfriends], maybe seeing a late-afternoon movie, and, afterward, walking home together staring in the windows of restaurants we can't afford, dreaming of what we just might do when we grow up, sell out, and start making money.

A cynical and wise-beyond-our-years generation, we grew up quickly and missed both our childhoods and our dreams. Many of us were scarred when our parents divorced and our mothers went back to work. We are afraid of social security, our national debt and the health care issue.

We are glued to MTV. We don't do drugs — at least not as openly as the flower children. We don't protest, as we know it wouldn't do us any good. For fear of AIDS, we limit casual sex. We can't even yearn for a condo

and a BMW. That would be far too '80s, and yuppies are the root of all evil.

We are Generation X, or so the media, advertisers and social commentators tell us. To facilitate product advertising, each generation is grouped, classified and analyzed. We are the slackers: the lazy, disenchanting generation that will pay for the excesses of our parents and grandparents.

This theory has been easy to sell. Most cable companies offer at least 30 different channels that allow us to watch an endless supply of sitcom reruns. Electronic companies have sold more Nintendo packages than they ever could have dreamed. In order to show how much we don't care about fashion, the fashion magazines feature vintage-type clothing that — here's a big surprise — costs just as much as clothes that actually look new. We're being sold an image of the '90s, and we're buying. We relate well to the hard luck story we're sold.

As part of Generation X, we are above the mindless (yet income-producing) jobs that generations before us accepted with pride. We don't want our minds to waste away while we work on assembly lines, drive delivery trucks or wait tables. In the information age, it is no longer prestigious to produce something; it's better to recognize one's intellect, even while sitting dormant on the couch.

The movie "Reality Bites" romanticizes our generation. The main character, Lelaina Pierce, a recent college graduate, is trying to begin a career in film journalism. When she gets fired from her internship with an overly cheerful and artistically void morning television show, Lelaina can't seem to find a job of

any kind. No matter that she graduated valedictorian of her university class.

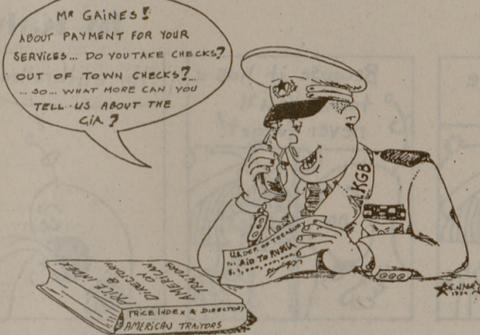
Instead of working beneath her obvious talent, Lelaina resorts to spending her days on the telephone with a call-in psychic and runs up a \$400 phone bill. To pay off the bill, she ingeniously convinces customers at the neighborhood gas station to pay her cash for their gasoline, and then charges each bill to her father's gas credit card. Not exactly the financial solution you would expect from an intelligent person. Lelaina's boyfriend, Troy, has been fired from 12 jobs, although he has an IQ of 180.

As students, we at A&M don't believe we are above hard work, at least not academic work. We do homework, study for tests and write papers. We aren't able to sleep in until noon. We can't keep dogs in the dorms, and we probably don't see many afternoon movies. While still in the safe and secure university environment, we feel unconnected to our generational personality. We have accepted only the superficial elements of Generation X. We read more magazines than newspapers and now frequent local coffee houses.

Still, we are discouraged by the controversy that surrounds our campus, by the recent decline in job opportunities, and by the fear of not being as successful as our parents.

We must be careful not to believe what we are told about our victimhood, our poor work ethic and our lack of family values. If we let it, the media image of Generation X will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Melissa Megliola is a senior industrial engineering major



EDITORIAL Tip of the iceberg Investigation should continue

With the recent indictments of two Board of Regents secretaries, authorities have begun exposing alleged wrongdoing involving falsified University records. The Texas Rangers and other authorities should investigate this situation until the parties involved in any misconduct are held responsible for their actions.

A Brazos County grand jury indicted Board secretary Vickie Running and administrative assistant Sasha Walters for eight counts of falsifying documents. They are accused of giving a local reporter falsified copies of state vouchers which misrepresented alcohol purchases by itemizing food and soft drinks on the receipts.

Since the use of state funds to buy alcohol is illegal, the falsified documents may be only part of the problem. Board of Regents Chairman Ross Margrave came to the defense of the two secretaries, saying that they may not have known they were breaking the law and there was no conspiracy.

