

OPINION

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Anger, old ways limit progress

I used to be color-blind. I never saw the differences between blacks or whites, Asians or Hispanics. I used to be one of those people who would throw her hands up in frustration when people complained about racism on campus. "Where," I would ask, "here?"



JENNI HOWARD
COLUMNIST

In the past, I've always thought that race relations were fine just the way they were. However, after reading a recent *Newsweek* article about the plans of the Pittsburgh, Pa., school district to phase out its busing program and the strong reactions to the proposal, it occurred to me that the reason I may not be seeing any colors is that I have chosen not to see anything at all.

In February, Pittsburgh Public Schools presented a redistricting plan that would eliminate much of the cross-town busing that has existed since the 1970s. The proposal also included plans to dislodge some special programs and create 11 smaller neighborhood schools. The benefits are twofold: Not only will parents be able to get more involved in their child's school because it is closer to home, but the school district will also save an estimated \$6 million annually over the next three years.

Curiously, the timing of its proposal fell on the 100th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1896). In *Plessy*, the Supreme Court permitted racial segregation under the standard of "separate but equal."

In the second half of this century, schools have slowly been integrated. Now, racial balances that have finally been obtained may be disrupted. Although the plan is practical, the backlash against it has been emotionally heated. This is nothing more than a plan to re-segregate the schools and an attempt to attract whites back to the city on the backs of African-American students," responded Eugene Beard, NAACP Education Chairman.

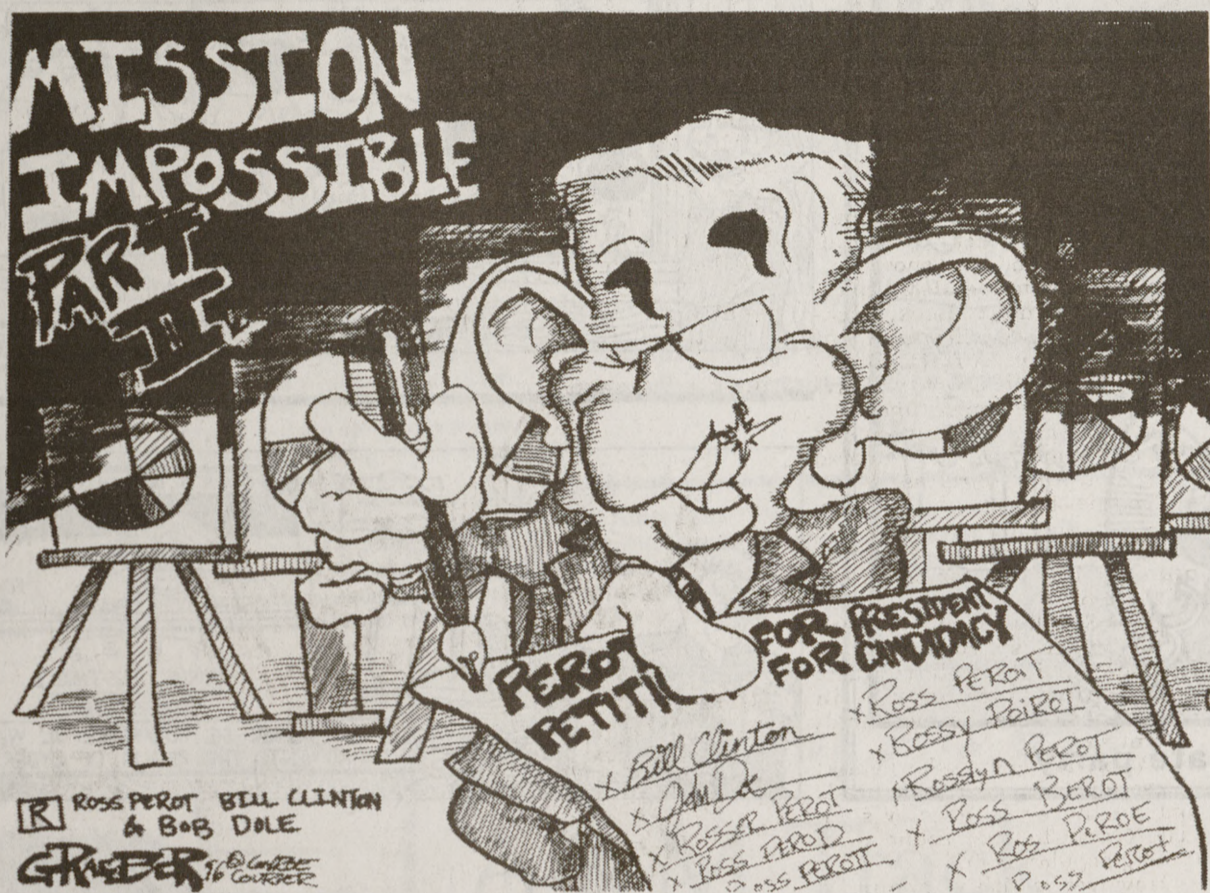
This type of reaction is what keeps many other school districts from following Pittsburgh's example. Many school districts fear that these programs will be hidden under the threats of lawsuits against "discriminatory practices."

