



# UNCOVER AGS

## Debate over wearing hats in MSC continues

When Shawn Williams, a Texas A&M junior, entered the Memorial Student Center on the evening of January 8 to check his mail, he knew that by wearing a hat, he was defying a long standing Aggie tradition. What Williams did not know is that, by doing so, he would unmask another.



**DREW DIENER**  
COLUMNIST

The first amendment grants the unalienable right of freedom of choice and expression to each and every citizen of the United States of America.

As a full-fledged citizen of this country, Shawn Williams is allowed to exercise this right, as it long as it is within the bounds of the law.

He is free to double strap his backpack if he chooses. That is not against the law.

He is free to walk down the street with his shoes untied if he chooses. That is not against the law.

He is free to put ranch dressing on everything he eats if he chooses. That is not against the law.

He is also free to wear his hat in the Memorial Student Center if he chooses. Believe it or not, that is not against the law.

I do not know if Shawn Williams double straps, walks down the street with his shoes untied or puts ranch dressing on everything he eats.

I do know, however, that Mr. Williams wears his hat in the MSC. By no means am I advocating, endorsing or supporting his practice. I am merely defending it.

It is, courtesy of the First Amendment, Shawn Williams' unalienable right to wear his hat in the MSC. By doing so he is not breaking any law of this country, this state, this county, this city or this university.

He is breaking the code of a time-honored tradition at Texas A&M University, but he is not breaking a law. While it is Williams' choice to wear his hat in the MSC if he so desires, it is also Williams' burden to face the consequences of doing so (i.e. verbal confrontations with tradition-abiding students).

Like Williams, a tradition-abiding student is also entitled to exercising his or her First Amendment rights. He or she has the right to express his or her opinion to Williams, concerning his choice to sport a hat in the MSC.

The tact with which a student might express his or her opinion to Mr. Williams is not governed by law, but by morals.

Like a tradition, a moral is not a law. Unlike a tradition (in the sense of the word as it is used at A&M), a moral is not necessarily something that is uniform in its expression. A moral is something personal, governed by an individual's feelings or beliefs.

After Williams' encounter in the MSC with two tradition-

abiding students who expressed their opinions to him concerning his hat wearing practice, Williams understands, all too well, the feelings and beliefs that govern their morals.

In defense of the tradition these two students hold so close to their hearts, one of them told, not asked, Williams to take his hat off and "show some respect for the Aggies that died for your black ass."

When Williams refused to remove his hat, it was removed for him. An infringement on Williams First Amendment right, or just the duty of A&M's self-empowered tradition police?

If a tradition is not a law, a tradition does not need police to protect it. Starting to sound like an infringement on Williams' First Amendment rights?

Williams was upset, and rightfully so. Had the two students not taken it upon themselves to react to the situation physically, they would have remained well within the bounds of the law by merely expressing their opinions verbally, a First Amendment right.

Although I do not condone the vocabulary employed by the tradition-abiding students, it is not against the law for them to speak in such a manner.

Williams tried desperately to verbally defend his defiance of the time-honored Aggie tradition, but despite such efforts, his opponents refused to cease from expressing their opinion — an unalienable right they were not going to exercise.

The situation demanded it of them: a near empty MSC in the secluded post office section, two white students stern in defending an Aggie tradition and one African-American student, stern in defending his right to defy an Aggie tradition. Three students having it out in a scuffle that has transcended the tradition in peril. All three fully exercising their First Amendment rights. What a country!

One of the white students made a suggestion to a seemingly stubborn Williams: "Why don't you go to another school where they like your kind. I heard Prairie View is a nice school."

Both sides enraged, the battle continued. Verbal punche — no physical ones — were thrown.

No laws, save the one act of infringement on Williams' rights, were broken, but a tradition was.

