

## Assault on homosexuals' rights

### Salt Lake City schools punish gays, chess players

Texas A&M has been displaced. Knocked off the top of the conservative list by the Salt Lake City, Utah, school board, no less.

**SHANNON HALBROOK**  
COLUMNIST



This ruling reflects the uncomfortable mixture we have in America. We have to balance rights with an umbrella of morality we expect of everyone. In the ideal, free America, people should be able to do whatever they want, as long as it's not harmful to anyone else. Homosexuality — when all the scary speeches and phobias are drained from its edges — is certainly not harmful to anyone else.

On Feb. 21, the school district banned all extracurricular school clubs to avoid having a gay and lesbian student group. Back in December, students requested such a group, and the state attorney general approved it.

However, the school board voted 4-3 to disband all extracurricular clubs from its schools rather than allow the gay and lesbian group to meet. This means that the environmental clubs, peer leadership groups, ethnic clubs, skiing club and the chess club have all been banned for the academic year.

The complaint against a club is that it will somehow encourage perversion and sexual immorality.

Contrary to the popular conservative belief, just because a person is homosexual doesn't mean that he or she is promiscuous. Just because the group was going to be a gay and lesbian group implies in no way that sex was going to be involved.

The slated purpose of the club was to merely provide a forum. A place for people to talk. Not a hookup group. Not a group to undermine school control. And certainly not a place to organize "orgies." Although there is a state law against sodomy, there is no law forbidding homosexuals from speaking with each other.

Those who argued against the club said that its existence might implicitly condone homosexuality. But the issue is not homosexuality — the issue is whether homosexual students have the right to associate with other homosexual students. And the school, by denying the students this right, is acting unconstitutionally. If allowing a gay club to meet on campus condones homosexuality, then the school district had no choice but to condone it, because to forbid it is illegal.

Allowing homosexuality is hardly encouraging it. Quietly permitting a homosexual group would have been nicely neutral, allowing all parties involved to do what they want.

Homosexuality is a sensitive subject for squeamish, conservative Utahans. But not only the gay and lesbian students are suffering because of this ruling. Since all the clubs are being sacrificed for the gay and lesbian group, all the clubs deserve to be defended. None should be done away with.

Take for instance the chess club. The chess club has been banned, like the rest, because the school board wants to bury the sin of homosexuality in its district. But the chess club hurts no one. Students at the school who prefer checkers, backgammon, Parcheesi or Chutes and Ladders are in no way encouraged to switch to chess or even try a game or two.

Students who like chess, on the other hand, play it in the privacy of their own homes and use the chess club only to talk to each other about their game and the social oppression they must face as chess players. When one is constantly called a geek, dork or rook-grabbing-bishop-fondling-heathen, it helps to talk frankly to others who must bear the same hateful epithets. Despite the fact that many famous people openly play chess — including Garry Kasparov and the computer that beat him — the chess players are being downtrodden because of some outdated, oppressive social stigma.

The students who formed the chess club are exercising their rights in a valid way, using a school club to get to know people with common interests. So are the students who tried to form the gay and lesbian club. There's no difference. They shouldn't be treated any differently.

Shannon Halbrook is a sophomore English major

### Alabama legislature ignores A&M case

Imagine entering Texas A&M University as a freshman in 1975. Mother and Father are at least 100 miles away. Distance was essential, because if they found out that you are gay, the repercussions would be catastrophic.

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COLUMNIST



Also imagine that Mom and Dad could not provide a car, so off-campus trips would be few and far between.

You are having trouble dealing with your homosexuality and prefer to talk to people in a similar situation to find out how they are dealing with it.

Unfortunately, you discover that an organization catering to your needs did not exist; the University refused to recognize it.

In addition, you learn a group of gay students does congregate, but off campus. What do you do?

The unenlightened among us would respond, "Well, Highway 6 runs both ways."

However, after an eight-year battle, Texas A&M finally recognized a group catering to the needs of gays and lesbians. The case, *Gay Student Services vs. Texas A&M University*, went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Well, it's 1996, and such organizations are common fixtures at most college campuses. However, the Alabama Legislature sought to become the exception when it passed a statute prohibiting "any

college from spending public funds or using facilities to recognize any group that promotes a lifestyle or actions prohibited by the sodomy or sexual misconduct laws." The statute also prohibits any group from "permitting or encouraging its members or others to engage in or provide materials on how to engage in the lifestyle or actions."

In Alabama, "sexual misconduct" is defined by the state's constitution as intercourse between unmarried persons, oral sex and sodomy. All homosexual conduct is considered criminal. The statute referred to this section of the constitution for justification.

However, if "sexual misconduct" were any of these things, organizations for married persons, fraternities and sororities and perhaps other organizations would lose recognition and funding, too.

Who is to say that members of these groups do not practice "sexual misconduct?" There is no way to determine this. Likewise, one cannot assume that members of a gay group practice such behavior or advocate it.

