

Million Man March disappoints

Monday's march suffered from speeches containing contradictory messages

I'm confused. To those who know me this might come as no revelation, but yesterday I was hoping to find some answers. I spent several hours Monday watching the C-Span coverage of the Million Man March, and I must say I was impressed.



ALEX MILLER
 COLUMNIST

More than 400,000 people flooded the West Mall of our nation's capitol, bringing to mind the crowd that formed to hear Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech.

I was watching, in part, to clear up some misunderstandings I had as to the purpose of the march.

Last week, when I first caught wind of the gathering I understood the march to be a symbol of African-American strength. A return to the meat and potatoes of living, if you will. A display of responsible, family-oriented, spiritually-whole African-American men for all the nation to see.

When at first I tuned in Monday, that is exactly what I saw.

It was heartening to see fathers standing by their sons, grinning in obvious pride. One man from Mississippi went as far as making a large sign proclaiming that he was present because he had two daughters.

He was in Washington, D.C. to ensure their future and show others how it might be done. All across the reflection pool, people from the farthest corners of our country stood proudly accepting the challenge of being successful parents, proud business men and community leaders.

What consumed me from the beginning and initially spurred my interest in the march was wondering whether all of these African-American men showed up to display this fortitude, or to support the ideals and rhetoric of Louis Farrakhan, Nation of Islam leader.

The Nation of Islam officially organized the gathering as a show of unity, atonement and responsibility of African-American males. However, a number of speeches held on the mall were in stark contrast to any sense of unity the Nation of Islam hoped to present.

On Saturday, even before the gathering in Washington, D.C., the Nation of Islam stuck its foot in its mouth when their national youth minister Quaneel X noted that "Jews should go straight to hell."

Just the kind of unifying statement I expect from any youth minister.

And the contrast would not stop there.

Throughout the day, many references were made regarding the idea that Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, retired General Colin Powell and Los Angeles prosecutor Christopher Dardin were a "sell out" to their race.

Why? Because they speak their mind and stand alone for what they think is right like Frederick Douglas, or Sojourner Truth?

Monday afternoon, the Honorable Gus Savage, a former Democratic Congressman, spoke for several minutes without imparting a unifying or strengthening thought to anyone.

He fervently revealed to the crowd that it was impossible for an African-American today to even be called a racist — removing him from suspicion by redefining the word, I guess.

Later Mr. Savage would drop what I believed to be the biggest bomb of the day, when he briefly beckoned the idea of a separate judicial system for African-Americans only. His statement left the phrase "separate but equal" literally ringing in my ears.

This proposal was expressed from the same podium later, when Rosa Parks, a true American hero, spoke of her lifelong fight for

acceptance in society.

As you'll recall, Rosa Parks was the woman who refused to give up her bus seat to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955.

Maybe Mr. Savage would have rather Mrs. Parks taken her seat at the back of the bus, or would have preferred a separate bus all together!

The last indignation which was brought on the crowd was the very presence of convicted drug user, philanthropist and mayor of Washington, D.C. Marianne Berry.

Maybe I am too idealistic. My parents raised me in a color-blind house where everyone was accepted and racial remarks were left unuttered. They left me to decide and speak for myself. Never would I allow the remarks I heard Monday represent a group I was a part of.

It is at this point I find hope.

I will not accept that the 400,000 participants of Monday's Million Man March endorse such negativity.

I believe in the goodness, and reasonability of all people. For that reason, I will not accept that the 400,000 participants of Monday's rally endorse such negativity.

As the cameras panned the crowd, the faces I saw showed no signs of the hate I heard in the background. The children present beamed of the same potential we all possess.

My suggestion is that those behind the podium take a seat, listen and learn from those many faces in that crowd which embodied true unity and hope.

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EDITORIAL

EQUAL ACCESS

A&M should be commended for making the campus accessible to all.

Widespread institutional support for disabled students has been consistently demonstrated by Texas A&M. The University should be commended for its willingness to assist disabled students in receiving a complete education.

A&M facilities constructed after 1977 must accommodate disabled students.

Features such as automatic doors and wheelchair ramps provide some of those necessary accommodations.

These features are in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. This act provides that all facilities constructed after June 3, 1977 must be made accessible to disabled persons.

The Support Services office offers a variety of programs which assist disabled students and maintains a guide describing the accessibility of campus facilities for disabled persons.

For example, Support Services works with on-campus housing to provide handicapped-accessible dorm rooms.

These rooms are held in reserve until it is determined that all disabled students who desire on-campus housing have been accommodated.

Not all campus classrooms are accessible to disabled

students, but the University's policy ensures that classes are moved to buildings which meet ADA guidelines, if a need is determined.

Support Services also assists blind and deaf students, and other disabled students who need assistance.

