

OPINION

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'Should I stay or should I go?' Students face tough decisions in housing choices

AJA HENDERSON
COLUMNIST

Have you seen the bright signs announcing today's deadline for canceling on-campus housing contracts? To some people, these are just mere flyers. To others like myself, however... they mean doomsday. For I am faced with a question of monstrous proportions: to move, or not to move? Moving off campus is a decision involving lots of stress and tears. It is more than just a matter of where you are living, it is a huge dilemma that decides one's fate for the next semester (or, if you are locked into a lease, for the next 12 months).

How did I even get to this confused state in the first place? Well, the itching to move off campus has two main causes: one increases my stress level about the thing and my increasing impatience with the little idiosyncrasies of dorm life. Folks are good at applying pressure of the worst kind when it comes to the



on/off campus issue. I feel like I am shaking a rattle and sucking a pacifier when I tell people that I live in a dorm. "You still live on campus?" they always ask with at least one eyebrow raised. You can see the laughter in their eyes at the image of a fully grown, robust woman like myself living in a dormitory. A recent survey of off-campus students here showed that over 1/3 are dissatisfied with their living conditions. Never mind that though... if you are not off campus, there is clearly something wrong with you.

The inclination to move off also has increased for little dormsey reasons that may seem trivial when taken separately, but whoa buddy do they add up. Those cutesy signs adorning the doors, announcing that you do, in fact, occupy the room. Rolling out of the twin bed continuously. The little notes they tape onto the doorknob to announce dorm-bonding

activities. Sharing a rectangle with another person — true, I live in a fairly large room with its own bath area, but it is still a rectangle! The pasty, pale guys who walk around and end up in the laundry room at the same exact time I do. Ecch!

Yes, dorm life has its quirks. But, what about the convenience? The tight garage spot that I waited and waited to acquire. The fact that I can get up 10 minutes before a class and fly like the wind, Jansport straps just flapping away. The all-bills-paid scenario that allows me to take 10 or more showers a day if I so choose. The vending machine down the hall... sweetstarts on demand, dude. No leasing worries, no fix-it yourself scenarios. Something's broken... you turn in the work order and it is repaired. See, there is an upside to dorm life after all!

Yeah! I'm definitely staying on. Well, then again, I do feel cramped. Sigh. If you are one of the unfortunate people in my same predicament, more power to



you. And don't distress — after all, we do have until 5 p.m.

Aja Henderson is a junior political science major

Texas' high court should not honor the Confederacy

JAMES C. HARRINGTON
GUEST COLUMNIST

When Texas' two highest courts, the Supreme Court and the Court of Criminal Appeals, reopened their building in 1993 after having been closed for months for major remodeling, Texans were in for two major surprises.

First, the court's building was not accessible to visitors and employees with disabilities and was out of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Fortunately, some federal litigation and Governor George W. Bush's appointment of Justice Greg Abbott, who uses a wheelchair, helped remedy that situation. The second remarkable feature of the refurbished building, though, still remains intact, and that is its conspicuous display of two old plaques in the main lobby honoring the Confederacy. The plaques, which face the main entrance, had been in the old building.

One plaque proclaims that the building is "Dedicated to Texans who Served the Confederacy." The other displays a Confederate flag, along with words from Robert E. Lee about how valuable Texas soldiers were to his side of the Civil War.

Not only are these bronze plaques strangely out of sync with history, but they affront the memory of a good number of Texans. After all, many Texans gave their lives to preserve the Union, and many more served and fought for the Union cause. Why should they not also be honored, if any honoring at all is to be done for the Civil War?

Secession did not enjoy universal support in Texas. Indeed, Sam Houston was literally carried from the Governor's Mansion because he refused to accede to the South's insurgency. Some Texas counties even rebelled against secession; those insurrections were quelled by military force.