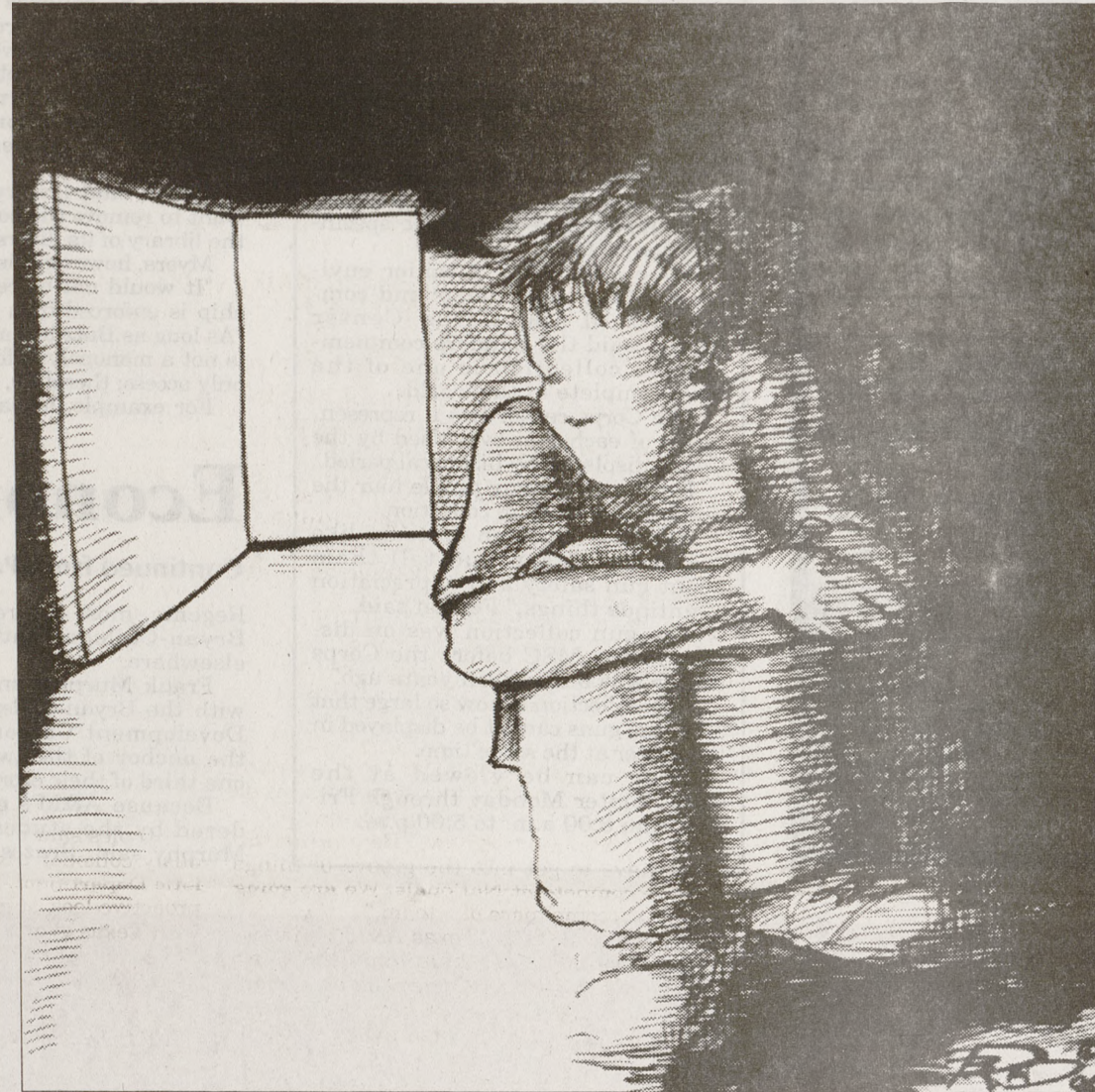
In fact, the mission statements of all gay and lesbian organizations that were denied funding relay basically the same purpose: the organization was there to provide support to the local gay and lesbian community and to combat homophobia. Nowhere in their respective constitutions did it say that the organization existed to promote its "lifestyle" or to encourage members to practice sodomy.

The section describing the practice of a homosexual "lifestyle" as criminal is equally disturbing. A "lifestyle" implies choice. If a person desires to live a certain lifestyle, her or she would choose to acquire those things that would allow him or her to lead that lifestyle. Most, if not all, psychologists today say that individuals do not choose homosexuality. With the amount of persecution homosexuals in America face, who would "choose" it?

Clearly, the Alabama Legislature unfairly targeted gays and lesbians. We would think the ruling in *Gay Student Services vs. Texas A&M University*, as well as the inalienable right of Americans to assemble, would make the legislators think twice before enacting such an asinine statute, but who said lawmakers were required to know the law?

And who's to say that this waste of time and money won't happen again?

H. L. Baxter is a junior geography major



### Clinton courts terrorists in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland. Why should anybody at A&M care? Unless their roots or family are over there, they don't have much of a reason. However, the president and her husband decreed otherwise. I guess it was a slow day in the Oval Office, and not having enough problems of their own (Bosnia, poverty and crime), they decided to stick their noses into something that does not concern them, perhaps in the hopes of distracting the American public from the problems they have failed to fix over here.

