

**THE BATTALION**  
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**EDITORIAL**

**LET THEM KNOW**

Students should utilize the new accessibility of A&M student leaders.

With the drastic increase in the general use fee this semester, many students now are questioning the strength of their voice at this University. Some student leaders, however, are now attempting to change that. Student Government has recently put great emphasis on opening the lines of communication between students and their representatives. Unfortunately, like real world politics, A&M politics usually reflect the more-vocal groups on campus. Therefore, Student Government should find ways to gauge the opinion of the entire student body rather than just the outspoken students on campus. One way the Student Government intends to better represent the opinion of the students is through an event called "Constituency Days." Through the program, the student senators would be more accessible to students to answer questions and listen to comments. With an informal environment, students will be more inclined to inject their opinions.

The leaders are definitely taking a step in the right direction by making themselves more available to student input. However, responsibility also lies with the students to become and remain informed on pertinent issues and to participate in the decisions made on campus. Ideally, students should voice their concerns to their student leaders. A number of ways already exist in which students can express their opinions to their campus representatives. Student leaders encourage contact either by phone, leaving a message in the Student Senate Office or via e-mail on the Student Government's home page on the World Wide Web. Student leaders also encourage students to attend Senate forums and round table discussions to stay informed of proposals and discussions. With increased student input, student leaders can better assess the needs and concerns of the students and, in turn, create a truly representative democracy here at A&M.

**Media fueled flames of O.J. trial**

The camera eye of the media turned the O.J. trial into a ridiculous circus

America's favorite spectator sport has just ended. Sadly enough, it occurred shortly after we learned the rules and jargon of the game. Judge Lance Ito had even implemented a two-minute warning for those of us who had to make a quick potty break or raid the fridge.



**JUAN HERNANDEZ**  
 COLUMNIST

On the up side, rumor has it that O.J. Simpson will be a special guest analyst for the Menendez Brothers' new trial, scheduled to air later this fall. The sad reality is that we as a nation watched a tragic event unfold in front of our eyes. But the truly disturbing idea is that we loved it. Many of us sat on our butts day after day with our remote controls surgically implanted in the palm of our hand and watched whatever the media fed us about the trial. We learned Judge Ito's favorite color is green, and that he drinks a warm glass of milk each night to help him relax. We learned from Defense Attorney F. Lee Bailey that excessive drinking may impede an individual's ability to perform a simple task, such as questioning a witness. Unfortunately, the media forgot to consistently remind us of the real victims: The children who lost their mother, the family who lost a son and the two people who lost their lives. Instead, each day we were assaulted and saturated by race-segregated polls and deviously constructed racial tensions. The media as a whole never seemed to care about the substance of the trial. Rather, it hungered for the conflict the trial could produce.

Like deprived vultures, reporters circled the attorneys, the judge and even the families of jurors to pick at fallen scraps of anything resembling a story. The media quickly converted a horrific event into entertainment. I am truly surprised a soundtrack has not yet been released for the trial. After all it was essentially equal to a TV version of Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*. The news people created an atmosphere portraying the black community as supporting Mr. Simpson as a martyr and the white community condemning him as a murderer. Was this a fair trial? Were the facts reported equally? The answer to both of these questions is unequivocally "no." The media's persistent demands for the spectacular created a constant atmosphere of animosity. The prosecution was out to humiliate the defendant, the defense was out to humiliate the Los Angeles Police Department, and Judge Ito was forced to preside over a courtroom melodrama. We lost our dignity and our faith in a quickly fading justice system. All of this thanks to the relentless media. Had the media not hyped this trial to the extent it did, the verdict would have been presented, and life for those involved would have moved forward without any further adieu. However, the news people had an end-

less and unnecessary urge to pull out their microscopes and further antagonize a difficult situation. I am not saying the media should ignore events, however, the media should be responsible and sensitive in situations such as this trial. So many lives were affected, from the victims to the jury members, and the press followed them all. As an individual I firmly believe in the ideology of a free press. However, I strongly disapprove of cameras in the courtrooms of America. I tend to agree with an audience member from the ABC program *Viewpoint* who stated quite simply, "the courtroom is not the amphitheater." It is a morbid situation that an estimated 90 percent of Americans watched the trial of the century's verdict.



This is especially startling and sad when compared to the number of Americans who vote in presidential elections — less than 50 percent. Even our grand old University was sucked into the media circus. On campus the day the verdict was to be announced, one could hear students and faculty asking each other if they were going to watch the reading of the verdict. Unfortunately, the media created a circus with this trial — and we were the clowns.

Juan Hernandez is a senior psychology major



**MAIL CALL**

**Anti-homosexual ad offensive to many**

The advertisements placed by campus-related Christian groups in recent editions of The Battalion are highly offensive and insensitive to campus gay and lesbian groups, as well as to people of other religious backgrounds. If this propaganda tactic is to combat Coming Out Week, then it is a poor strategy. The continual intolerance directed toward minorities, gay/lesbian groups and foreign students on this campus is highly frustrating. The type of sentiment as expressed in the advertisement perpetuates a narrow-mindedness that detracts from Texas A&M's efforts to be considered "world class."

Georgia Fox  
 Graduate Student

**Coming Out Week not for everyone**

I would like to point out that just as Pamela Benson, in her column concerning Allies, has classified gays as mistreated here at A&M, she classifies 'non-gays' as the "mistreaters." Don't worry, I'm not pleading reverse discrimination. I can handle it, as usual. I don't take a whole lot of pride in this week. It has nothing to do with me. I guess since I'm not an "Ally," then I am a joke-telling, homophobic, food-throwing, disrespectful Aggie.

