

Lefties restricted by a right-ruled world

In a world full of victims, I was a like a ship without a rudder. How was I, an upper-middle-class white male with good teeth, being oppressed or discriminated against? I felt abnormal because I didn't have a government policy or court decision identifying me as a victim of society.

Columnist



Mason Jackson
 Senior marketing major

After some thought it occurred to me. I actually had to overcome something to write this very column.

Hi, my name is Mason. And I am left-handed. Yes, even something as ordinary as writing can be a struggle for my people (lefties). It's impossible to find a spiral notebook bound on the right side, resulting in

imprints deep in my wrist, dangerously close to a major artery. Because our culture insists on having script go from left to right, the pen has to be specially chosen for its fast-drying, non-smearing quality.

And don't think that it's just a coincidence that the opposite of right is not only left, but wrong. It smells like a conspiracy.

What is the University's policy on lefties? 159 freshmen, one of the newest, largest and most trafficked classrooms on campus has approximately 18 seats, yet only 18 of them (3.83 percent) are equipped with left-handed writing surfaces. This despite the fact that nearly ten percent of the population is left-handed.

Such a discrepancy may be responsible for my note-taking phobia. Clearly the test scores of lefties should be curved upwards to compensate for such hardships.

Is there any doubt that this culture despises lefties? We shake hands with the right, while the left just hangs there, looking stupid, with nothing to do.

On what side of the road do we drive? The right. Sure, the driver sits on the left side of the car, but don't be fooled. There are ulterior motives at work. The right hand gets to shift, adjust the radio and climate controls and, should it be so lucky, rest on the leg of a significant other. Meanwhile, the left hand gets signal turns. Yippee.

Few people know this, but it's nearly impossible to find a guitar built for a lefty. Jimi Hendrix was a lefty and he couldn't find one. So he took a standard guitar, turned it over and strung it upside-down.

Then he became the greatest guitarist the world has ever known. Yes Ags, even better



than Robert Earl Keen.

Wait a minute. If Hendrix could overcome it, why can't I? Maybe instead of waiting around for a special policy that gives me a leg up, I should just compete with what I've got. Yeah, maybe instead of complaining about the hurdle in front of me, I should just jump it. Maybe if I weren't so preoccupied with finding instances where I've been wronged, I could adapt to the circumstances or even find

a way to use my uniqueness to my advantage.

And maybe... well, that might require a little more risk and effort than just complaining. After all, if you spend your life complaining that you can't win, you've got a built-in excuse to lose, right? No, that would be the left thing to do, because there is neither risk nor fun involved.

Maybe as a society we should just get over it and get on with it. Moral of the story: If life gives you a right-handed guitar, string it upside-down.

Ol' Army changes with the seasons

There have been a whole lot of changes around here lately, and not all for the better. We just stand here and take them, while back in ol' army ... wait a minute.

Columnist



Bryan Goodwin
 Junior English major

Ol' army ... what the hell does that mean, anyway? Is there any way to know? Would 30 years be a long enough time to be definitively "ol' army?"

This past weekend was my father's 30th reunion, the Fightin' Texas Aggie Class of '66. He still doesn't think his time here was long enough ago to be known as truly "ol' army." Conversely, anytime something at this University changes, people invariably refer to the time period in which it occurred as "ol' army."

Thus, the change made earlier this semester preventing fish from running on the Quadrangle qualifies last year as "ol' army."

In addition, the disappearance of Hell Week and Fish Day has made my first year here imminent-ly "ol' army." But how old is two years ago? Maybe we should start saying "previous army."

Of course, 30 years ago (back in ol' army, if you will), fish didn't run on the Quad, had no day designated just for them and thought that just about every week was hell. So we have a problem here. That's right: an ol' army gap.

Which of the two "ol' armies" is more legitimate? Believe it or not, there's more.

In an even ol'er army (chronologically, at least), things were even more different. It used to be that upperclassmen could carry around a board and paddle underclassmen who were in need of disciplining. Not just use it, which can't be done today, nor in the ol' armies of last year, my fish year, or my father's time, but openly brandish it. That's even better than a concealed weapons law.

With all of these ol' armies to

consider, how can we compare them? Is it simply a question of chronology (retroactively returning my fish year to "current army" status), or does the vehemency and earnestness of the user's uttering of "ol' army" somehow factor in?

Perhaps the first time a tradition is experienced qualifies as "ol' army." In that case, myself and other red-ass Ags (but what exactly qualifies as red-ass ... wait, no time) took part in establishing some ol' army of our very own last Monday evening at Midnight Mania. That's pretty darn good bull! (but what IS good bull ... wait, still no time)

Ask a dozen Aggies what "ol' army" is, and you'll get a dozen answers. The fact is, ol' army is an abstract concept, and an ambiguous one at that. The ol'est army people know about for absolute certain is their freshman year. Whatever they experienced at the time, they considered to be The Way Things Are, The Way They've Always Been, and The Way They Always Should Be. This leads to a heck of a discrepancy in determining the ol' army-ness of something.