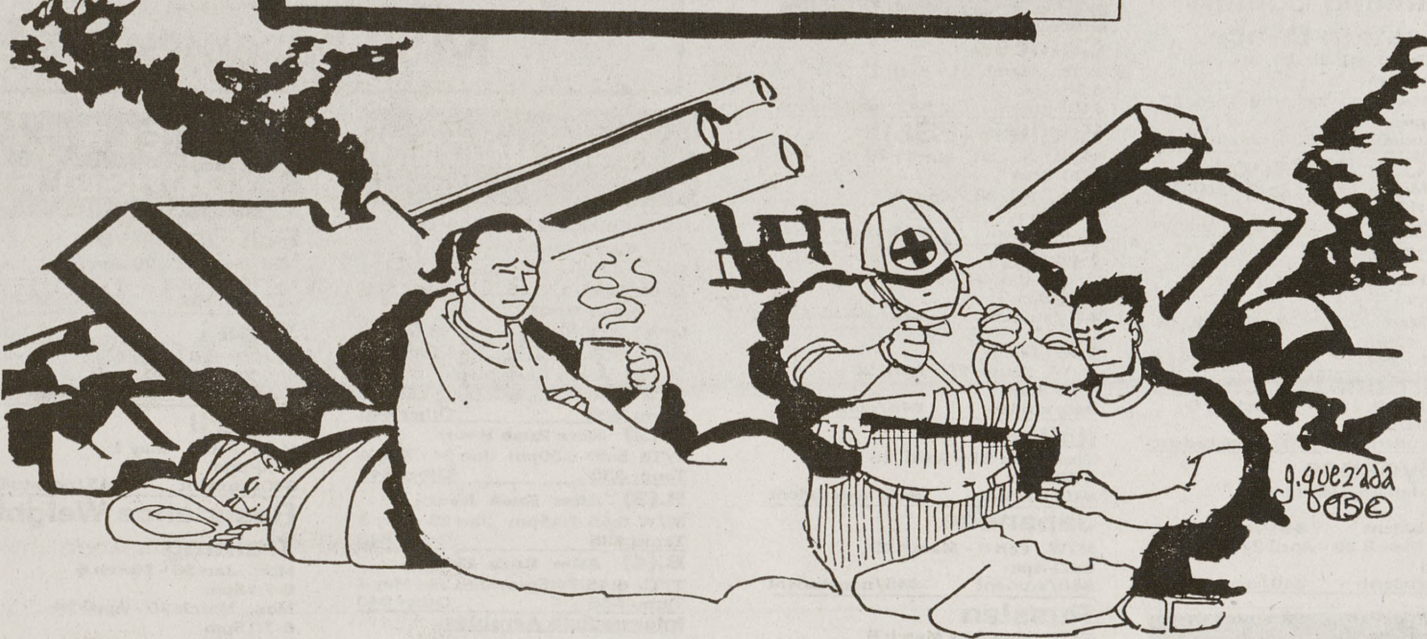
In trying to defend one time-honored Aggie tradition, the two white students exposed within their words and within themselves another ... the time-honored tradition of racism.

Perhaps less practiced than kissing one's date after an Aggie score, or honoring our fallen students at Silver Taps or taking one's hat off when entering the MSC, it is, nevertheless, still a tradition practiced on this campus.

Remember, a tradition is not a law. It is your First Amendment right to choose not to follow one.

*Drew Diener is a junior English major*

THE NEWS SAID THAT AFTER SEEING HOW THE EARTHQUAKES DESTROYED JAPANESE STRUCTURES, AMERICANS WILL LOSE CONFIDENCE IN JAPANESE ENGINEERING. ASK THE VICTIMS IF THEY CARE.



**THE BATTALION**  
Established in 1893

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## EDITORIAL

### TAKE A DEEP BREATH

Breathalyzer law violates rights and presumes guilt with license revocation provision.

Under the guise of stricter laws and sentences for drunk drivers, the Administrative License Revocation (ALR) will suspend the license of any driver who is pulled over under suspicion of driving while intoxicated and refuses to take a breathalyzer test. It can be argued that there is a need for stricter penalties for DWI. However, the refusal clause of this law is a threat to two of our Constitutional rights.

According to a press release from Texas for ALR, a law enforcement officer must determine that there is probable cause and reasonable suspicion to stop a motorist under suspicion of DWI. This is not a problem.

If the officer deems the driver impaired and the driver fails a series of field sobriety tests, the driver is arrested for DWI and taken to the police station, where he or she will be asked to take a test to measure blood alcohol level. This is not a problem.

If the driver refuses to take the test (usually a breathalyzer), his or her license will be suspended.

This is a problem. The problem with this law is that it treats refusal to take a breathalyzer test as if it were an admission of guilt. In fact, the length of suspension is

longer for refusing to take the test — 90 days for a first offense — than for taking it and failing, which only mandates a 60 day license suspension.

Suspects are allowed to request a hearing and to appeal a ruling, but they should not be placed in that position for refusing to take the test. This provision comes dangerously close to violating our constitutional rights to freedom from unreasonable search and seizure and self-incrimination. At best, the refusal provision is intrusive and violates the spirit, if not the actual words of the Fourth and Fifth Amendments.

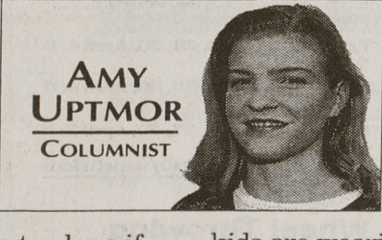
The new law could have quite an impact on Bryan-College Station — a town with an overwhelming student population and dozens of frequented bars. It is important to note that this law will not only affect those who drink. Anyone refusing a breathalyzer test for any reason will be subject to the license revocation — under the influence, or not.

Perhaps no one would refuse this test unless they were trying to hide something. While this line of reasoning supposes guilt, it does not prove it. Americans must remain vigilant against allowing our desire to control a criminal behavior overshadow the rights and freedoms of society as a whole.

