

STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Senate calls for student input, ideas

Bill proposes change in worker registration

After being elected last April, one of my most important goals was to make Student Government and the Student Senate more legitimate by making students aware of the topics we discuss. I decided to use a column in The Battalion as a primary avenue for bringing ideas and issues of A&M to the forefront of students' minds.

BROOKE LESLIE

Guest Columnist

The intent of this message is to provide a method of communication in which students and faculty can become informed about current issues facing the Texas A&M Student Government Association and the student body as a whole, whether it be the academic calendar or our efforts to improve parking.

Tonight, the Texas A&M University Student Senate will be debating the Student Worker Preregistration bill. This piece of legislation, authored by Ryan Shopp, is designed to change the current preregistration schedule for student workers.

Student workers, by definition, are those students who work at least 12 hours a week between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., on or off campus.

Presently, the system allows for two full days of registration for honors students followed by three days in which all student workers and seniors are allowed to register for courses. After this period, an alphabetical pattern is followed by seniors, juniors, sophomores and then freshmen.

The new proposal requests that the format be altered in such a way that senior workers would register on the last day of Honors registration; junior workers would register on the last day of senior registration; and sophomore and freshmen workers would register on the last day for junior registration.

The worker preregistration bill is not only designed to help graduating seniors,

The worker preregistration bill is not only designed to help graduating seniors, but to aid upperclassmen who are within three semesters of graduation.

While graduating seniors can be forced into full classes, juniors and non-graduating seniors are left facing the dilemma of possibly graduating a semester late because they cannot get the necessary classes to fulfill their degree requirements.

Supporters of the bill argue that the change would decrease phone congestion in the Brazos Valley system, relieve the threat of shutting down the telephone lines and make the registration process fairer to a greater population of upperclass students.

Darla Marburger, the Student Senate Academic Affairs Chair, said, "It is important that the students understand that the format of the current system must be changed in some form or fashion, because the inefficiency of the current phone registration system poses a constant threat to the community."

Those in opposition claim that underclass students who need specific blocks of classes in order to work will not be able to coordinate their schedules to meet their specific needs.

However, the needs of the student population as a whole must be recognized. In order to aid the 4,000 student workers, we are sacrificing the academic welfare of approximately 13,000 upperclass students.

No matter the case, this issue will be discussed and debated further at the Student Senate meeting tonight at 7:30 p.m. in the Governance Room of the John J. Koldus building.

The Student Government Association challenges you to contact the SGA office at 845-3051 with your opinion on this issue.

The information will be passed on to those senators who represent you. In order to represent the views of the student body, the students must use their voice to send their messages loud and clear to the Student Government Association of Texas A&M University.

Student Body President Brooke Leslie is a senior agricultural development major

'Our young black men are dying ...'

Social group fails to achieve real equality because of race, poverty

My little brother James has lost his 12-year-old mind. He is at that age where he and his buddies have discovered girls, rap music and the world at large.

AJA HENDERSON Columnist



My mom is very nervous - sighing, wringing her hands and carrying on about her "baby" is growing up. My dad is in denial, and he tries to keep convincing her that James is still the little boy he always was. So, here is this "little boy," who is taller than my five feet, six and a half inches, still being hugged and fussed over by my Dad like he always was.

I have to shake my head at this scene - but not too hard, being a daddy's girl myself. And, for all my brother's little tirades when my parents yell out his pet name, "Jakemeister!" in front of his pals, he knows he loves it.

He literally lives in my father's office, letting his head get all puffy when my one of my father's secretaries tells him how big and strong he's getting. "Baby, can you move that box for me?" Yes, James is riding through adolescence on cloud nine. Unfortunately, this is not the story of most young black boys and men in America.

One of the recent issues concerns young black males and the plight this socially, economically and racially challenged group is suffering. The reports are not encouraging. Over 50 percent of black children live in a single-parent home headed by a woman, leaving young black men without an immediate male role model.

