

Public TV, Arts deserve federal funding

For probably the first time in the '90s, the cause of choice at an awards show was not AIDS. A few red ribbons still popped up at the Oscars, but the pressing topic of the night was, appropriately enough, funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.

AMY UPTMOR
COLUMNIST



Both the NEA and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting are major targets for budget cuts by Congress. Desperate times call for desperate measures, they say. Rep. Barney Frank said budget cuts in this area are being considered with the "future in mind," referring to children and the problems their generation would face with an unbalanced budget.

I do not think he realized the full implications of that comment when he made it. The NEA and the CPB both have "the future" in mind — possibly more so than many areas of the government that are not being so financially scrutinized. Their impact is not as blatant as actual schooling, but the educational benefits can not be ignored.

The question that plagues Congress regarding the "to fund or not to fund the arts" dilemma is whether art is something that the government has any business funding. In the minds of many people, funding art is like funding pornography (i.e. free speech) and garbage (i.e. creativity). Regardless of how you interpret it, art has educational value, and thus deserves government funding.

Maybe I just have a soft spot for the CPB because I grew up watching Sesame Street and Reading Rainbow. My sister's children are now influenced by the same shows, and there is no doubt in either of our minds that the influence is positive.

PBS shows educate children. They promote literacy, combat ignorance and stimulate an interest in knowledge at a young age. More importantly, they teach morals. Barney annoys me as much as the next person, but I would rather hear children singing that wretched "I love you, you love me" song than practicing the latest kung-fu move they learned from watching the Power Rangers.

Our generation owes a lot to the CPB. It laid the groundwork for a higher level of learning. I hope it will still be around when I have children.

The NEA is as powerful as an educational tool. That money goes to a lot more than "pornographic artwork" — also known as free speech. NEA funds provide scholarships for students whose talent lies in art rather than in traditional school subjects.

There are also many programs that exist because of NEA funds that are more than beneficial to society. The Fort Wayne Philharmonic in Indiana, for example, has an anti-drug program that allows classical musicians to serve as role models for children. The Seattle Opera has discussions with prison inmates as part of a "rehabilitation through music" program.

These programs are unconventional and don't sound necessary, but then again, many people in this world cannot be reached through conventional means. Art seems to be an outlet to some people that helps them achieve a better life. Both of these programs have been successful in doing this.

I agree that desperate times call for desperate measures. And if it came down to either doing away with school lunches and education for the disadvantaged or funding for the NEA, then my loyalty would have to go to feeding and educating disadvantaged kids. But hopefully it will not come down to that.

And I do not have a problem with cutting funding for the arts. The problem is that some members of Congress plan to gradually reduce funding until it no longer exists. If the arts have any educational value and social merit whatsoever — and they do — then they deserve some form of funding from the government. The arts are largely funded by donations, but they will not survive without some government funding.

The real tragedy of this budget-balancing dilemma is that, in one way or another, children — and, thus, their education — are going to get hurt. If Barney Frank really had the future in mind, he would look to areas where money could be taken away without hurting "the future." Like cutting out some of the wasteful spending and outrageous salaries that plague Washington.

It's funny how grossly overpaid congressmen can see art as a waste of our money.

Then again, my thinking has been skewed by art and public television.

Amy Uptmor is a junior journalism major



Marijuana users needlessly hounded

The recent marijuana arrests at Walton Hall have led me to believe that a revision of the Aggie Code of Honor is in order. How about: "Aggies do not cheat, lie, steal or turn their fellow Ags into the repressive state apparatus." After all, even young children know that "tattle tales" are the most morally reprehensible individuals possible.

It is too bad that in this era of concern about violent crime our law enforcement priorities are so corrupted that consensual, peaceful recreational marijuana users are hounded by the government.

It would seem that we would be much better off locking up people like the informant. Alas, though, this society is far from evolving into a state with such a high degree of justice.

Jason F. Carr
Graduate Student

Affirmative Action facilitates diversity

Although I agreed with a certain campaign poster which stated affirmative action does not equal equality, I think affirmative action does equal diversity, and equality cannot survive without diversity. I know affirmative action recently has been criticized as being an insult to minorities. Here is an example of why affirmative action is necessary.

A man can walk home from campus at night with no fears at all. A woman can't walk to her car at night without being completely afraid of being raped. Though rape is a horrible crime, it receives a very lax sentence compared to many other "less important" crimes. This is because our justice system is not diverse enough to "understand" rape.

There is too much power in the hands of a homogeneous group.

Affirmative action can help this type of injustice. People may score higher on a test, but that doesn't mean they can understand the needs of everybody. There are just some qualifications that can't be tested, and I say that as someone who would in no way benefit from affirmative action.

Jeriad Zoghby
Class of '95

Silver Taps behavior shows lack of respect

Silver Taps is one of the most highly regarded and solemn traditions at Texas A&M. The solemnity of it was not taken into consideration by the "Aggieland" on Tuesday, April 4. Right before the Ross Volunteers marched in, a person pulled out a camera. Immediately, a concerned Ag quietly asked him what he was doing. He identified himself as a staff member of the Aggieband and said he was going to take pictures. He was politely asked not to, and he pretty much shrugged it off.