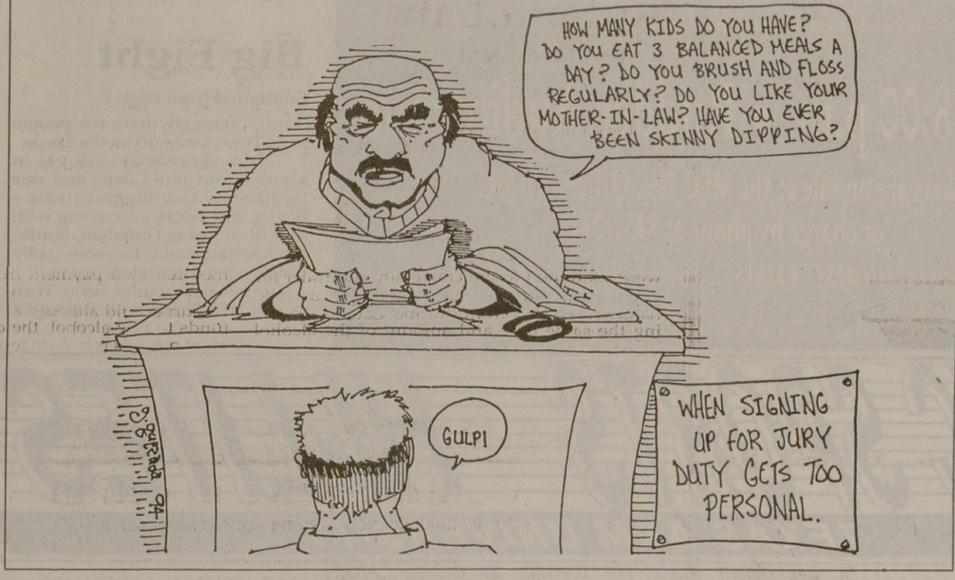
"They were only handling things the way they had been handled prior to them," he said. This defense does not make

A&M look any better or change the fact that the law may have been violated. We deserve to know if anyone established a policy that orders secretaries to falsify state documents or hide alcohol purchases. The investigation should not end until any wrongdoing has been exposed completely.

The fact that System employees have been indicted damages A&M's reputation severely. But a bigger injustice would be to allow these women to bear total responsibility for any illegal actions in which others may have participated or allowed to go on.

We should expect our school to openly acknowledge its mistakes. The fact that these laws may have been broken does not cause nearly as much damage to our reputation as does the possible attempt to cover the facts.

Although we should take these initial legal actions seriously, we must not let the indictment of Running and Walters limit further official inquiries. This investigation must not end until taxpayers know exactly where their money has gone and who spent it.



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Columns, guest columns, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors.

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

We reserve the right to edit letters and guest columns for length, style, and accuracy.

Contact the opinion editor for information on submitting guest columns.

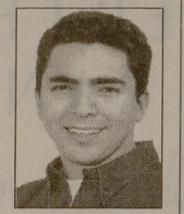
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Make-believe training session turns up real-life problem

My little brother used to trust me. Poor sap. Then my parents took us on that fateful trip to Dairy Queen. My brother was sitting quietly, watching me (he adored me) when I started to sprinkle pepper onto the table. His smile disappeared as he looked on, confused. I crouched down until my eyes were visible just above the table.

"Wow," I said. "This pepper looks really neat when you look at it like this, Royce. It looks really cool when you put your eyes close to it, like this. Those little peppers look HUGE on the table."

Intrigued, my brother consented. He crouched down, put his eyes level with the



ROBERT VASQUEZ
Columnist

table and tried to imagine why his big brother would be so amazed with this particular perspective of Dairy Queen pepper. Before he got a chance to ask, I blew a big gust of onion breath at the pepper, most of which landed in his eyes. I erupted into laughter.

"Ouch!" the little booger yelled. "Mom!"

Needless to say, I didn't get a DQ cone for dessert that day.

Boys grow up, but that doesn't mean they stop doing stupid things. A couple of weeks ago, a group of students was chosen to act as professionals in a mock executive training program. Top company officials from around the world are chosen to attend this thousand dollar conference each year. You might call them golden boys, though they're old enough to be men.

The students did their stint, acting like professional interviewers with these executives. Everything proceeded at a quasi-professional level. The nature of the interviews was somewhat light, and the mock setting allowed considerable leeway for

joking and lapses in judgment that would never be tolerated in real-life situations.

But as the interviews ended and the students began to file out of the room, one of the men in the room chuckled and said to a rather attractive female student

In the middle of the "training program," the attention of the entire room had suddenly been thrown into Lisa's lap — because she was wearing a skirt.

named Lisa, "You with the blond hair, in the green skirt. What are you doing this weekend?" The room erupted into laughter.