Almost half of young black males live in households below the poverty line, and two-thirds of the ones who live in female-headed households have below-poverty incomes. These figures reflect young men who are boxed into situations that seem largely unsurpassable.

Many groups within our community, including politicians, the press and academic institutions, fail to focus upon the reality behind the condition of these young men, opting instead to spit out fast fix-it solutions like "Get a job!" or "Go to school." Or, sometimes they attach a filler onto the front of the fix-it: "Keep hope alive. Get a job!" or, "Keep the dream ... Go to school."

This simplistic reality sounds tough, and it's what society

wants to hear. After all, we live in a country that was founded and still thrives on the work ethic.

Nonetheless, this mentality ignores the fact that young black males are dealing with a deck of cards dealt to them early in life, if not at birth. Later in the boy's life, these "cards" manifest into the problems that most of America does not want to handle - the problems to which many Americans want to apply the fix-it glue.

Fix-it is not new. Young black men have been heard these little catch phrases for the last 25 years. Their condition hasn't improved - it has worsened.

Trapped in a vicious cycle, labeled as "failures" and "lazy," angry at conditions that they did not ask for and do not deserve, young black males are rejecting fix-it.

They see "fix-it" as a lie. The drug dealer up the street is the one with the money. That NBA basketball player is the one with the fame.

Popular thought shakes its head at the young black male and continues to label him as an inherently violent individual who is destined to a life of failure. Thus, it becomes acceptable to treat him any kind of way. Prejudice and discrimination against him is the name of the game.

An example of this bias lies in a controversy that occurred in September of 1991. The Virginia-based National Center on Institutions and Alternatives released a study concerning the conditions of black males in Baltimore, Maryland.

This study revealed that five out of nine young black men were "in trouble with the law."

Young black men do not need America's instant problem-solving, they need comprehensive action designed to make their hurdles just a little lower.

Of course, the study failed to clarify that it did not separate hard-core crimes from such minor offenses as jaywalking in reaching that figure.

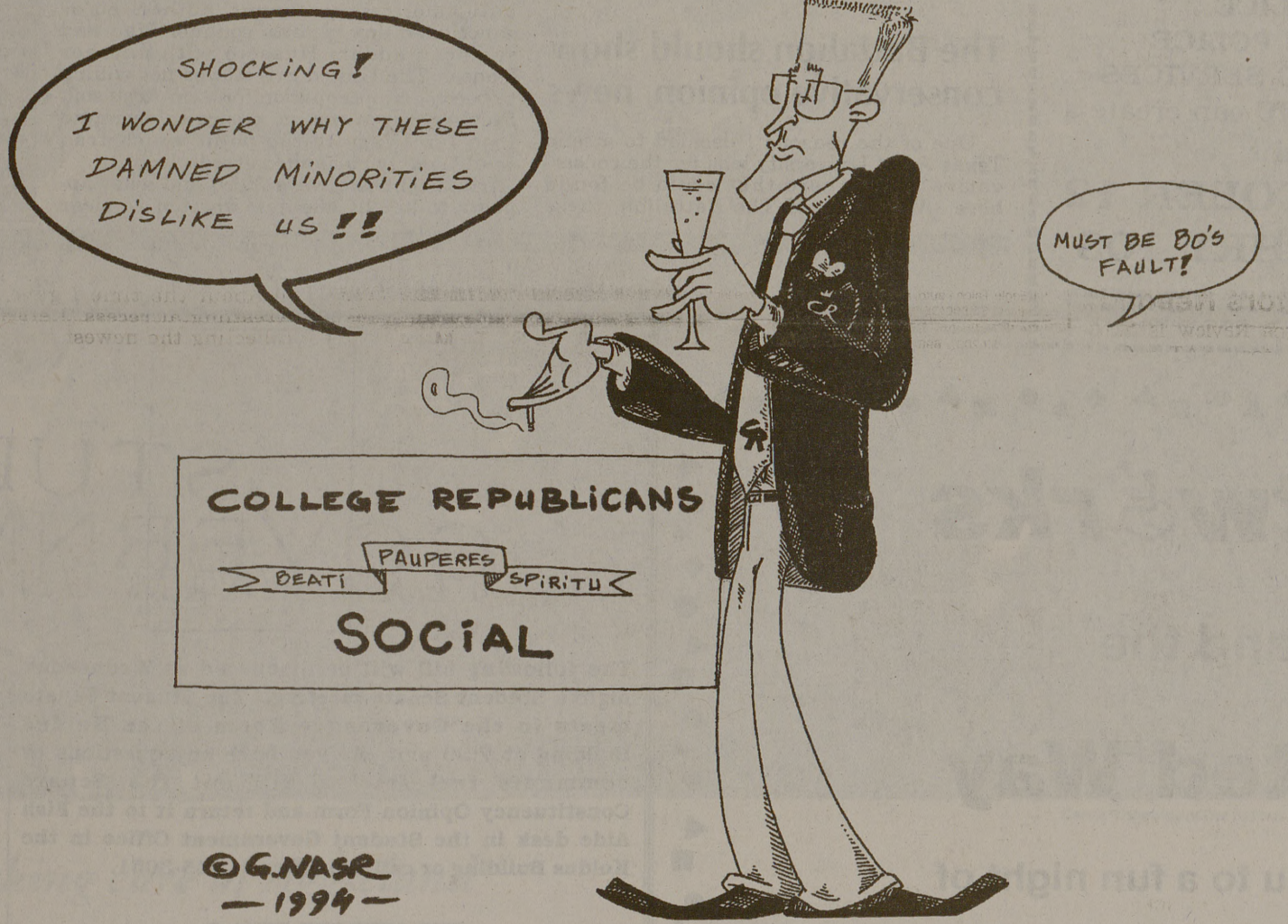
Studies like this might have noble intentions, but if crucial elements are left unmentioned, ambiguity is certain, and misunderstanding is probable.