So let me suggest an answer: Ol' army is now. Ol' army is what you make of it. If you came here to be a two-percenter and go through A&M without partaking of the Spirit, or the "Other Education," then you may disregard. On the other hand, some came to get inundated with the traditions, transitory though they may be. My advice is this: Enjoy them while they last. Have a good time here, live the experience and take advantage of what makes this University great. Found some traditions, partake of some "ol' army" ones, and keep the Spirit alive.

Do it before your time and your versions of Aggie traditions are, alas, forever relegated to the ranks of "ol' army."



MAIL CALL

Equal rights gives everyone a chance

Regarding Aja Henderson's Oct. 17 column, "Lack of scholarships keeps minorities away":

What happened to equal rights? Henderson says she wants equal rights, but when we provide equal access, that's not good enough.

She wants special treatment. That terrible ruling (Hopwood) ruled out race as a basis for acceptance. That is about as equal as anyone can get.

If Henderson wants truly equal opportunities, why not leave race completely off the application? And why should we offer scholarships to minorities only?

Let's make it fair for all students and give equal access to these scholarships, again leaving race off the application.

I have been working since I was 12 years old. My parents and I are paying for my college out of our pockets.

If we have to work for it, everybody else should, too.

Society owes me nothing. It's my responsibility to make my life all I can.

I would like to encourage the students of this University to take the same initiative. Be able to look back and say, "I, not somebody else, did that."

Dean R. Hauser
 Class of '98

Brian Teitelbaum
 Class of '98

Drug legalization outweighs morals

Regarding Chris Cox's Oct. 16 Mail Call, "Drug legalization endangers morality":

I must commend Jackson for having the insight to write an

opinion on a subject many people refuse to discuss.

I am appalled at Cox's narrow-minded, government-sponsored thinking.

This is exactly how our politicians want people to think — by sidestepping the issues.

The question here is not morality, but decriminalization and crime.

Compare the crime rate of "Legal Drug" countries, such as the Netherlands, with the United States, and you will find that not only is the crime rate much lower, but there are statistically less drug users than here in America.

This is what Jackson is talking about — not whether morals will permit people to use drugs.

The chances of future offspring dying because of drug-related crime is much greater than the chances of dying because of legalized drugs.

I quote Abraham Lincoln from December 1840:

"Prohibition ... goes beyond the bounds of reason in that it attempts to control a man's appetite by legislation and makes a crime out of things that are not crimes.

A prohibition law strikes a blow at the very principles upon which our government was founded."

Cox might not want to live in a "cesspool," but I just want to live.

Hemp's historical precedence hidden

Regarding Chris Cox's Oct. 16 Mail Call, "Drug legalization endangers morality":

Cox stated in his letter on drug legalization that "This

country has lost touch with morals and traditional values. It has moved from a president that could not tell a lie to a president who didn't inhale."

I presume that he is referring to George Washington as the president who could not tell a lie. According to the Austin-American Statesman, Washington grew marijuana in his own back yard.

Now, what possible motivation could someone have for growing it other than to have their own personal stash for smoking?

If historians and Cox are both correct, then this country has never had any morals. Maybe smoking marijuana is one of this country's deeply rooted traditions that has been written over by some person who decided we should forget that tradition.

Or maybe it was banned because someone figured out that the very useful fiber of the marijuana plant could be used to make paper and would give the traditional paper and timber industry a good run for its money. The drug it produces could certainly scare an uninformed government into banning it.

These pages of history have been conveniently deleted from the textbooks we read in high school to prevent rational decision making on our part.

People should decide, or research it for themselves, or smoke it ... it's their decision.