Programs which provide in-class interpreters, note-takers, reader services and registration assistance are offered at no cost.

Great effort on the University's part is made to provide useful services.

When a need is demonstrated, Support Services responds by taking care of it, even seeking outside assistance if necessary.

Without the assistance of University Support Services, the dream of receiving a college education would be nearly impossible for many disabled students.

Classrooms would be inaccessible and traditional class schedules impossible to abide by. With help, however, all motivated students can receive a world-class education.

A disability should not be an insurmountable obstacle to receiving an education. With the assistance of the University and Support Services, it need not be.



Political animosities reversed in Austin

The protesters lined the walls where nearby, a political bigwig is speaking to several thousands of people.

They carried signs screaming that this political hotshot needs to get a backbone as passers-by spat out insults like "I just want to drop a bomb on you guys!"

These are the trials and travails of the dissenting few on a major university campus. These dissidents are going against the grain, professing beliefs that are largely unpopular on this politically homogeneous campus.

No, these protesters are not the liberal minority at Texas A&M.

They are conservatives. And they attend the University of Texas at Austin.

It's like looking in a mirror, huh?

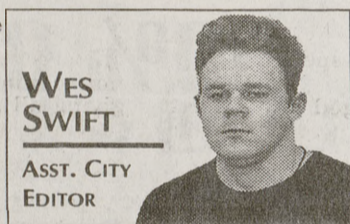
This is what struck me as I left the Frank Erwin, Jr. Special Events Center after hearing President Clinton speak on Monday. More than 11,000 people packed the arena to hear the president speak.

But what lay outside the arena was a flip-flop of what I saw last spring when Sen. Phil Gramm, R-Texas, announced his candidacy for president of the United States.

There, Gramm supporters tried to silence protesters from the Libertarian Party.

Gramm-backers used their own posters and signs to cover those of the protesters. Every time one of the Libertarians tried to say something, a chorus of pro-Gramm screaming muffled the dissenting cries.

But Monday, the shoe was on the other foot.



WES SWIFT
 ASST. CITY EDITOR

Conservatives were standing with their signs, stickers, pamphlets and brochures while they were ridiculed by the liberal majority.

An interesting paradox rises out of this situation. For quite some time, the liberal voices at Texas A&M have screamed about the narrow-minded mentality of the conservative majority.

When the roles are reversed, however, it seems that the liberal-minded have no qualms about playing the big, bad political bully.

Maybe, in the end, this says something more about the power of the majority, rather than the mean spirit of the conservatives and liberals.

On this campus, the conservative majority can scare dissenters — namely, the liberals — into relative silence. This can be seen in the prevalence of discrimination felt by minorities and other unpopular groups.

But at the University of Texas, the liberals don't have that problem. The conservatives are the ones who are laying low. They are ridiculed, prodded and pushed into being nothing more than sidewalk vendors for the right.

At both campuses, though, it seems that free thought is stifled. When no one gets a chance to express their views in an equal fashion, then the entire community doesn't get the other side of the story.

Protest signs, no matter how visible, can never substitute for solid, free thinking debate. The political minorities in these environments are no more than token arguments, because the ideological majorities

have the power to squash any debate.

So in the end, neither campus can be considered a true institution of higher learning because neither campus can boast of equal time for ideologies. Either the left is stepping on the right, or vice versa.

How can this be fixed? It's doubtful that either campus, unto themselves, can experience a drastic change in ideology. It would take much more interaction between the schools for such a revolution.

Perhaps the Texas A&M College Republicans could spend a few days promoting the conservative agenda with the Young Conservatives of Texas in Austin.

Or maybe a democratic student group from t.u. could spend a week with the Aggie Democrats promoting liberal causes.

Chances are that it would open some eyes on both campuses. Hell, it could even get the majorities at each university to lay off on their diminutive counterparts.

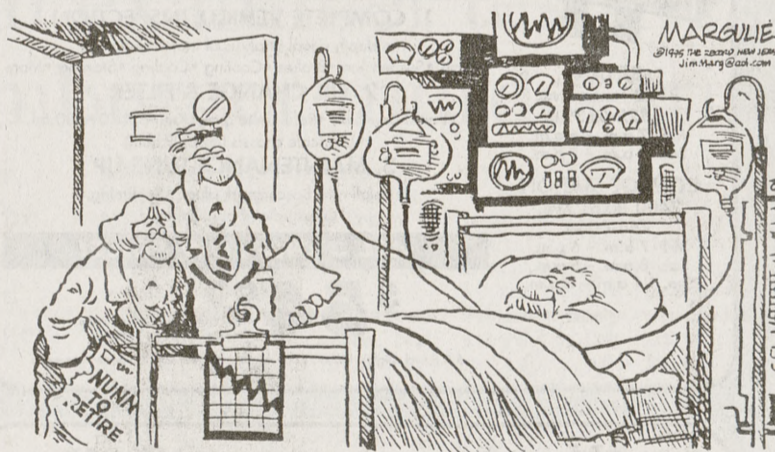
Will this ever happen? Doubtful. The politics of each campus are so ingrained in the identities of each school that such dynamic mingling could irreparably change the universities.

