

## We can't forget our history

AJA HENDERSON  
COLUMNIST



Why do so many people detest Black History Month? I gave the closing remarks at the Black Action Committee's exceptional Black History Month program recently. The program was held in the MSC Flagroom. It was greatly annoying to see students nonchalantly finishing their homework or just shooting the breeze, slouching down in their seats or rolling their eyes as we stood and sang our "Black National Anthem." Couldn't they have just left or at least stood up for the anthem, a song that symbolizes pride and unity within our culture, instead of "dissing" it? This enraged me.

My best guess as to why people detest Black History Month is that it makes folks uncomfortable. People are forced to remember one of the most gruesome times in this country's brief history. The picture is not pretty. The whippings, the mass rape of slave women, the cruelty of an institution that divides the races even today. Well, this is the thing. Black History Month is not here to ease the soul, to pat people on the hand and say that things are all right. Rather, it is designed to bring remembrance so that history will not be repeated.

Do you think it is any easier for a black person? Do you think that I am comfortable imagining slaves being whipped or thinking back on the day when blacks couldn't even sit at the front of the bus? Do these things bring me joy?

They do not. They give me a fresh wave of hate against that institution. They make me wonder where my last name, Henderson, came from and where exactly my ancestors were from. Unlike people who can say, "I'm an Irish-German-English whatever," I can't name countries like that. I don't know any particulars — I can only tell by my dark skin and features that my ancestors were snatched from a big continent called Africa. And that's sad, because I want to know. And Black History Month reminds me that I do not know. So, it's not easy, but I will keep on celebrating the folks who helped bring about change and mourning for those crushed under the system. I will celebrate and wipe my tears at the same time.

Some people think we should just sever our ties with the past. "My ancestors didn't do it" ... "It happened a long time ago" ... "I don't know why they have Black History Month, anyway — we are all Americans."

How shallow. I don't need reminders that I am an American first. This country was built on the back of my ancestors. Hell yeah, this is my country. And I am well aware that most whites were not "fortunate" enough to have the money to even dream of a having five slaves, much less live the *Gone With the Wind* lifestyle. Thus, I find it to be gross self-flattery when someone spits, "Don't hold me responsible for what my forefathers did."

As for the people who voice opposition to Black History Month with the insincere excuse that it further divides us ... OK, first you don't want me to call myself a Black American, then you want my month to be blotted out under the justification of racial harmony. Well, if you think that these things will bring us closer together, you are wrong. The way we will come closer together is to stop the denial of what happened (and is still happening in this country and on this campus). We must swallow the atrocities before we move forward.

Then, perhaps, maybe everyone can stand up together for the "Black National Anthem" just as easily as they can for "The Star Spangled Banner."

Aja Henderson is a junior political science major

## Fair gives the boot to ethnic days

AND STAY OUT!!!!

Big Tex is being downright uncordial. Organizers of this year's State Fair of Texas are shutting the door on ethnic days, which have been part of the fair since its early years. Errol McKoy, president of the fair, told The Dallas Morning News the decision was prompted by a loss of \$65,000 on such days from last year's fair. But something else happened at last year's fair.

Gay and lesbian organizations sponsored National Coming Out Day at the fair. That day also lost money. Now, I wouldn't want to suggest that just because the gays and lesbians sponsored a day at the fair that the good ol' boys in charge would do away with all of them. I mean really, Texas is the "Homophobic State," but to make this accusation is going too far.

But it's not. Eileen Stangeland, chairwoman of Norway Day, was told in a letter from organizers that last year's 20th Norway Day would be the fair's last.

"It said that, because of other groups wanting to have similar functions, we weren't going to have ethnic days anymore," she told The Morning News.

So now we have it. The cat is out of the bag. The State Fair celebrates Texas — its people, its history and its culture. The fair should represent all Texans. Germans, Norwegians, Czechs and Italians played important roles in the development of this state.

But now the fair only seems to represent the glorified image of Big Tex — the great white cowboy who fought valiantly against Mexico to win independence.

McKoy says that African Americans and Hispanics have a more constant presence at the fair, and so we don't need any other special days. McKoy shouldn't flaunt their presence as some sort of concession. It wasn't until well after statehood that whites surpassed Hispanics in population here. If they did not have a constant presence at the fair, there would be some major explaining to do.

Instead, the organizers should be spending their time explaining the exclusions of smaller groups.

I doubt we'll see enough volunteers of Norwegian or German descent to have such a constant presence. That is exactly why those groups deserve to have special days set aside during the fair. If these days are losing money, then other solutions should be sought. Perhaps there needs to be an increased call for volunteers and fund raising within those communities. They might rally

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around the cause to keep them from being excluded from Texas history. But we'll never know if this knee-jerk decision is left to stand.

But let's face it. People are expected to go to the fair to ride the rides, eat the cotton candy and eat barbecue. They aren't supposed to go to express their homosexuality. That idea scares the hell out of the good ol' boys in charge.

But they neatly avoided the issue by doing away with all special days that weren't profitable (Senior Citizens Day and public and private schools days still turn a profit).

So they've set the ground rules and disguised their homophobia, but Texas continues to progress despite their best efforts. Eventually the fair will have to celebrate all Texans. Someday people will recognize that several cultures have existed within our boundaries. These cultures and these people won't go away, but hopefully closed-mindedness will.

Until then, the message is clear: No group will be part of the celebration of Texas unless it can turn a profit for Big Tex.