### Older, not wiser

Ideas, fads of youth slip away with age

Every Christmas I seem to come up with some great issue that occupies my thoughts for most of the holidays. I always return to school determined about what I'm going to do differently for the new semester.



**AMY UPTMOR**  
COLUMNIST

We were going to be "cool parents" and let our kids do anything. We now realize this isn't such a good idea, but I hope we never completely forget what we thought at that age.

And how many times have your and your friends laughed at what kids are wearing these days? Have we soon forgotten the days of parachute pants, checkered vans and fluorescent shoe laces? These make the latest teen fashions seem pretty tasteful.

I caught myself in the midst of this mental change while buying my nephew's Christmas present, a Power Ranger doll that cost me \$40. All I could do was complain to anyone and everyone about how ridiculously overpriced this doll was, and how he should at least be able to do some neat karate moves for that price. I also had to whine about how the doll would be discarded as soon as the next fad enticed my nephew.

I realized the error of my ways when I found four Cabbage Patch Kids in the back of my closet, collecting dust. If my memory serves me well, they cost about \$40 each, and they certainly don't have any talents (although they do have that cute signature on their rear-ends).

This reminds me of the scene in "The Breakfast Club" where the janitor advises the principal "The kids aren't changing, you are." That this movie is 10 years old makes me feel even older.

I don't mind the fact that I'm becoming an adult. Like I said, I'm looking forward to it. I see that I am already starting to lose my open-mindedness, or my memory. I don't exactly know which. But what I'm losing is something that is important to me. I hope that this visit from the ghost of my future can help me mend my ways before it's too late.

That's what I'm determined to do this semester—to not let the forces of aging ruin my open mind.

And maybe next Christmas my grand revelation will concern something really useful—like employment.

*Amy Uptmor is a junior journalism major*

Apparently, the break is too long if I'm thinking like this. Last year, the issue of the holidays was deciding on (and staying with) a major.

I chose journalism, and her I am, a columnist for The Battalion only one year later. So, of course, since I needed ideas for my first column, nothing seemed to hit me as overly important over the break.

Then I started thinking about how many people my age are getting married (or are already married), or have kids and a career, or are getting divorced. Even though I am nowhere near any of these landmark events, I am on the same path as them. Ready or not, we are all entering the adult world, and that scares me.

One trip to karaoke night was enough to assure me that most people our age are still living up the young life. But we are all changing. Everyone is just trying to squeeze as much fun into four years as they can before entering the real world.

It's not that everyone is getting married and moving on that scares me. I am looking forward to getting a job and starting "the rest of my life." What scares me is that many of us are starting to think like adults, and I don't mean in a good way.

How many times have you and your friends had the discussion about what you will do when you become parents? It seems come up more and more, and the views get a bit more radical every time.

I have friends that don't want to let their kids out of the house until they are 16 years old. And while these poor kids are locked up, they won't be allowed to have contact with the outside world through television.

I can understand the desire to shelter children with the current state of the world but I remember when we used to have these conversations in junior high.



### Student's refusal to take off hat angers many

Shawn Williams says, "When he took my hat off it became a racial issue." Students remove their hats in the MSC in honor of the fine Aggies, black and white, who made Mr. Williams' free speech possible. Although I am unaware of the severity of the altercation, removing a fellow Aggie's hat is not a racial statement. It is a subtle reminder of the respect that all Aggies deserve.

How ironic that Mr. Williams aims to build consideration for minorities through the promotion of a Multicultural Awareness class, yet he cannot complete the mental task of removing his hat to reverse his own kind — Aggies. Unfortunately, whomever removed Mr. Williams' hat fell into his trap.

Is it merely coincidence that the story of this "racist" incident shares the front page with Martin Luther King, Jr.? Dr. King's dream stresses mutual respect to ease race relations. Mr. Williams' showboating is disrespectful to Aggies dead and alive. My apologies if Mr. Williams was treated disdainfully; I am sure that the squabble height-

ens his cognizance of the insult caused by his insolent actions.

Did it ever occur to him that when the men told him to go to a school where he was wanted that they were not referring to the color of his skin? If they are like most Aggies, they are referring to the fact that he was not behaving with the pride and respect characteristic of all true Aggies, regardless of their skin color.

*Sarah Lowe  
Class of '98*

the First Amendment — and it allows me to state my feelings just as plainly. If he is so insecure as to blatantly dishonor the deaths of those who fought for him and then try to conceal his insecurity with some vague reference to bigotry, then he is not worth the spittle I would like to throw at his feet.

*Quentin N Ellis  
Class of '95  
Accompanied by 32 signatures*

### Aggie helps another to recover lost wallet

As I was dragging myself back to my dorm after completing the Houston Marathon, I unknowingly dropped my wallet (packed with \$62, credit cards and IDs). About five minutes after I returned to my room, a great Ag named Brandi Bender called and informed me that she had found my wallet. I am extremely proud to attend a university filled with honest and trustworthy people like Brandi.

*Shea Sellers  
Class of '95*

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