The most one could hope for is that the differences between the schools could serve, if for nothing else, as a point-counterpoint perspective that represent both sides of the political spectrum.

The students at the schools will have to change later, maybe even one student at a time, like my revelation in Austin changed me. Maybe in time, things will change.

Though I doubt it ... but even pipe dreams are worth having sometimes.

Wes Swift is a junior journalism major



"It doesn't look good, ma'am...we're downgraded his condition from 'CRITICAL' to 'SENATE DEMOCRAT'."



MAIL CALL

Columnists bash too much, too often

I was truly sickened by Chris Stidvent's article "Homosexuality — Not a Choice." In defending one group must he bash another?

The Battalion's opinion page bashes everyone endlessly; Christians, Republicans and conservatives are only a few.

I'm sure I'm not the only one who is tired of juvenile articles that endlessly stream out of the pens of opinion page columnists.

The article written by Michael Landauer "Bring back that Aggie feeling" which, believe it or not, was not a bashfest, was quite a sight for sore eyes.

It seems to me that most often the majority gets bashed.

I haven't seen one article in the Batt negatively portraying blacks, gays or Democrats and I don't want to.

However, when it comes to white, heterosexual, conservative Christians there is no end to the offensive articles.

If I'm not mistaken, the majority of this campus fits into at least one of these categories.

My writing this letter is the culmination of months of reading the Battalion putting it down with a sense of disappointment. Because of this trash printed daily I don't feel that I can support the Batt by picking it up to read it anymore. I guess Chris Stidvent should consider himself lucky.

Barry Shaeffer
 Class of '99

12th Man more than yell leaders

Last time I checked the spirit of the 12th Man was not solely dependent upon our five yell leaders. It is dependent upon us, the 12th Man.

Our spirit goes far beyond doing yells at Kyle Field or G. Rolie White. It goes beyond losing your voice or standing for four and a half hours. That "spirit" is made up of respect, admiration and pride.

Maybe we don't do as many yells this year because we have TV timeouts, something we didn't have last year. Maybe it's because we have more respect for our opponents than they do for us.

The tradition of the 12th Man may have started as support for our football team, but the legend of E. King Gill means we are a step above everyone else. We, as Aggies, take pride in all we do.

The yell leaders who epitomize our spirit — David, Henry, Michael, David and Chris — do more than we give them credit for. Their "job" isn't just limited to a weekend at Kyle Field, it's 24 hours a day, everyday.

Before judging the spirit of the 12th Man, take a step back to think about what it stands for. Gig 'em and beat the hell outta Baylor!

Kathryn Farnum
 Class of '96

Not all college pet owners are cruel

I agreed with Erin Hill on several points in her column about animal rights. However, I objected to her idea that the typical college student can't care for a pet.

Three years ago, I purchased a beagle puppy. He has become one of my best friends.

Yes, I am a "typical college student." I party. I study. I stay up and sleep late. But I take good care of Crosby, my dog, as well.

Although I don't always buy groceries for myself, he never goes hungry. He always has all of his shots. I get up ten minutes early to walk him. When I visit my parents, Crosby comes with me.

Yes, I have had to adjust my schedule since becoming a dog owner, but nothing compares to coming home and having a cute

face and wagging tail to greet me.

Some college students mistreat and neglect their pets. And I agree these people should not own pets. But they are not typical college students who own pets.

Amy Ferguson
 Class of '94

Most homosexuals don't fit stereotype

I read the anti-gay ads in last week's Battalion with disappointment. The ads had an oversimplified perception of what it means to be gay.

The image of gays and lesbians as a group of lonely, isolated souls separated from God who endlessly roam gay bars is incorrect. Getting to know a few of us might help people understand how poorly most of us fit the stereotype.

My partner and I have been together for three years. We have a committed, loving monogamous relationship. We attend church here in College Station, and are welcomed and supported by the ministry and congregation.

We plan to have a commitment

ceremony in May. Also, our families know we are gay and they're involved in our relationship.

We are invited places as a couple. Our parents give us advice on our relationship. When my father developed Alzheimer's disease, we helped care for him.

I'm not asking you to approve of our relationship. There is more to being a Christian than who you choose to spend your life with.

It is behavior toward others, dedication to family and friends and the way that we act as stewards of God that are truly important.

A loving partnership with another person, whether gay or straight, brings God more completely into our lives.

Anne Woods
 Class of '93

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