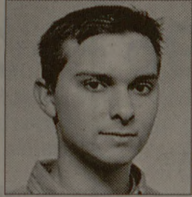


Ethics, shmethics

Politicians keep jobs despite allegations of ethical, moral violations

Columnist



Jon Appar
 Junior
 Journalism major

Does anyone notice a disturbing pattern in modern politics? After admitting to several ethics violations, including the inappropriate funding of his college class, House Speaker Newt Gingrich was recently re-elected to his post by fellow Republicans.

After months of investigation and allegations concerning Whitewater, Travelgate and the possession of FBI files, President Clinton was re-elected last November to continue as commander in chief.

The subject of questionable campaign contributions surfaced during Clinton's run for the presidency, and the issue is now being subjected to stricter regulations and policies.

Let's not forget the upcoming Paula Jones sexual harassment civil suit against Clinton.

Ethics problems even surfaced in the local community last year as former Texas A&M Board of Regents chair Ross Margraves was convicted of official misconduct for an incident in which he used a state airplane to attend his son's graduation.

Politicians have always been accused — and many times convicted — of scandals in a variety of situations. Recently, however, the public seems to have accepted ethical problems as the norm, choosing to ignore these problems in the voting booth.

Ethics, or lack thereof, plays an important part in a politician's life. It determines his course of action when faced with morally questionable situations.

The public does not seem to understand an unethical politician will not represent them very well.

Several Republicans — 20 at one point — threatened to vote against Gingrich in the recent House Speaker election, but only a few followed through. As a result, Gingrich, an admitted violator, is still the most powerful man in Congress.

Well, at least Gingrich said he was sorry for committing the violations, although apologizing does not make what he did right.

Several million voters railed against Clinton's questionable ethics concerning scandals in his political and private life, but it was not enough to take him out of the White House. As a result, America is now represented by a man whose character and ethics are questionable.

Ethical problems cross political and ideological boundaries. Both Republicans and Democrats are at fault.

This is not a new problem. Since the infamous Watergate scandal and President Nixon's obstruction of justice, many administrations have been riddled with allegations of wrongdoing, whether it was the Iran-



Even if Clinton is found to be guilty of ethical violations, unless something drastic happens, he will still be in office.

Without a re-election to worry about, the questions surrounding his ethical and moral standards will not affect him in the least.

It's too bad the public did not know the results of the ethics probes before November 5. It may have affected some votes.

Then again, the accusations of ethical problems do not seem to phase voters, so actual confirmation of ethical violations would most likely not change anyone's mind.

Contra scandal, allegations that George Bush was a "crack king" or the numerous accusations made concerning President Clinton.

Hopefully, the investigation of Clinton will produce results.

Too much corruption has permeated politics. The American people firmly believe an ethical politician is no more than a pipe dream.

Unless the public speaks up and voices concern over continued ethical problems in politics, the scandals and controversies are here to stay.

EDITORIAL

THE BATTALION
 Established in 1893

Editorials appearing in The Battalion reflect the views of the editorials board members. They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of other Battalion staff members, the Texas A&M student body, regents, administration, faculty or staff. Columns, guest columns, cartoons and letters express the opinions of the authors.

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MLK

The best way to honor King's memory is to practice what he preached

In one of his last speeches, Martin Luther King Jr. told an audience, "I may not get there with you, but we as a people will get to the Promised Land."

King, who was assassinated 29 years ago this April, will be honored with a national holiday Monday.

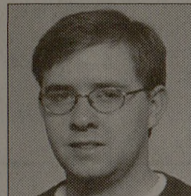
Texas A&M students will be given the day off to commemorate this holiday, but to truly show respect for King, students should remember the civil rights leaders words every day and make a concerted effort to live by them.

An excellent example of this kind of commemoration is the Southwest Black Student Leadership Conference that is going on today and tomorrow at A&M. The conference was not designed to honor King, but if he were alive today, King would certainly be pleased with such an endeavor.

In his day, if a conference as large as the SBSLC were to take place, its purpose would be much different. Instead of discussing ways to unite and become leaders within their community, students would be discussing ways for African Americans to get a foot in the door of an equal society.

Although this country is still a

Columnist



Brandon Hausenfluck
 Senior Journalism major

Never be afraid to ask for help. Students are constantly overwhelmed by the complexity of Texas A&M, and to our disadvantage, we repeatedly fail to use a wealth of services available free of charge.