The organizers can try to narrow the scope of the fair all they want. They can create some lilly-white, legendary sense of what Texas was, but one thing is clear: The fair no longer represents all Texas is.

Michael Landauer is a junior journalism major



## MAIL CALL

### There's more to baseball etiquette

Sports columnist Lisa Nance's Olsen Field etiquette is vital when attending Aggie home games. It can be very embarrassing if you do not know the proper response to the action in the game. Also, the Aggie players in the dugout love watching the fans act the way they do. Here are a few additions to the etiquette list.

1. Bill Hickey, the first-base coach, is known as "Wildman" and deserves a standing ovation every inning when he runs out to his spot along the base-line. This is the students' way of letting him know he does not go unnoticed.

2. When a big rally or the shark fin goes across the scoreboard, the students are supposed to do the chomp. That is, you clap hands like a shark mouth opening and closing.

3. Don't do normal Aggie yells. Baseball is played in the spring; let the students relax in the great weather and watch baseball. The extreme case does come into play against Texas, when the expected "Beat the Hell outta U." is needed.

4. If a player is hit by a pitch or falls down, say "ouch" every time he takes a step or swings the bat.

5. When an A&M pitcher strikes out a batter, they play the rifleman over the P.A. system and

the crowd stands up to empty their shells from their gun.

6. If a fan drops a foul ball hit into the stands, give him an "EEEEEEEEEE," just to let him know that every person there saw him make that error.

7. After a foul ball is hit and it leaves the stadium, the P.A. guy will play a car window smashing or cow "moo." It is always polite to give him a golf clap to let him know he has done a good job.

8. When an Aggie hits a home run over the monster or makes an amazing defensive play, it is proper to give that player the "we're not worthy, we're not worthy" bow repeatedly out of respect.

9. Late in the game, when the relief pitcher is brought in, wave your arms like a vulture and call out "Caaw!!!Caaw!!!" This is to let relief pitchers know they are like vultures in stealing the show from the hard-working starter.

10. At the beginning of the last inning or any half inning that may end the game, everyone stands for the War Hymn. If the player is short ask him "Who makes your uniform? Geranimals!" Or if he is a husky fella say "unbutton your shirt so the other guy can breathe!" Unlike other sports, don't be afraid to start new traditions at baseball games.

David Minor  
Class of '95

### Business fraternities do more than party

I am writing in response to the column by James Francis that appeared on Feb. 15 in The Battalion. It is truly sad that columnists today can not compliment someone without tarnishing the image of others. The thought behind this column was sound. However the approach to its comparisons were biased. The graphic shown with the column presented an image that does not truly represent social or business fraternities on campus. The stereotyping of all Greek fraternities with a keg is ludicrous. Had Francis done more research he would have found that some Greek fraternities on this campus actually do more than party, they are professional organizations that focus on the betterment of the members not only in college, but in the world after graduation. Maybe Francis should have thought about these things before categorizing all fraternities by representing them with a keg in the newspaper.

Walt Smith  
Class of '97

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## Education requires practical application

My first class at A&M was in 102 Zachry, a classroom that looked remarkably similar to the inside of the Astrodome.



HEATHER PACE  
STAFF WRITER

It's because education is all about learning to think for yourself, something that is lost in the shuffle of earning 128 credit hours to graduate.

Suddenly, in my spare time, I was memorizing large textbooks filled with information that disappeared from my mind the day after the exam.

I learned how many judges were on the Texas Supreme Court and which button you pressed on the computer to center titles, but my intellectual faculties were hardly being cultivated — more like stomped all over.

I don't need a teacher to tell me how to justify the right side of my papers—I know how to read. I need a teacher to challenge me to think for myself.

The purpose of an education is not to compress as many facts as possible into students' heads, but to enlarge their understanding of the world and their ability to survive in it.

our system of education be improved? I am taking a philosophy class that is examining the existence of God.

As I sit in class, I listen to my teacher expound intelligently on various theories with complicated names that we memorize so we can fill out scantrons every once in a while.

Then, our class of 360 divides into discussion sessions where our TA expounds intelligently on what our teacher already said in class. I am still waiting for the discussion part of our discussion session.

I propose learning not who believes what theory and why, but whether my classmates believe in God, what religion means to them, etc. . . .

Although we might not

### The purpose of an education is not to compress as many facts as possible into students' heads, but to enlarge their understanding of the world and their ability to survive in it.

There is an old saying that goes something along the lines of, "Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish, you feed him for a lifetime."

The useless facts I am spoon-fed soon leave me, but the lessons I learn from the teachers who bring the world into the classroom will always be invaluable to me.

It is not sitting through countless lectures and spending Friday nights in the library studying for a 4.0 that will ensure success; it is getting out there and discovering how the world works.

One of my friends is a construction science major who spends his weekends working for a builder because he believes he has learned more through first-hand experience than he will ever learn in his classes.

How is it that some Fortune 500 companies are run by people without college degrees?

impress anyone with our knowledge of the "Principle of Sufficient Reason" at a cocktail party 20 years down the road, we will leave the class with a better understanding of ourselves and a greater ability to reason.

That will put us in better stead than memorizing Plato's Republic would ever do.

I am still trying to figure out how college is educating me by "cultivating intellectual or moral faculties," as Webster so aptly describes it.

If all my classes challenged me to think—to look at something in a different perspective—instead of just following my textbooks, I would feel that my schooling had prepared me for life.

I only wish my parents would try to understand this the next time they get my grades.

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