Parents agree. David J. Armor, a fellow at George Mason University's School of Public Policy, is the author of a 1995 book entitled *Forced Justice: School Desegregation and the Law*. In his book he maintains that many parents — both black and white — felt that court-ordered school desegregation has often failed. However, if school boards refuse to touch the issue because of the lawsuits it might cause, resentment could build.

While the issue of busing is one that is currently at a primary and secondary school level, the reactions to these proposals can teach us much about how we approach issues that deal with race.

There is anger on both sides of this issue. As I discovered this, I realized that we can't possibly claim that racial tension no longer exists. We have come a long way since the days of *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, but we still have a long way to go. And saying that we don't have problems will just add one more conflict with which to deal.

Jenni Howard is a Class of '96 economics and international studies major



"Classy" label doesn't fit A&M

There are a lot of ambiguous phrases out there. One shining example is the phrase "real world." Personally, I know that the real world is this living, breathing, horrible monster that is awaiting me and ready to destroy me as soon as I am pushed kicking and screaming off this campus. I'm scared to death of it. It's my own fault really; I chose my major of my own free will, and I am preparing for a brilliant career in the field, whatever that field may be. Shockingly, there aren't a lot of Fortune 500 history companies out there.



STEPHEN LLANO
COLUMNIST

Meanwhile, MTV has some very odd ideas on what the real world is. I can only tolerate about 20 seconds of that show of the same name. Give me a million-dollar house in London or Los Angeles and I'll show you just how real the world is. Yeah, right.

"Senior" used to mean that you were in your final year of college. Ambiguity has allowed this so-called "final year" to extend to two or three. I used to see old people on campus and think that old Ags had come back to relive their college years. Now I realize they might still be living them. It's getting harder and harder to graduate in six years.

In fact, there's a lot of ambiguity in my college life, too. Apparently, I have to "pass" my "required courses" to "graduate" and receive a "diploma" so I can land a "decent job."

But it doesn't stop there. Texas A&M has a big ambiguous phrase that needs to be addressed. No, not "NCAA Regulations" or "cups and ice." The ambiguity surrounding "world-class university" is driving me nuts.

I guess it was near the end of my freshman year when I first heard "world-class" used to describe our institution of higher learning. I thought it was a good idea at first, but that night I saw TV ads for a "world-class" pay-per-view wrestling match and a "world-class" salon catering to gentlemen in Houston. Hmmm...

Let's paint the picture: After floating several "cups of ice," someone on some committee decided this University needed a plan to market A&M to the masses. So someone called some advertising gurus who suggested using this term to attempt to define a place that prides itself on being full of undefinable Aggie spirit.

So what does "world-class" mean in this context? After a few minutes of thought, I concluded it must mean that A&M ranks up there with the

supposedly high-quality schools. Apparently, they want us to think A&M could be the next Yale or Princeton.

Well, I don't want to go to Yale or Princeton. Whenever I think about any other university, I get one image: a campus full of strangers caring only about themselves, their futures, their classes and nothing else. An amazingly well-known and well-respected school — with the atmosphere of a morgue.

Texas A&M has the atmosphere of a family. I like the fact that you can walk across campus and make eye contact with everyone you pass. I like being able to strike up a conversation with anyone in line to pull tickets. I like going to a school of over 40,000 people and always being late to class because I run into several people I know. I like complaining about construction, the inadequate library (which I still use all the time), parking (even though I don't own a car) or whatever the hot topic is to complain about. I like the fact that you can have a lot of friends and a life outside of classes without belonging to some fraternity or sorority. I like the faculty members who are knowledgeable and well-respected members of their fields — truly world class qualities — but never too busy to discuss a question with any student. I like the spirit I see in everything, from building Bonfire to gathering in someone's room to talk instead of studying for finals.

I like all these things, and many more. But most of all I like what they mean — we care about our campus and school. We care about each other as students.

Well-respected? "World-class"? Maybe not in the context of some profit-minded advertising campaign. But A&M scores top-notch with the people who really count: current and former students. That means more than any sort of official stamp of approval from outsiders. Just one visit was enough for me to realize what a special place we have created, ad campaigns aside. I've been a part of it for three years and I wouldn't do a thing to make us like a "world-class" university.

Well, maybe a couple of things. I've always thought it would be great to hear Dave South announce at a game: "Steve Llano is a big, sexy, hunk of a man!" I might also replace the water fountains on campus with fully stocked wet bars. Some people may not think these are "world-class" additions, but it all comes back to the concept of ambiguity.

Aggies know Texas A&M is world-class. That's enough of a recommendation for anyone.