The end result is more negative labeling and politicians leaning back their heads, opening their mouths even wider than usual to offer their amazing fix-its.

Fix-it solutions do not solve such deep-rooted problems. Young black males do not need America's instant problem-solving, they need comprehensive policy action and programs designed to make their hurdles just a little lower so that they can jump them and have a better life.

I do not want my little brother's happy adolescence to be an exception to the turmoil of young black males in this country - I want to see it be the rule.

Aja Henderson is a sophomore finance major

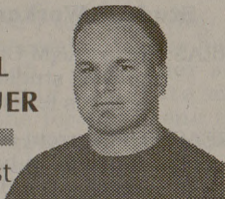


On the road again in Iraq with Saddam

The U.S. needs to remember a few things we learned in Kuwait last time

History repeats itself, there is no doubt. But it usually takes centuries or decades, not just a few years.

MICHAEL LANDAUER Columnist



Yet here we are again debating what to do about Iraq. This time here are a few things we should do differently.

I think most people agree that if we go back into battle we should take Saddam out of power.

As I was driving out of Houston Monday morning, I heard a poll on the radio. At the time, 94 percent of the respondents were in favor of military action in Iraq.

Of course, George Bush could have been playing with the redial button on his phone.

Here are some things we should keep in mind as the story unfolds before our eyes on CNN.

Let's not blame George Bush. The same people who are whining about having to go back in now, are the same people who were griping about fighting for oil the first time.

Had Bush decided to finish Saddam off, these critics would have complained that he had been dishonest about his intentions.

Going beyond the U.N.'s goal would not have been popular at the time. We fought to free Kuwait, we won, and we got out. We didn't want another Vietnam, but critics weren't happy with sticking to our goals, either.

In hindsight, we should have finished Saddam off, colonized Iraq with Texas oilmen (moved the Oilers to Baghdad) and made it a state. Gosh, I hope we do it right this time.

Let's get one thing straight - soldiers fight wars; that's their job. When we send soldiers off to fight it is because they already have agreed to go. We are not taking able-bodied men and women off the streets. We are using our volunteers for their purpose.

