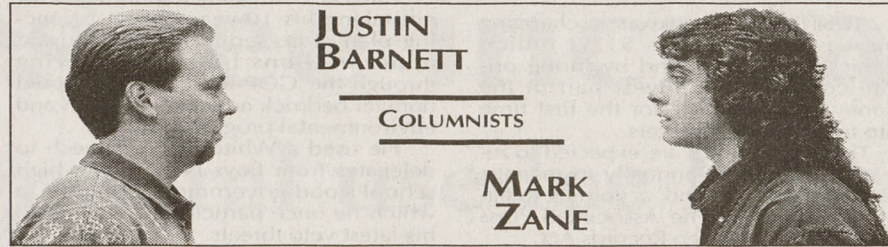


OPINION

THE DEBATE SURROUNDING MULTICULTURALISM

We must first study our own culture to understand others.



An increased campus diversity provides many opportunities.

Of all the trends and new ideas within the sphere of higher education, the one that seems to evoke the most heated debate is multiculturalism.

The argument has become so complex and so laden with rhetoric that any serious discussion of its merits, or lack thereof, frequently degenerates into a shouting match between supporters and opponents.

When a proposal to add a multicultural requirement to the core curriculum at Texas A&M was suggested, near hysteria ensued.

Debating the substantive aspects of the proposal was jettisoned in favor of rumors and innuendo. Any empirical evidence to either support or reject the value of multicultural studies was put on the back burner.

If the issue of multiculturalism is ever going to be honestly examined, then cool heads must prevail. Good arguments exist that both support and reject its inclusion in the educational curriculum. Hurling acrimonious charges back and forth will accomplish nothing.

Discussing the issue in a mature and rational manner, however, might alleviate many of the misconceptions. Despite the controversial nature of multiculturalism, it can be implemented if done so with common sense.

It would be even more beneficial if the politicians, activists, shrill ideologues and the self-anointed "experts" would steer clear of the whole process. Involving them is a sure path to failure. Their only motivation is the implementation of a personal agenda.

The educators and parents, those closest to the matter should be intimately involved with multicultural implementation.

They have the most to gain or lose. Supporters and opponents will not be around to pick up the pieces if the enterprise is a total disaster.

Lynn Cheney, former chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, outlined three ways to effectively im-

plement multiculturalism into the schools and universities. In a speech that was printed in *Change* magazine, she suggested that multiculturalism could be effective if the truth is told, if more culture rather than less is studied and if there is a strong emphasis on what we all have in common as Americans.

Telling the truth simply means providing a complete picture of the history of particular cultures and peoples.

That means the actual truth, not some revisionist distortion of the facts. The good, the bad and the ugly must all be included. All cultures have certain events in their past that are both inspiring and shameful. Neglecting either will not change anything.

Studying more culture rather than less means starting out with one's own culture. For people in the United States, that means American culture. If we do not know what makes us unique from others, how can we possibly appreciate the uniqueness of different cultures?

A rigorous study of our own culture will provide a firm foundation for the debate and exchange of ideas necessary in the educational process. Being resentful of your own culture and surroundings will not make you any less American.

Hyphenate yourself all you want. If you were born and raised here, you are an American. Calling yourself Mexican-American, African-American, Irish-American, etc. may sound romantic, but the people of those countries could spot you without any difficulty.

Americans have a peculiar habit of standing out. Most important in multicultural education is to emphasize what we share as a nation, as well as what sets us apart.

Men and women from many and varied backgrounds have shaped this nation.

We encompass peoples from all parts of the globe. We never have been monocultural. Regardless of past sins, the belief in equality

and freedom is what should bind us together.

Multiculturalism can be a positive aspect of the educational experience if these simple suggestions would be considered.

Using it for political purposes to stir controversy and paranoia is self-defeating for both sides.

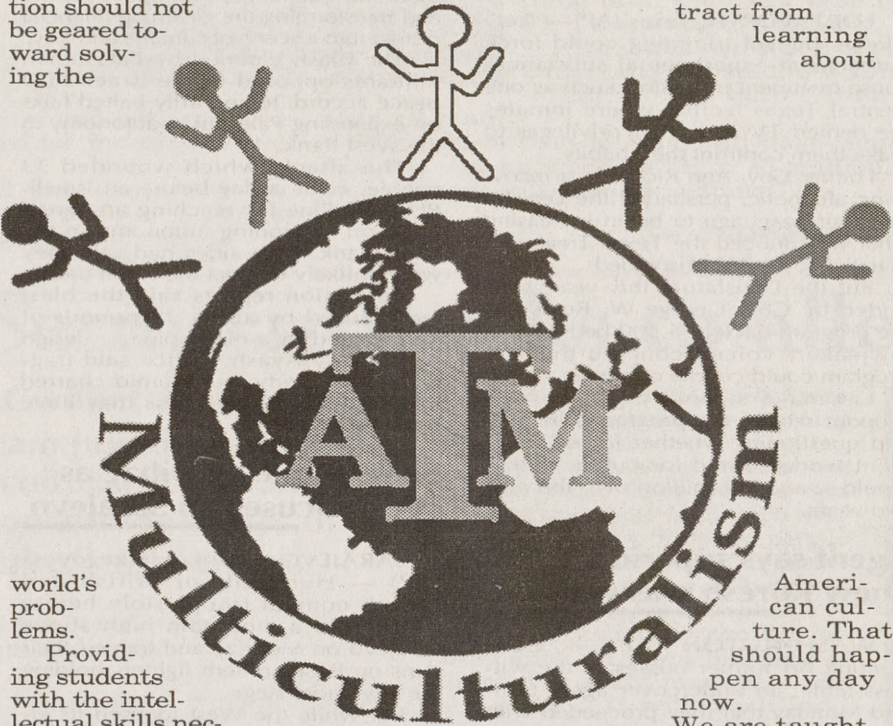
Multiculturalism will not solve the problems plaguing this country. The focus of education should not be geared toward solving the

world's problems.