Another student asked him to please not use the flash, at least and show a little respect, and he again rudely responded that there was no way around it.

Take pictures of Bonfire, Yell Practice and Big Event, but leave the pictures of Silver Taps in the minds and hearts of those who hold it dear to them. Having him there taking pictures took away from the meaning, and I know the family members did not appreciate it.

There are pictures of Silver Taps in existence, and the Aggieband could have used those. Silver Taps does not change — pictures taken three years ago would suffice. It is not a show, it is a respected memorial service, and the photographer obviously doesn't respect those fallen Aggies.

Jennifer Lebsack
Kara DeLa Verge
Class of '98
accompanied by 18 signatures

People should consider consequences of actions

I know you have received many letters on the subject of abortion, however I am offering a different point of view that you may not have heard.

Pro-abortionists have an irrelevant argument when they say they are "pro-choice." The problem is they don't want to take responsibility for their choices. If a man and a woman make the choice to spend the night together, then they need to consider the consequences of their actions.

If they sincerely love each other, then they should be ready to spend their lives together and raise the child they conceive out of their love. They have just created a new human life designed in both their images.

When they choose abortion they are killing the result of their love and passion. Consequently, they are putting to death a part of themselves.

We are not animals with no emotions. There is a reason this issue has such strong feelings on both sides. Why are pro-abortionists adamant that this life is nothing but fetal tissue? Why so they get so angry if one suggests this conception is anything more than that? Because they feel the tremendous grief, pain and guilt for aborting their own flesh and blood.

When one woman told me she had had an abortion, she sorrowfully said that it "killed her."

A major reason abortions are happening in this country is because our children are not being taught the basic truths about the worth of human life. Why do parents risk losing all their possessions to save one of their children dying in hospitals of hideous diseases? Because they believe it's worth it.

I never met a person who decided to keep her child ever say she regretted her choice; but my sister-in-law mournfully regretted her choice.

Let's make wise choices and the right choice.

Let's stop the slaughtering of women's souls and priceless human life.

Jennifer Wells
Class of '82

A&M's example not exactly 'exemplary'

In response to last Tuesday's editorial, "Exemplary Example," I cannot comprehend the logic used to defend such an opinion.

I would trust that in hiring contractors, Texas A&M administrators did not have the goal of hiring more women and minorities.

The objective should be to hire the best contractor to maintain an acceptable balance between input — cost — and output — product provided.

This, and this alone, should be the basis for contracting. And if, by coincidence, 26.5 percent of those contractors are women and minorities, no harm is done.

Also, such a percentage have no relevance in the argument A&M is "making a real effort to achieve diversity and recognize cultural differences."

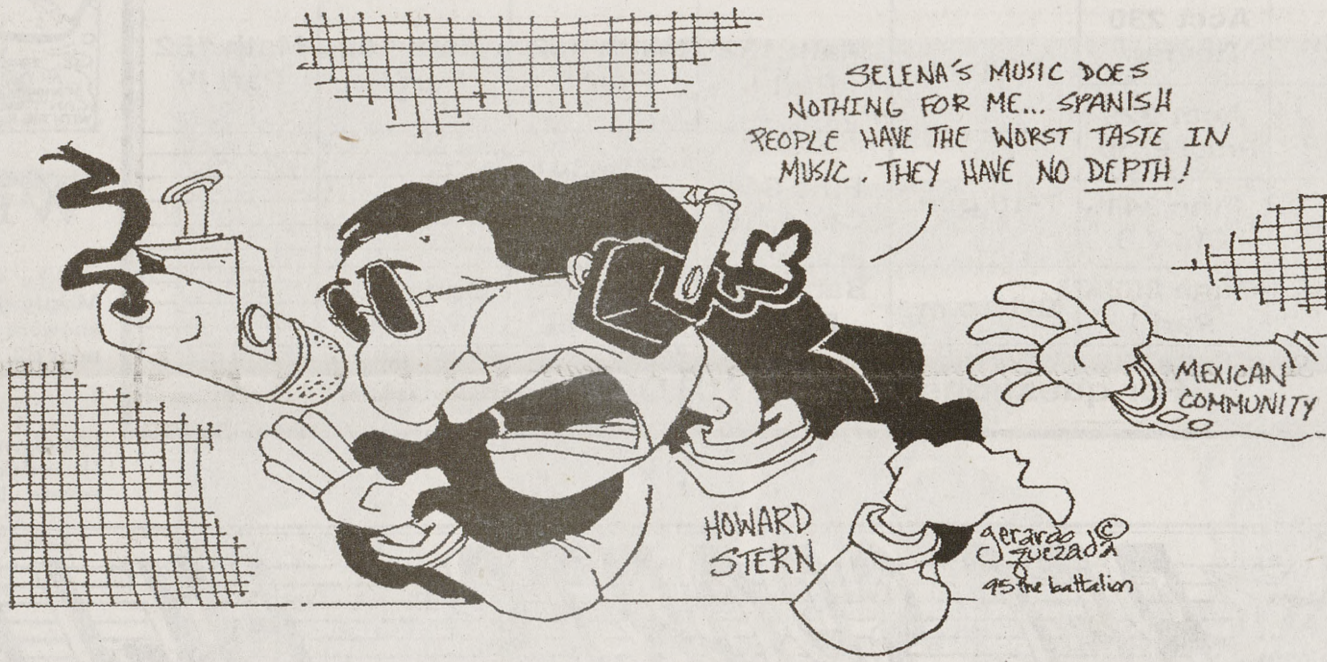
If, in hiring women and minority contractors, A&M is attempting to achieve diversity and rectify discrimination, one must conclude that A&M may not be getting the most for its dollars.