If America uses its military to protect its interests, people start to complain about sending our soldiers off to die. And they can never die "for America." Critics say they are dying for oil, greed, power or politics.

Dying for your country seems to be something that hasn't happened since World War II. Now that we have the Bomb, why should our men and women die? Of course, the same people whining about the death of our soldiers are critical of our use of bombs because they hurt innocent citizens. War is ugly, we can only hope for low numbers of casualties. But we can't keep every single soldier safe from injury or death.

Or maybe the critics are right. Maybe we also should stop sending cops out on the streets. They might get shot.

Let's get another thing straight - we ARE fighting for oil. The critics are all over this argument again. And I concede; we do fight for oil. Oil is money and money is power. There has never been a war fought for anything other than power.

And politicians only point this out when they are opposed to the military action because they may not get credit for thinking of it first. If we understand these two points, watching CNN will be a lot more fun.

Let's remember some things we learned last time. Saddam convinced the U.S. he was not

going to invade Kuwait.

I'm not talking about yesterday's news, I'm talking about the day before he invaded Kuwait in 1990. We can't trust him. If we don't pay attention to him, Saddam will stab us in the back (probably with a knife we gave him).

We also learned how to cover a war. The media is already gearing up for this one. All the networks have their logos ready and Time-Life is probably already working on a series of books, "Desert Storm Part Deux - The Wrath of Saddam" (or maybe "The Search for a Foreign Policy").

We also learned to not give credit to the president. Bush received more credit for his actions from Kuwait than he did from America. Clinton should be licking his lips at this opportunity. If we have to pay attention to the political maneuvers of anyone, we should start listening to the probable contenders for the election of '96. After all, they will be dealing with post-war Iraq.

Once Saddam is gone we will have even more problems on our hands.

So let's not worry about who to blame, who will fight or why.

Let's just get rid of Saddam, keep the number of casualties low, keep gas prices low and get on with another hopeless attempt at nation-building.

At least that will be an interesting debate with some new issues to argue. For example, should we fund a dome for the Baghdad Oilers?

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EDITORIAL

FLIERS SAIL WAY OUT OF LINE

College Republicans should take responsibility for their racially offensive political fliers and guard against repeating the mistake.

The group claims not to be responsible for the statements on the fliers - which have the organization's name at the bottom - because they were distributed without authorization by a "committee" and were not approved by the organization's officers.

A committee by definition speaks for the group it represents if it has the power to post material with the group's name. The College Republicans are irresponsible for allowing these to fliers to go up.

The fliers themselves are more offensive, however. Three stand out with gross, ignorant stereotypes:

"Ahh, poor Hispanics ... Your test scores are too low. Your grades are too low. But that's all right. We'll lower the requirements for you. College Republicans believe Hispanics are just as smart as any other race."

Yet vice president for publicity Bo Armstrong, who has been forced to resign over this incident, said, "We are all equal. There is no race, we are all Americans." By law affirmative action efforts cannot set up separate criteria for admitting whites and minorities to a university. To use such a condescending tone to refer to "any other race," along with the stereotyped problems its members face, violates the basic spirit of equality.

"You're black, you're female, you have a 2.0, you have a job. You're white, you're male, you have a 4.0, your point. College Republicans support equal employment opportunity."

Anyone with a 4.0 from Texas A&M who can't find a job suffers many more personal obstacles than just being white or male. The College Republicans' statement implies that black women and other minorities get jobs solely because of their race or gender. That allegation is both unfounded and insulting.

A third flier lists the terms "African-American, Mexican-American, Asian-American, Caucasian" in a printed column. At the bottom, "American" is written in with a check mark next to it. The line: "College Republicans are proud of their heritage."

Why can't people be proud of their entire heritage - like black, white, Asian or ethnic cultures, as well as the whole "American" experience?

These fliers may not have intended to offend or insult anyone, but they did. The College Republicans, along with every other American, must work to eliminate "race" as a political, educational or employment group, or "race" will always be a problem for America.