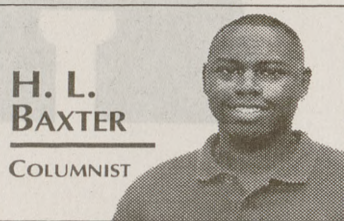


Newt's 'Americanism' strips away individuality



H. L. BAXTER
COLUMNIST

In a recent essay published in Time Magazine, Newt Gingrich relayed his feelings concerning the existence of the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Gingrich opined that "some aspects of government-subsidized art are clearly designed to undermine [American] civilization." He further asserted that abolishing the NEA is one of many steps to "renew American civilization."

The civilization Gingrich describes is a multi-ethnic, multi-faceted one. All the different ethnicities, labels and classifications comprise the American civilization. The way we renew this civilization, Gingrich claims, is by "[celebrating] what unites us instead of what divides us."

But what unites us in this heterogeneous society? The American flag? Apple pie? The simple fact that we're lucky enough to be Americans? Clearly there are more things dividing than uniting in this ill-cohesiveness. Americans differ in many ways and that's not a bad thing unless we make it so. In fact, differences are quite good.

Occasionally, my mother compares Americans to a stew. The different spices and odd mixtures give character and flavor; every ingredient complements another in some way. This is the stuff that makes American civilization. It's all quite simple.

So if we must celebrate, what do we celebrate? Do we celebrate the idea of Americanism or the different groups contributing to American civilization?

My initial response would be both. Since more differences exist than do similarities (and remember, that's a good thing), we would naturally celebrate cultural differences more often than similarities. The problem occurs when, in the course of celebration or expression, one culture offends another.

Gingrich cited an example of this scenario in his essay. Using Andres Serrano's photograph "Piss Christ," Gingrich asserts that the artist's expression of atheism or agnosticism offended Christians and those who possess "abiding faith in a higher power."

Clearly, any expression that offends another group is wrong.

However, that expression should not question the importance of that group's existence.

I may be hated and despised by a select few because I am black, but one cannot ignore the existence of the black race.

Similarly, one cannot ignore the issues that surface concerning the black race.

Ignoring the group or killing the messenger will not make the group disappear. It appears Gingrich believes otherwise by celebrating "what unites us

instead of what divides us."

We are not all white. We are not all male. We are not all heterosexual. We are not all Christian. We are all individuals first, Americans second.

Gingrich is right when he says we should celebrate being Americans. However, there is much more that makes us great. It would be foolish to ignore these unique aspects.

We have come full circle.

In the human race, we celebrate our cultures with art, ground them with science, treasure them with hope, share them with pride, guard them with defiance.

It is utterly ridiculous to believe one should shed his or her culture and adopt the all-encompassing "American culture." In fact, it is not only ridiculous, but impossible.

In my home state of Louisiana, the Cajuns try desperately to preserve facets of their unique culture. Their language, art, architecture, lifestyle and

other mores are disappearing because of assimilation into "American culture." The French are fighting a losing battle in an attempt to keep their language as pure as possible. Native Americans continue attempts to maintain their sacred rituals, crafts and other things that signify who they are.