Providing students with the intellectual skills necessary to evaluate and devise possible solutions for problems should be the primary goal of higher education.

Multiculturalism can be beneficial if used in this context.

The chic trends of the present will be gone by the time all problems are solved.



Justin Barnett is a senior English major

Mark Zane is a sociology graduate student

Alcohol habit at A&M hard to swallow

The thrills, the chills, the throw-up, the loss of memory, the sexual partners never met before and never to be seen again ... this is truly the life - at least at Texas A&M.

Drunkenness is a huge part of student life at Texas A&M, according to a recent Harvard study.

In the survey, which compared alcohol and drug statistics at A&M to those of other colleges and universities, Texas A&M dominated the charts and creamed a comparison of 140 colleges in categories ranging from "binged three or more times in the past two weeks" to "drove after drinking alcohol."

One surprise was that A&M was lower than other schools in the "requiring medical treatment" category - an ironic twist to the expected.

It seems that students here drink so much that drunk driving is old hat.

Yet the more people try to explain why they get wasted weekend after weekend, the less sense it makes. It just doesn't compute that someone - or over 87 percent of all students in good ol' Aggieland - would want to spend every weekend in a drunken stupor.

For a moment, let's put aside the fact that almost any drink tastes better than alcohol, or the fact that soda pop is a whole lot cheaper than either beer or wine.

Also, we should ignore the fact that high-calorie alcoholic drinks give usually health-conscious people the beer-bellies and double-chins with which drinking is often associated.

And finally, pretend for a moment that drinking doesn't cause people to act awfully dumb in front of friends and strangers alike.

Instead of dwelling on all of these tiny



ELIZABETH PRESTON
COLUMNIST

details, focus on the positives of drinking.

One that must be mentioned is the thrill of forgetting anything done on the night in question. This must help when students are at a dull party or have had a bad day.

There couldn't possibly be a better way to forget an F on a test than by drinking hard liquor and getting sick.

In addition, this cancels out the negative "acting dumb" factor, because the drunk in question won't be able to remember acting like an idiot in the first place.

Another positive aspect of binge drinking is the indescribable joy of sleeping with a stranger. The Harvard study reported that 29.5 percent of the Aggies drinking alcohol participated in unplanned sexual activity. These people must be immune to those little STDs that are such a bane to the rest of humanity.

Drinking for the specific purpose of getting drunk is a waste of time, energy and money.

And finally, the ultimate experience that keeps all Aggies running back for more, the grand finale of binge drinking; the toilet-hugging, or bowing to the porcelain god, spewing your guts or whatever you like to call it. It's a charming way to spend any evening.

Hmm. Then again, none of these sound like reasons to breathe or continue living, much less reasons to continue getting drunk week after week.

Seriously, drinking is not only overrated and dangerous, it is downright stupid. College students are supposed to learn, to ex-

pand their horizons, to make friends and learn how to influence people.

All of this is hard enough to do without adding binge drinking and drunk driving into the equation.

In addition, many people argue that they do not experience these effects because their bodies are used to drinking.

While this is indeed exciting news for them, the sad fact is that just because they think their bodies are used to drinking does not change the physical and psychological reactions all human bodies have when they have alcohol in their system, regardless of how often this happens.

Alcohol is a depressant, and therefore even one beer or glass of wine - even in the body of a very experienced drinker - slows reaction time considerably and leaves both the drinker and those around vulnerable.

This does not only mean vulnerable to car accidents, but also walking into things or falling and hurting themselves.

White crosses representing drunk driving victims can be seen all over the state of Texas, and all of those drivers felt "sure" that they were alright to drive. No one gets in a car planning to kill someone else or to end their own life.

Drinking is not the scourge of existence, and everyone who participates in it is not evil. However, binge drinking without a designated driver is not only stupid, it is murderous.

In addition, drinking for the specific purpose of getting drunk is a waste of time, energy and money.

Maybe someday A&M will be at the top of polls for "hours each student spends studying" or "most community service" instead of beating almost every other school in the country in aspects of drunkenness.

Elizabeth Preston is a senior English major



MAIL CALL

Stidvent mistaken about politics

Chris Stidvent got it all wrong in his column on Monday. Conservatives are in office or run for office because of one simple reason, it is the most effective way to create change.

How else can we slash the size of government?

The liberals who controlled Congress for 40 years never listened to the people. They only listened to their campaign advisers to get re-elected.

Liberals think that the average American is so stupid and incapable of taking care of themselves.

And what is Stidvent's source for his claims that the size of government is increasing?

As for his theory about environmental stimulus, how would he explain the "depression generation" as some would call it?

Wouldn't he say they had it very bad? Why didn't they turn into drug dealers and murderers?

Also, Head Start was not cut. Why does a reduction in growth become a cut in the mind of liberals? Do liberals storm into their employer's office screaming about a cut in their salaries

when their boss does not give them a raise?
*Hwa Ho
Class of '96*

PTTS wasteful in "recycling" efforts

The Parking Transit and Traffic Services has received numerous complaints about closed lots, parking tag price increases and so on. I have another complaint to make.

In the Koldus building, where its office is located, it has discarded 16 cases of parking maps.

You remember, the little envelope in which everyone receives their hang tags.

This is gross negligence on the PTTS's part. Surely it knows how many parking tags it will sell to the nearest thousand or so, but 16 cases? There must have been a few hundred in each case.

That's about 5,000 wasted maps and color envelopes. If one copy at the library costs 10 cents, how much did we pay through the PTTS for each color map and hang tag envelope?

*Adrian Sanderlin
Class of '94*

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