Further, the very notion of slavery was particularly noxious to the state's large Mexican-American population, let alone the idea of fighting to preserve it. Slavery offended their religious and cultural sensibilities. In fact, Texans had to carefully weave their way around this issue when drafting the constitutions of the Republic — the constitution banned "slave running" as piracy. An underground railroad for escaping slaves eventually developed through South Texas and into Mexico.

More salient, however, are the tragic, bloody scars that slavery and the legacy of the Civil War left on the face of Texas. What do these bronze plaques say to the thousands of African-American and Mexican-American Texans lynched since the Civil War until recent times? What do they say to the descendants of those murdered, terrorized and raped out of racial hatred?

Between 1865 and 1868 alone, 468 former slaves were killed in Texas. The state's Freedman's Bureau documented incidents of violence and harassment in a register that filled three volumes. Lynch mobs burned, tortured, mutilated and hanged hundreds of African Americans between 1880 and 1930. The Ku Klux Klan committed many of these atrocities. Even after the 1897 anti-lynching law took effect, over a hundred lynchings occurred between 1900 and 1910. The history of vigilante lynchings and random brutality against Mexican Americans in South Texas, often perpetrated by the Texas Rangers, is a sordid epoch.

And what message do these plaques deliver to the millions of Texas African Americans and Mexican Americans who toiled under the yoke of segregated labor, lived in social and economic apartheid, were stripped of their voting rights, and suffered cruel discrimination? To this day, as a historical result, they endure standard educational institutions, segregated housing, inferior job classifications and denial of promotional opportunities.

Typically, court buildings tend to display lofty assurances of impartial and equal justice under the law, but not the Texas high courts. They could have better spent our tax money by engraving on the refinished marbled walls the sentiments of the Texas Equal Rights Amendment, which Texans adopted in 1972 by a 4-1 margin, that equality under the law shall be assured to all alike, regardless of sex, race, color, creed or national origin.

The time has come for the Texas Supreme Court and the Court of Criminal Appeals to consign the unhappy relics of the Confederacy to the archives and rededicate their building to Texas's more contemporary and more honorable efforts to protect and defend equal rights.

James C. Harrington is the legal director of the Texas Civil Rights Project

Media criticism built on house of race cards

MICHAEL LANDAUER
OPINION EDITOR



It's all racial. When my French teacher used to give me zeros for not turning in my homework, I told her I thought it was because of my German heritage (the Germans had a couple of wars with the French).

I was kidding, but sometimes I wonder what kind of mindset some people have when it comes to examining apparent issues of race. People especially like to say that the media create issues of race or engage in racist coverage.

For example, I bumped into a friend as I was picking up my Dallas Morning News. He looked at the top headline and shook his head. "Man, they're going to do it to him just like they did it to O.J. and just like they did it to Moon," he said.

The top story was about the indictment of Dallas Cowboy Michael Irvin on drug charges. Irvin was found in a hotel room with hard-core drugs and women suspected of being prostitutes. If found guilty, he could go to jail, and his career could be over.

Cowboy's owner Jerry Jones has said that Irvin will go through the NFL's drug program, and sports gurus around the country are questioning how the high and mighty can fall so low so fast.

The Morning News has run a steady stream of stories about how the Cowboy's bad-

boy image will affect the team and its public support. When celebrities mess up, society questions its values and wonders if we place too much trust in our talented heroes.

But no one in any of the articles I read ever said anything about race being a factor in the grand jury's indictment. That question has never been raised. So I guess my friend was talking about the media.

Yes, we in the media go out and create stories like this just to be able to justify our deep-rooted prejudices. Yeah, that's it. Reporters planted O.J. Simpson's blood at the scene of his ex-wife's murder. Some lunatic editor was responsible for the glove.

And Warren Moon. Forget the fact that the media created a god out of the former Oiler quarterback. Schools were closed and people mourned the day he left town for the Vikings. But some crazy reporter thought it might be newsworthy that the police were called to his house to find his wife frantically accusing her husband of trying to kill her. Some son-of-a-bitch reporter thought the people who adored Moon had a right to know this.