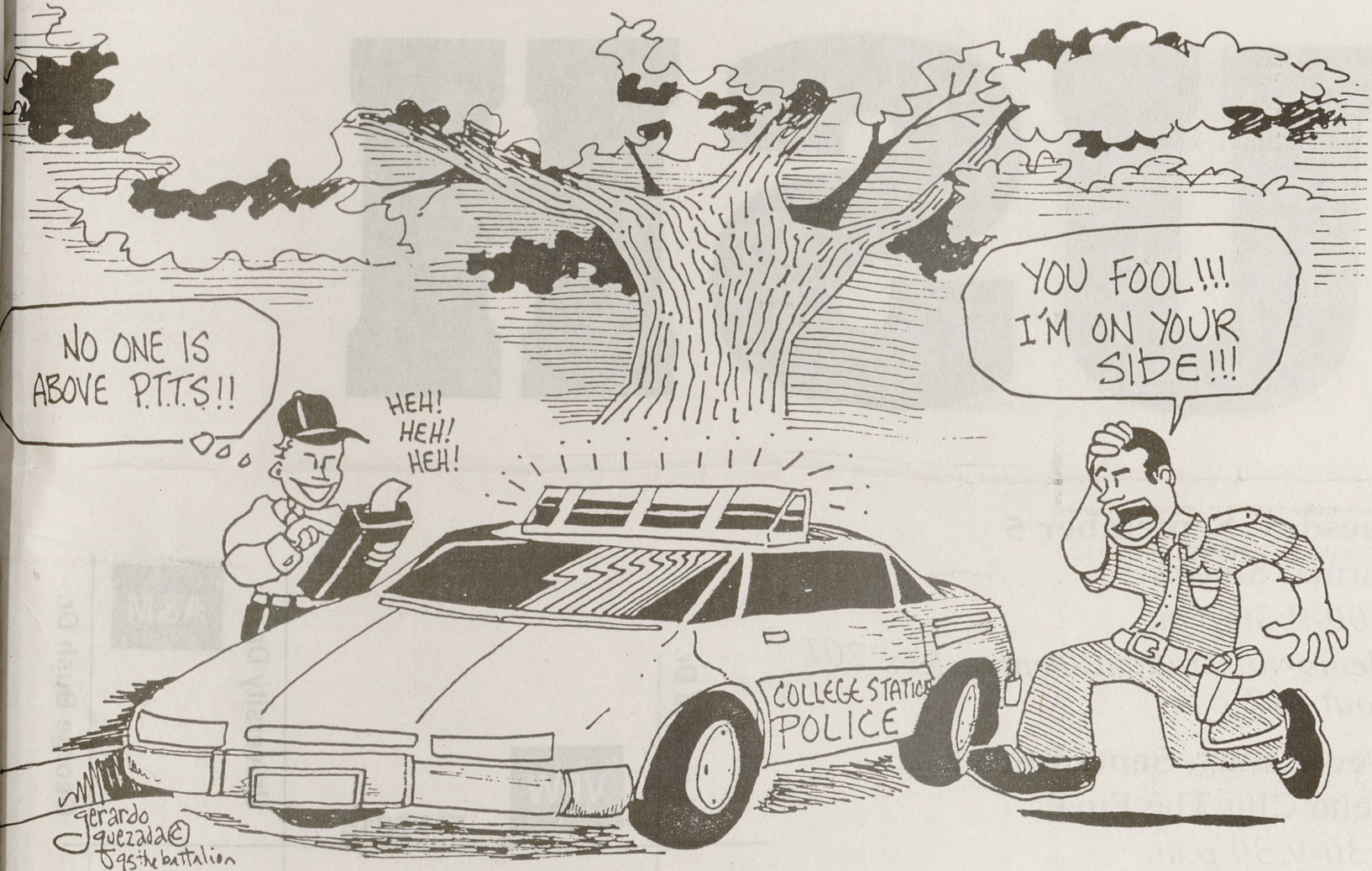
So it worries me when Newt Gingrich advocates assimilation into an "American culture" dominated by others like him.

It shocks me when Americans are not in favor of equal rights to groups that are denied them.

It appalls me when a student body adamantly opposes learning about different cultures.

In a time when America is becoming even more multi-ethnic and multicultural, it is shameful — and sometimes dangerous — to ignore the voices yearning for our undivided attention.

H. L. Baxter is a junior geography and political science major



THE BATTALION
Established in 1893

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EDITORIAL GOIN' MY WAY?

Public transportation to Aggie football games is greatly needed.

Football at Kyle Field: the incredible team, the yells, the crowds, the overpriced food and, of course, the parking.

Invariably, inconvenience and confusion are the rules of the day for fans who drive to Kyle Field on game day.

Traffic congestion before and after A&M football games has been a problem for years for visiting fans, alumni and students who live off campus. The frustration caused by such pre- and post-game hassles has reflected poorly on the University and its ability to remedy an ongoing problem.

A&M home games boast a huge attendance, and it is almost unimaginable that an increase in attendance is possible. Yet, as the Aggies gain national media attention, they will most assuredly gain more popularity, attendance and traffic.

A task force made up of state, city and University organizations was designed to alleviate the problems of traffic congestion by designing and

creating a worthwhile program.

The measure they came up with for combating Kyle Field traffic is the use of a shuttle bus service. This plan seems to be the most promising proposal put forth by any A&M organization to deal with a parking dilemma on game days.

There will be eight locations throughout the Bryan-College Station area where people can park and board the buses. This will eliminate the focal point of the traffic.

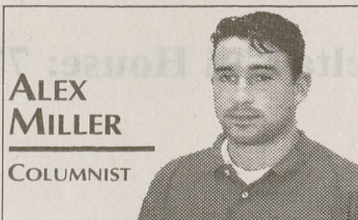
It is simple: the fewer the number of vehicles around Kyle Field, the lower the amount of congestion.

Also, construction on all of A&M's main roads within the next two years will most likely increase traffic problems, and this will make the use of the shuttle bus service even more attractive.

With the utilization of such a program, fans hopefully will experience the thrill of football, not the thrill of waiting in traffic and hunting for a parking space.