Stephen Llano is a Class of '97 history major

Aggie lore consists of more than 12th Man

OK. It's only the second day of classes, but it's time for the first quiz.

The quiz is not about schoolwork, but about our school. This is a test about the heritage, history and foundation of Texas A&M.



DAVID RECHT
COLUMNIST

I thought there was nothing else to know. E. King Gill was the original Twelfth Man, the Class of 1894 started the Aggie ring, Bonfire did not burn in 1963 because of the Kennedy assassination. ...

I knew A&M, forward and backward. One evening at the dinner table with my family, however, I got a wake-up call from Dad.

He is a proud member of the Ol' Army Class of '67, and boy, in his eyes things have really changed here. "When I was in school," he told me, "we had to know the names of all the streets on campus and the inscriptions on every building."

That got me thinking. Off hand, I couldn't think of the name of the street that runs in front of the MSC (it's Joe Routt).

Granted, there are quite a few more streets now, myriads of buildings and inscriptions and 30 more years of the most explosive growth A&M has ever seen. No one could possibly memorize every minutia of history on campus. But I think the interest in and appreciation for our roots is just as strong as it was 30 years ago.

Therefore, in order to satiate the student body's ravenous craving for A&M knowledge, here's a quiz. No passing or failing, curves or even scores. It's only five questions, followed by five answers.

Here we go:

1. The first graduating class at the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas was in 1876. The most prominent member of this class was the son of the most prominent Texas revolutionary. Name the student and the revolutionary.

2. While I'm on the topic of the Texas Revolution, here's another one. Aggies all over the world celebrate Muster on April 21. What does the rest of the Lone Star State celebrate on April 21?

3. What started as a small all-male school now is the third largest coeducational undergraduate university in the nation,

enrolling 18,417 women in 1995. When did the first women attend Texas A&M, and what were their names?

4. Moving on to the athletic arena. The breakup of the Southwest Conference will end some very spirited rivalries. One that will not end, however, is the one between Texas A&M and Baylor. These two schools have played year in and year out since the founding of the Southwest Conference in 1914 with the exception of four years, 1927-1930. Why didn't the Aggies and Bears compete those four years?

5. Last one. For whom is Sbisla Dining Hall named?

Now for the answers:

1. Temple Lea Houston was a member of the class of 1876. You've probably heard of his father, Sam.

2. April 21 is San Jacinto Day, the anniversary of the 1836 slaughter of Santa Ana's army by General Houston's men while the Mexicans were taking an afternoon siesta. San Jacinto Day is not to be confused with Texas Independence Day, on which delegates from all over the fledgling Republic of Texas declared themselves a free nation at Washington-on-the-Brazos, a few miles downriver from here. Texas Independence Day is March 2.

3. History professor Charles M. Hutson had two daughters, Sophie and Marie, who were A&M's first "unofficial students." They attended school from 1899-1903. A bill to allow official enrollment of women at A&M was passed in the Texas Senate on March 3, 1953.

4. In 1926, the entire Corps of Cadets traveled to Waco the weekend of the Baylor-A&M game. During the trip, a riot ensued in Waco, and Cadet Charles M. Sessums was killed. As a result, the two teams did not play football against each other for the next four years. In fact, the Corps did not return to Waco for a football game until last fall.

5. The dining hall is named for Bernard Sbisla, an Austrian-born chef who served A&M students for 50 years, between 1878 and 1928.

I dug all these up from Henry C. Dethloff's *A Pictorial History of Texas A&M University, 1876-1976*. After reading it, I can walk across campus now with more awareness of the history around me.

But I still don't know all the street names.

David Recht is a Class of '97 civil engineering major

THE BATTALION

Established in 1893

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EDITORIAL

AGGIE CULTURE

Students should take advantage of the arts at A&M.

Annette Wilzig's new exhibit in the MSC Visual Arts gallery will likely open some eyes to controversial, provocative sculpture. But students should also let it open their eyes to the enriching opportunities that are offered by A&M's many cultural organizations.

Wilzig's work won't appeal to everyone on campus. But the wide variety of artists and works that arts organizations bring to A&M does offer most Aggies a chance to see art they can appreciate.

At the Visual Arts Gallery, for instance, the exhibit changes monthly, regularly offering something different. In addition, the J. Wayne Stark and Forsyth Galleries show similar kinds of exhibits. OPAS and the Aggie Players

bring the performing arts to A&M, and Town Hall supplies the campus and community with entertainment from concerts to comedians.

No one is forced to see something he or she does not want to see, whether it's a sculpture or an opera. But for the people on campus who enjoy these things, these organizations offer a great opportunity.

People should recognize that not all art appeals to everyone. But this should never stop people from enjoying the work which does appeal to them. Everyone should appreciate the MSC Visual Arts gallery and other arts groups that try to give something to all Aggies by supplying the University with a wide range of cultural opportunities.



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