Sarah Lewis  
 Class of '98

**Dispose of inserts in campus trash cans**

Having opposable thumbs is a wonderful thing. It concerns me that some Aggies are unable to take advantage of this versatile feature of the human anatomy. For example, the hand mus-

cles of some Aggies are so weak that they are unable to grasp a copy of The Battalion firmly enough to prevent the insert from falling out. Trash cans have been placed by some newsstands to spare these disadvantaged Aggies embarrassment. Perhaps the University could also offer a kinesiology course focused on the development of the hand. It is a shame that atrophied hand muscles are forcing Ags to litter their own campus.

Sara Lloyd  
 Class of '98

**More ideas for culture requirement**

For once, I agree with Chris Stidvent. He proposed the need to expand the "multicultural" curriculum. However, we "conservative white people" would like a fair hearing. Simply adding more classes doesn't qualify as fairness, but adding classes that promoted the opposite view would be truly open-minded. I have a few propositions of my own. Classes such as: HIST 700: *Scientific Evidence for the Existence of God*; Religious Studies 489: *Biblical Reliability*; or POLS 412: *Conservatism: Common Sense and Fact*.

Most Ags are not interested in only learning about cultures like their own. I know that other cultures are worthy of my attention and study time. But let me choose those cultures that I study.

Dustin J. Roberts  
 Class of '99

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor and will print as many as space allows. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald. A valid student ID is required. Letters may also be mailed to: The Battalion - Mail Call 013 Reed McDonald Fax: (409) 845-2647 Texas A&M University E-mail: Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu College Station, TX 77843-1111



ONE FINAL DESPERATE ATTEMPT COURTESY OF THE DEMOCRATS.



**Animal rights should start at home**

College students often adopt pets for all the wrong reasons, then ignore them

"Animals are not toys. They are sentient beings who, like us, require proper care to flourish," says People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, in one of their Internet fact sheets. Take a look around, however, and you'll see animals don't always get the care they need. In recent years, animal rights awareness has grown, thanks to high-visibility groups like PETA and celebrity supporters of animal rights, including Paul and Linda McCartney, Kim Basinger, Brigitte Bardot and k.d. lang.



**ERIN HILL**  
 COLUMNIST

More protest about animal testing resulted in a huge boom in eco-marketing, with companies like Bath & Body Works and The Body Shop pledging to the consumer that none of their products had been tested on animals. Aretha Franklin's fur coat-wearing fiasco at Clinton's inauguration — she wore one, and shouldn't have — showed how hot under the collar our society could get about minks and other exotic creatures exploited for their pelts when given the opportunity. But despite the heightened awareness about animals in the corporate captivity of cosmetic companies or fur coat manufacturers, there is still a group of animals that is abused and exploited with nary a thought. Examine some living conditions of the pets in your apartment complex, for starters, and you'll know what I'm talking about. Growing up in a college town, I learned early on that one of the particularly odd, yet fairly typical college student behaviors was having

pets but not taking proper care of them. My college student neighbors had a big black Labrador who would constantly lope over to the edge of the yard and stick his nose through the fence, looking for attention on our front lawn. Apparently, his side of the fence was a pretty depressing place. All of his playmates were either in studying or out partying. Some students get pets for fun. This is the "I've been kinda bored lately. I think I'm going to get a puppy" school of thought. Perhaps the nurturing maternal or paternal instinct kicks in, and a pet seems the easiest way to satisfy it. Too few students think about the animal's needs when they decide a new companion would be fun. While this new puppy, or kitten, or fish or bird may be delightful, a pet owner may grow tired of the daily care required. The pet becomes a nuisance. The pet becomes neglected. The pet ends up at places like the Humane Society which are filled beyond capacity with animals nobody wants. An animal is not merely an addition to the entertainment center in the living room. No matter how cute, an animal is a dependent. Pets, especially babies, need round-the-clock care. They must be thought of just like their human counterparts: Helpless without the care of a mother. If you are out of your apartment more hours then you are in it, you probably don't have the time needed to care for a small animal. Ask yourself this: If something happened during the day, and you weren't returning until hours later, after studying and hanging out with friends, who would take care of your pet? Before adopting, PETA suggests asking

yourself the following questions to gauge your appropriateness as a pet owner:

- Will someone have the time and patience to exercise and housebreak the animal?
- Is someone prepared to pay for food, accessories and inoculations?
- Is someone prepared to pay for veterinary treatment including spaying and neutering or emergencies?

**An animal is not merely an addition to the entertainment center in the living room. No matter how cute, it is a dependent.**

As PETA says, "Adopting an animal is like adopting a child in that it means making a lifelong commitment to care for and spend time with the animal and to provide for him or her in case of one's absence." Pets are not good presents. Pets should not be 'learning experiences' for children. Pets are not for your entertainment or comfort. Considering the lifestyles typical to students at this University (late nights, excessive time spent in a library carol, all-night study sessions at The Kettle, infrequent grocery shopping), it seems unlikely that many of us who have pets are really capable of giving them the care needed. Everyone may be well aware of the abuse that takes place inside laboratories. Just don't forget what could go on at home, too, if pet owners don't take appropriate responsibility for the life that's been entrusted to them.

Erin Hill is a graduate pursuing a teaching certificate