Randall Smith
 Class of '96

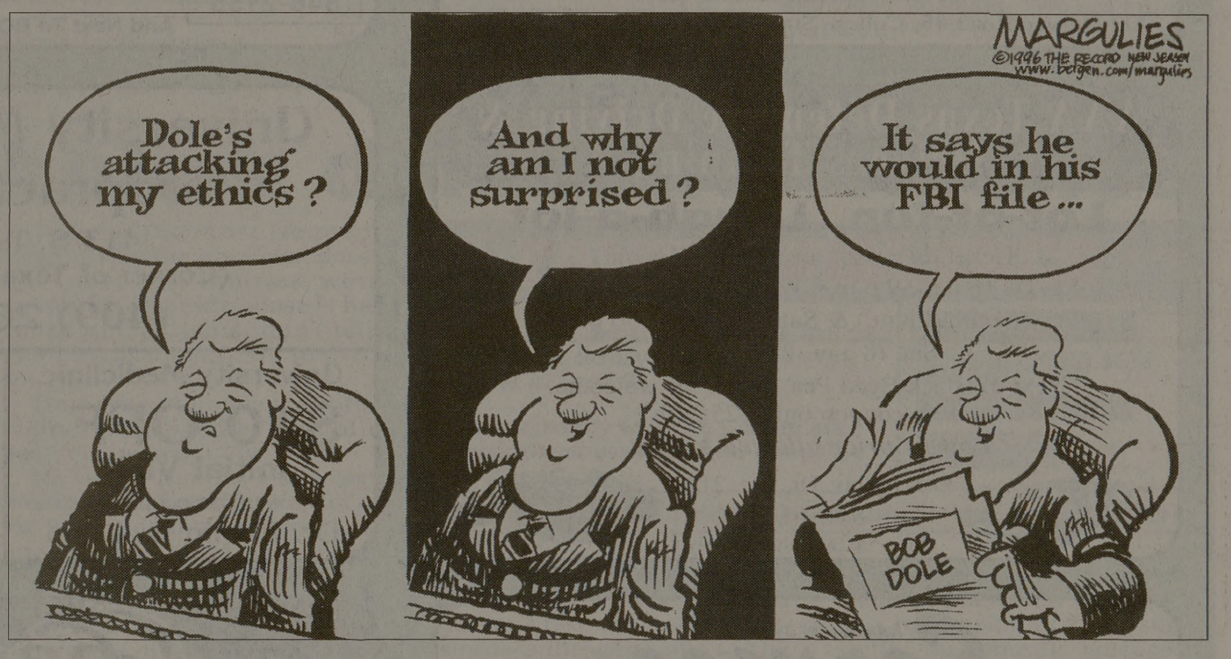
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Criticism mistaken for mudslinging

Vice President Al Gore needs to get a life. According to Gore, the environment has gone to hell in a hand basket, a tax cut will blow a hole in the deficit, and the Republicans have taken the "low road" with their recent attacks on the Clinton administration.

The Democrats seem to have made misinterpretation of Dole and Kemp a hobby. Last week, vice-presidential nominee Jack Kemp said in a radio address that the Clinton administration had engaged in half-truths and was characterized by many words ending in "-gate."

Right now, we're all nodding our heads in agreement. The Democrats took these allegations and called them negative campaigning and a direct attack on the White House.

What Jack Kemp said on the radio is the truth. FBI files were held by the Clinton administration for no apparent reason. The employees of the White House travel office were terminated, and Hillary Clinton looks to have played a part. When asked in the last debate, Clinton failed to dismiss claims that he will pardon his fellow Whitewater felons who are presently behind bars.

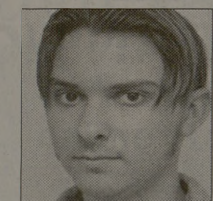
Kemp in no way played a part in negative campaigning during the vice-presidential debate. No comments about inhaling or skirt chasing were made. The words "draft" and "dodging" did not come out of Kemp's mouth across the airwaves.

Similarly, Newt Gingrich pointed out on NBC's *Face the Nation* that one out of four White House staffers are admitted drug users.

Again, Gingrich was not making a personal attack on Clinton: he was quoting an FBI report.

Why are the Democrats so paranoid of personal attacks? Possibly because Clinton has so many

Columnist



Jon Apgar
 Sophomore journalism major

"traits" to attack. Gore accused the Dole/Kemp campaign of "flip-flopping" on their promise to avoid personal attacks.

Gore should take a closer look at the president before he mentions the word "flip-flop." I would rather see a flip-flop on campaign strategies than a flip-flop on campaign promises. True, Dole did say he didn't want his campaign to sink to the level of personal attacks on the president in an effort to garner votes. But the comments made by Kemp and Gingrich are not personal attacks, they are facts being presented to the public.

When Kemp was asked straight out if he believed Clinton to be a liar, he resisted the urge to yell, "Liar, liar, pants on fire!" Instead, he said Clinton's integrity was for the public to decide.

Moreover, Dole showed in the final debate that he has the integrity to avoid personal attacks on Clinton, though he did attempt to bring up ethical considerations considering drugs, campaign donations and promises not kept. Clinton opted to ignore Dole's challenge, probably because it was the first time he didn't have a clever spin tactic on hand. People must realize the difference between personal attacks and basic, fundamental criticism of one's opponent.

Clinton calls Dole's tax cut a \$550 billion tax scheme. Is this a personal attack on Dole? Of course not. It is simply criticism.

Dole is under no obligation to refrain from attacking Clinton's character. Dole probably doesn't want to see it would result in a more negative image of himself.

Dole and Kemp have kept their promise to avoid negative attacks, opting instead to present facts during the debate that just happen to cast a negative shadow on the ethics of Clinton.

It's not Dole's fault Clinton has screwed up so much.