OK. Back to reality for just one sec.

The media do not "do" anything to the people on which it reports. The media don't have to "do" anything. There are great stories out there happening all the time. My history teacher used to preface some of the more iron-

ic or interesting things she would teach us with a great line: "This stuff is too good to make up."

Fallen heroes being charged in courts of law with beating or killing their wives can have a profound effect on society. Do people really want these stories ignored? Or do we just want them ignored when it might be construed as a race issue?

Moon apologized to the community for his actions. Simpson wrote what sounded like a suicide note as he tried to flee the country. They cared what the world thought of their actions, but even they never mentioned race as a factor for their downfall in the public eye.

Courts have to sift through evidence and decide what is truth. The media report on the whole process. The story is a bit more interesting when the courts are processing our heroes.

Our heroes make good money off the media. If they don't want media attention for the screw-ups, maybe they'll start their protest by turning down million-dollar endorsement deals made entirely possible by the mass media.

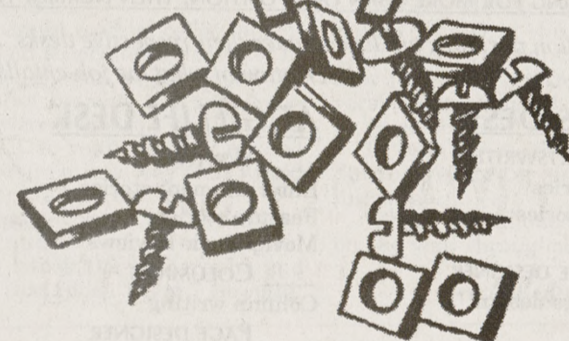
But that will never happen.

And so Michael Irvin was on the front page of the Morning News. Sure, he's an African-American, but he's also a drug suspect. In Dallas, that's what the media like to refer to as news.

Maybe... just maybe, it's not all racial.

Michael Landauer is a junior journalism major

Montana



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jim@ny1.com



MAIL CALL

Parking police not proactive in problem

I failed to see any solution to the football and Bonfire parking problems by placing "No Parking" signs in the Southgate and Eastgate areas. It appears that College Station is not concerned with fixing the problem, only with pleasing these residents. However, these signs do not actually prevent anyone from parking in these areas. They just allow the police to write tickets and

the tow trucks to make money hand-over-fist.

About 50,000 automobiles invade College Station to attend these events, and surely this number will increase as Texas A&M enters the Big 12. This creates massive parking and traffic problems. The reason the traffic is congested is because these people are trying to find a place to park. Restricting the parking only increases the traffic problems as motorists search everywhere for a parking spot. Remember that these people came to Col-

lege Station to spend money, and they can't spend it if they are stuck in their car.

Restricted parking in some areas merely shifts the problem to new areas. Plus, the Southgate and Eastgate areas will be just as congested with desperate motorists and eager tow trucks. Certainly, this could result in an overall cost to College Station in police overtime and equipment. All of those cars have to go somewhere, don't they?

Instead of telling the event visitors where not to park, tell them where to park. Find an area or several areas for parking and route the traffic to them. Visitors will gladly pay for parking and a shuttle to the event just to avoid the normal parking hassles. Mail these routes out with the football tickets so the visitors will know what to expect.

A true solution to this problem would please everyone, not

just the Southgate and Eastgate residents.

Dan Malone
Graduate student

Choice is not always the issue for gays

In response to the gay lifestyle argument that being gay is not a choice, I'd like to make an analogy to a serial killer. A serial killer can be born a serial killer or can choose to be a serial killer. A serial killer can lead a happy life being a serial killer. Am I saying that being gay is as detrimental to society as being a serial killer? No, I'm saying that you should not use the issue of choice when deciding the morality of homosexuality.

Forrest Dye
Class of '98