Finding what you seek

Those who want to think negatively about A&M will find ways to do so



ALEX MILLER
COLUMNIST

Six years can make quite a difference. As I look back on my first semester, I recall nothing but fond memories. Perhaps life was different then.

I started my tenure at A&M with a mouthful of braces, so it was virtually impossible to distinguish me as a freshman.

My sole concern during the first week of school was to find a refrigerator large enough to accommodate six cases of beer.

When I couldn't find a refrigerator large enough, I traded within the dorm for a 25-year-old roommate with bartending experience.

The year was 1990, the Reagan era was over, but many were still basking in its afterglow. The Corps didn't need permission to haze, and the word "multiculturalism" had not yet reared its ugly head.

Those were the good ol' days. Or were they?

I must have refrained from listening to campus rhetoric those first few days at A&M, because if it sounded anything like it has recently, it might have cast a shadow. I describe the University as "Divinely Inspired," but apparently many disagree.

It seems, my fellow students, there are those among us who simply cannot be happy. They thrive on conflict, seeking to never be satisfied until A&M is all they dreamed.

Now, after three or four years at school, these veterans so graciously take it upon themselves to tell incoming students just how miserable it has been for them here.

There is almost an arrogant quality to their sentiments, expressing how lucky you are not to start school here as ignorantly as they did. These doubting Thomases seem to burst with pride when they tell you, "Hey

man, housing here really sucks, I just thought you ought to know." Thanks!

Do people attend Texas A&M to solve world-wide problems (hunger, Bosnian strife, etc.), or is this just a fringe benefit of enrollment here?

Every so often, student rise from among the masses who appear to be majoring in activism and protest. They seem to stand against every belief on campus that is considered mainstream.

A few years ago, an individual surfaced whose entire career at Texas A&M seemed to revolve around getting people to stop eating grapes in protest of the treatment of migrant workers.

There was no great travesty at hand, the grape producers weren't Nazis, but this guy was relentless. This man had endeavored to search the nation for something to piss him off, and he succeeded.

In response, many students had to consume 70 to 80 pounds of grapes daily just to make light of the situation. Thank God for small fruit!

If some people would put half as much effort into being happy as they do in finding fault, many problems would simply not exist.

How many incoming students actually came to A&M with the pipe dream of equality? Luckily, someone was here to tell you there isn't equality: How enlightening! Truthfully, there is no equality, racial or otherwise, but there is fairness.

Everyone takes the same test to enroll, and once here, you have to fight to stay.

A friend of mine once told me he was confronted by discrimination on his first day at A&M.

Apparently, when he attended his fresh-

man chemistry lab, everyone "looked" at him, and no one sat beside him. I told him the same thing had happened to me, and I refused to believe I was a victim of discrimination.

As it turned out, we both happened to have been wearing the Aqua-Velva For Men we received in our campus care packages. Who could blame anyone for shying away?

Your life here is what you make it. Simply put, if you spend time looking for problems, you will find them.

If you choose to martyr yourself and solve these campus-wide atrocities, be the best at it. Just don't poison others with the game you have created.

Time is precious here, use it to your advantage.

If some people would put half as much effort into being happy as they do in finding fault, many problems would cease to exist.

Everyone attending Texas A&M has an opportunity to start anew, assuming you don't have braces.

You no longer have to be known by the fact that you drive a multi-colored Datsun B210, or that your mom was the high school cafeteria lunch lady.

So think twice when someone who has been here a little longer tells you how oppressed you are.

Spend your time making friends and grades, for there may come a time when that's all you have.

That and a stack of yellow parking tickets 9 feet tall.

Alex Miller is a senior bioenvironmental science major



MAIL CALL

Religion should not dictate values

Brian Beckcom's Aug. 30 column on values contains a lot of nonsense and double talk.

His premise states that America runs the risk of losing its identity if we accept the notion that individuals can practice whatever beliefs they want.

Beckcom states that truth is more important than values, but he just can't get the truth straight. Beckcom really doesn't want a new set of values, he wants his old set to be followed by everyone.

Sorry, but we have Catholics, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Atheists and Branch Davidians here now. They don't want to, and shouldn't have to, follow his set of values (if I'm correct in thinking that his set of values comes from his religion).

People know what's right and

what is wrong.

They don't need people like Beckcom to enforce religious beliefs on them.

We don't need to be preached to and definitely not by some distant politician.

Christopher Veel
Class of '97

Once an Aggie always an Aggie

Howdy Ags!

I have just one simple message that goes out to all the freshmen that live on the Northside, the Southside, the Quad and off-campus: You're Aggies now.

Don't let anyone tell you different because no one can take that away from you.

Joseph Piotrowski
Class of '97