Only by hiring on sound economic judgment, not gender, race, or ethnicity, can A&M overcome stereo-types and discrimination.

This is the example A&M should set. By establishing diversity and affirmative action instead of prudent economic rationality, A&M has set an example I hope no one will follow.

Aaron Wendt
Class of '98

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TALK OF DEPTH FROM MR. SHALLOW HIMSELF

Always the time to do right

"Indifference will not do; disdain is disastrous," said Dr. Louis Sullivan, former Secretary of Health and Human Services, during his speech to A&M at the April 7 MSC Political Forum and MSC Great Issues program.

ERIN HILL
ASST. OPINION EDITOR



Anytime someone criticizes the status quo or suggests change around here, certain kinds of comments abound. Comments like, "I just don't see what the big deal is. Things don't seem to be that bad to me."

Or "When will they (fill in the blank for the group name) ever stop complaining about equality? I think they're exaggerating the problems."

Or "Things will just take care of themselves. We don't need to always be overanalyzing problems. Why are they making so many demands?"

For example, when minority students made certain demands of the University last fall, the campus was in an uproar about those demands.

Comments like these heard around campus are not too surprising. It is easy, after all, to get sick of something that is repeated all of the time. Our tolerance for an issue wanes, no matter what it is.

It seems that the average Aggie perceives the world, both in Aggieband and abroad, as being pretty darn nice. Sure, there are problems, but nothing that can't be dealt with. Since criticism sends a ripple through this placid perception, it is not appreciated.

Those people who do make big deals about issues are considered to be trouble makers by the non-boatrockers; people would like them to shut up. "Stop your complaining" seems to be the general sentiment among Aggies.

But we must not get so caught up in our contented state that we close our eyes to injustice.

Just think of early American colonialists who got pretty upset about the ridiculous tax situation that was King George's regime. They got fed-up with

"Taxation without representation," and instead of just sitting around on their colonial behinds, they revolted. This nation was founded on revolt — Locke's social contract underpinned everything.

Why should we abandon that revolutionary spirit now when it worked so well for so long.

Just because you have not experienced oppression doesn't mean others do not. Just because you haven't seen it or because you don't participate in the oppression of others does not mean that oppression isn't out there — it is.

It seems both ridiculous and self-centered to assume that everyone leads your life, and too many of us fall into that trap.

It seems that we are very limited in our viewpoints. Just because things, for the most part, are decent here in Aggieband, and the U.S. — a point which is debatable, by the way — doesn't mean that we should sit back and relax.

For starters, we ought to wonder how things got to be the way they are now. Just think, for a moment, about history, what was our past and what is our present.

It was only in the lifetime of our parents that black Americans began to see any semblance of Civil Rights. Women's lib came about in that time period too. Many who fought the original fights are still around. They are probably more able to see the sharp contrast between now and then, better than any student. So for a twentysomething someone to assess a cause and find it fulfilled, seems a tiny bit naive.

Things haven't always been the way they are now, lest we delude ourselves. The recent history of our nation shouts that to us loud and clear.

Jim Crow laws kept slavery-like conditions a reality well into our century. When we hear people talk about slavery, sometimes white students feel defensive. They reply that they never had

slaves, so why should they be blamed.

For starters, the issue isn't always about blame. But also, we shouldn't think that the slavery being referred to is the variety that President Lincoln abolished in the 1860s. Even after Reconstruction ended, horrible inequality stayed on as an unwelcome houseguest of the South. That state of affairs stayed with our country until visionaries like Martin Luther King, Jr. stepped up and accepted the mantle of a social reformer.

You see, things weren't just taking care of themselves. The situation had remained the way it was for a century. 100 years of inequality for black Americans seems like a very long time, long enough for it to be taken care of, if that theory of inertia were true. Perhaps things take care of themselves only after someone gets the ball rolling.

But too many people are afraid to give a shove to a cause, or else they are afraid of those who are pushing. It is those people, those who fear the fight for equality and remain complacent, that most hinder the cause of right.

As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "The Negro's great stumblingblock is not the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to "order" than to justice ... who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom." The freakish opposition may do harm, but it is an overt kind of damage. The passive wreak more havoc with their apathy. In doing nothing, they hinder the cause.

We all benefit from the efforts of those who give those first few difficult shoves and get the ball rolling, whether we realize it or not.

Whether or not we are advocates or passive consumers of another's advocacy is up to us.

But as Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "The time is always right to do right." And we can either be pushing the rock of justice, or be rolled-over by it.

Erin Hill is a senior English major