The golden boys laughed. The students laughed. Even Lisa laughed. But later, as we walked to the meeting room where we would discuss the interviews, I thought about what had just happened. The room had been filled with forty- and fifty-year-

old men. Except for one other female student in the room, Lisa was the only woman there. And in the middle of this "training program," the attention of the entire room had suddenly been thrown into Lisa's lap. Not because she was interviewing, but because she was wearing a skirt. I noticed that she had laughed it off, but I couldn't help wondering if she was the slightest bit uncomfortable.

"Yes," she said, staring into the distance. "I didn't even know him, and he's asking me in front of all these men some stupid question to make them laugh. He was old enough to be my grandfather. He didn't see me as a professional. He saw me as some woman in a skirt. Is that how men are going to see me when I get a real job? As some bimbo?"

I thought I understood what the problem was. Somewhat self-righteously, I concluded that the man simply was from the old school. The politically correct, homogenized members of Generation X would never commit such a travesty.

In our discussion, the leader of the session told the group of executives what

everyone already knew: Such behavior would entice charges of sexual harassment and should be contained, if not purged.

The consensus among the executives was one of agreement. And they applauded when the students were introduced. But it was when they came to Lisa's name that I did a really stupid thing. As Lisa stood up to face the crowd of men who had thrust their attention upon her, I whistled. Not to make the golden boys laugh. But to make Lisa laugh. She and I are good friends. But she didn't find it funny.

"Why did you do that?" she asked. I couldn't answer. Bad judgment.

Warped sense of humor. Plain stupidity. The same reason many men — and some women — do such things. I felt stupid and searched for the words to explain myself. All I could think of was, "I'm sorry."

"Boys will be boys," the proverbial defense goes. It's a sorry excuse, but "Men will be boys" is pathetic.

Robert Vasquez is a senior journalism major

COLLEGE STATION, TX
 Feb 28
 1994
MAIL CALL

Making headlines:

• I am writing in response to the article "Four Kappa Alpha Members Accused of Assault Begin Trial" printed on Feb. 22. I am in no way condoning the actions of the four students. I am, however, appalled at the use of their fraternity affiliation as a headline. The men were not at a fraternity function; therefore, this seems to be highlighting a completely irrelevant issue. The fact that four students assaulted another student two years ago is the issue, as old as the news may be. Would the headline include the students as members of the

chess club if the students had not been affiliated with the Greek system? The Greek organizations are trying to rise above their negative stereotype by contributing positive things to the Brazos Valley community. Assault belongs in police beat. If you want to write about Greeks, try printing something that is positive.

Elizabeth Elrod
 Class of '95

• I have seen many things written in the Batt aimed at casting A&M's fraternities in a less than desirable light. However,

the article about the assault trial of four A&M students is the lowest blow yet. Despite the fact that the incident is almost two years past and did not occur at a Kappa Alpha fraternity-sponsored event, The Battalion thought this would be an excellent opportunity to make a correlation between wild, violent behavior and fraternity life. On the front page no doubt! It was strange that the headline of the story stands out greater than any other.

The real story is the trial itself, not the fact that the individuals involved happened to be fraternity members. I seriously doubt this incident would have drawn your attention had the individuals involved been Fish Camp counselors or orientation leaders. Because this, of course, would make good ol' A&M look bad. Congratulations on another fantastic article aimed at fraternity bashing. I'm sure there will be more to come.

Mac Brink
 Class of '94

• We are writing this letter in response to the criticism of the coverage of the Walker trial. Ever since the initial article was published, there has been a lot of speculation about the defendants being identified as belonging to Kappa Alpha fraternity.

Many people have been caught up in the fact that KA was used in the headline. Granted, the association of the fraternity was not necessarily relevant to the article; however, we feel that the speculation on the headline has detracted from the most important part, the facts of the trial. No one included the KAs in the headline to intentionally bash the fraternity. The fact is that the defendants do belong to KA.

Readers seem to be missing the point that the four defendants, regardless of what organization they belong to, beat up John Walker for absolutely no reason. They are on trial for assaulting a completely innocent person, and people seem to automatically be sympathizing with

the defendants because of the press coverage.

Meanwhile, John Walker is trying to gather up his pride and walk away with at least a little dignity. The incident has made Walker become "weary of people" and more cautious about being alone. No one should have to live in fear of people, especially when they don't deserve it.

We regret that some students are not able to overcome their superficial notions of what life is about. Hopefully, people can look at this in hindsight and remember that peoples' lives are much more important than any organization's name.

We were hesitant to testify, but we feel we owe it to John to help him in any way we can. We'd like to take this time to tell John how sorry we are for this unjustified event. You are one of the nicest guys we've ever met, and we hope that maybe someday you can forget about all this.

Names withheld upon request