**KIERAN WATSON**  
COLUMNIST



be a huge problem; after all, countries being intermediaries is what diplomacy is about. However, the way to try to solve this problem is not to invite Gerry Adams, a

man who is a murderer and an anarchist, to the White House. The correct way would be to impartially look at both sides and then try to suggest a solution. Inviting Adams to America last year just to make the pro-IRA voters happy was a juvenile attempt at politics. How would Clinton, and more importantly the American people, feel if the British government invited Timothy McVeigh to 10 Downing St., wined and dined him, then chastised the American government for being so gosh darned mean as to expect a murderer to face his

punishment? Rather annoyed, I would imagine.

Maybe Clinton has some plan to make alliances with the world's terrorists and scare the American public into giving him a second term.

One aspect of this conflict is slightly amusing. I asked a friend who supports Northern Ireland's bid for separation how the residents who want to be part of England would feel if they were abandoned by the British government. She did not even know there were residents who are pro-Britain. This is not a case of a country deciding to go on an invasion binge just for something to do. British subjects live and work in Northern Ireland and have the right to live without fear of terrorism.

The next question is why would anyone want to rejoin Ireland. The only reason Ireland is still economically viable is because Britain props it up. For

years the government has restricted capital movement out of Ireland, property values have plummeted, and taxes have skyrocketed. Several of my relatives left Ireland as soon as they were old enough to get a British work permit. Emigration has become a national pastime.

Britain, on the other hand, has the best economic outlook in Europe. Britain, as of last week, has the lowest unemployment rate of any country in Europe, the highest number of new jobs generated in Europe, and the brightest economic future in Europe.

Northern Ireland is British sovereign soil. It is Britain's to defend any way she sees fit from thugs and terrorists who bomb innocent people and kill noncombatants who are just trying to stay in the world's eye.

Kieran Watson is a sophomore finance major



### MAIL CALL

#### Not just literature encourages creativity

In response to Helen Clancy's Feb. 23 column advocating a literature requirement in the core curriculum, I would like to make a few comments.

Clancy seems to think that everyone should be required to take a literature course in order to "help students articulate creative and independent thought." Does Clancy believe that literature is the only academic study that promotes creativity and independent thought? Has she forgotten about philosophy, psy-

chology, history (other than the required American history), and the performing and visual arts? The humanities electives in the core curriculum all promote the vitally important, aforementioned attributes.

Who is to judge the effectiveness of one course over another? All of these studies enrich our minds and broaden our existence. Should we then require students to take courses in not just literature, but psychology, philosophy, music and all of the other enriching and creative courses?

Borrowing from Jeremy Valdez, we would "make stu-

dents out of the elderly" by doing this. The fact that there is a choice of humanities courses acknowledges the fact that everyone is different and everyone is creative in different ways. We shouldn't deprive students of the remaining freedom they have in course selection.

To expand on Clancy's use of Voltaire, the University provides many tools to cultivate your intellectual garden. It also allows you to choose what to grow. Besides, a garden with nothing but roses would be nice, but a garden with carnations, tulips and others is even better.

Greg Ziegler  
Class of '96

#### Football player deserves support

Leeland McElroy came in to eat at the place I work in College Station. I just wanted to let

everyone know that he is a pretty down-to-earth guy. He didn't have the attitude I thought he would. When he said that he was going to enter the NFL draft, I was upset, but now I realize it was the best decision for him. I wish him all the luck in the future.

Marty Rouse  
Class of '97

### THE BATTALION

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## EDITORIAL

### FACT OR FICTION

#### The Evans Library made the right decision in reclassifying false books

Although there is no doubt that the Holocaust occurred during World War II, some books in Sterling C. Evans Library would have students believe otherwise.

David Gershom Myers, an associate professor of English, and Arnold Krammer, a history professor, found eight books in the library that assert that the Holocaust never happened.

Through film reels, books, journals and other reputable sources, students of history know that those eight books are wrong. However, they are placed along side the true historical accounts in the library, as if to represent the same consideration as fact.

Krammer, who teaches history of Nazi Germany, should be commended for his role in distinguishing the true history books from the fictional accounts that shared the same shelves. This incident makes it evident that we must protect our history from false revision. Keeping watch on our history may be a thankless task for historians, but it is an invaluable asset to ourselves and our posterity.

Myers deserves credit for bringing this to the attention of library administrators. Although the administrators do not want to remove the books because of censorship concerns, a compromise was found. The library now classifies the books as fiction, listing them as mistaken history of the Jewish experience. In one sense, acknowledging the fictitious nature of these books sends a stronger message than removing them from the library.

This solution is fair to both sides. Although people have the right to exert their freedom of speech, the Institute for Historical Review in Torrance, Calif., which published most of the disputed books, and similar organizations do a huge injustice to the memory of those who died in the Holocaust.

Students can learn from the real history books on the shelves of the library and learn even more from Holocaust survivors. But fictional theories have no educational value except to illustrate how blind hate can make some people.

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.

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