Over 500 students are on academic probation this semester.

Without a doubt, some of those students who read this column are not sure how they will meet their probationary terms.

Everyone goes through a time in life when several questions go unanswered. At times, we feel we are being kicked while we are down. But the good thing is, there are ways to address these problems at this university.

A&M has done an excellent job of developing resources designed to handle almost any problem a student may encounter.

Every student on campus has both a departmental and college adviser whose

main purpose is to assist students in making decisions which can affect their future.

Kreg Abshire, a senior academic advisor in the College of Liberal Arts, said students should get to know their advisers.

"Students always need to feel comfortable going to their advisor," he said. "That's what advisers are for."

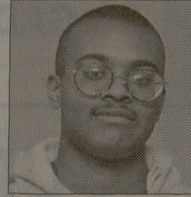
Students need to meet with their adviser immediately if they are having problems.

Difficulties in school can be attributed to many things. One may be having trouble in a math course because of an undiagnosed learning disability in that area. The individual may also be suffering from a serious depressive episode. No matter what the case, students at A&M need to understand academic careers can be improved.

If students fail academically without

Ebonics could bridge gap in test scores

Columnist



General Franklin
 Sophomore
 English major

A new term has been taken to the forefront of political-race relations in the nation today. The subject is the speech pattern labeled "Ebonics."

While many people feel this new terminology is a disgrace and undermine the learning ability of African-American students, Ebonics can be a useful tool in helping some learn proper, standard English.

It all began on December 18, 1996, when the Oakland Unified School District ignited a fire storm of controversy when it passed a resolution acknowledging Ebonics in teaching its African-American students.

The decision to integrate Ebonics into the English curriculum of African-American students has been cast in the familiar context of racial politics. To truly consider the efficacy of Ebonics, it is necessary to examine its origins.

Linguists trace the development of Ebonics or "Black English" to slavery, when a hybrid language emerged from the interaction of White Europeans and African slaves. Eventually, Ebonics became a hodgepodge of English and various West-African languages, involving English words placed in the grammatical setting typical of West-African languages.

Early evidence of this dialect was found in the portrayal of Blacks in literary works. Over time, however, Ebonics became associated with slavery and servitude, thereby encouraging free or runaway slaves to master standard English. Nonetheless, many African-Americans still speak English in the same grammatical pattern of West-African languages.

Today, linguists believe the slight lapse in communication between Black English and standard English may lead to adverse consequences in the education of urban blacks. Despite this concern, educators have nominally treated Ebonics as incorrect grammar to be shunned and discouraged.

A Bronx teacher said the learning disparity between blacks and whites is not due to a communication lapse, but to insufficient instruction.

"We need to stop making excuses for not teaching," he said. "When my students use bad English, I tell them it is bad English and it has nothing to do with the color of their skin."

In light of this outright rejection of Ebonics, many educators worry a rejection of Black Eng-

lish threatens to alienate students by questioning the legitimacy of their oral communication. All of these events, the history and development of Ebonics, as well as the lukewarm endorsement by many educators illuminate the bold action taken by the Oakland Unified School District.

The task force which rendered the recommendation of Ebonics, unearthed startling statistics regarding the academic standing of its students. The data illustrated low levels of student performance and a disproportionately high number of Blacks in special education compared to those in Advanced Placement or Gifted and Talented Education programs.

Furthermore, the task force discovered African-American students accounted for 81 percent of all school suspensions. Faced with these gloomy figures, the panel concluded the unique language patterns of African Americans accompanied by a direct connection of Ebonics "to English language proficiency" must be fostered to increase "student achievement and education."

The other objective, along with the aforementioned recommendation, is to "turnaround the educational attainment of its African-American students" by utilizing Ebonics to facilitate better dissemination of the material to those students.

This objective seems reasonable if Ebonics can truly be implemented to strengthen learning, but whether it works is questionable.

Before the resolution, the Oakland school district initiated an Ebonics program at a few select sites which saw some success. The program allocated \$200,000 in state and federal funding toward the training of teachers and the development of classroom materials. Its goal was making the transition to standard English less demeaning than the reproach and criticisms of the past.

Amid the vocal praise or equally vocal condemnation of Ebonics, advocates have ignored questions of efficacy. Can Ebonics strengthen learning by bridging vernacular language to standard English, and can it be acknowledged without undermining the instruction of the English language?

Linguists seem to handle these questions rather well. After the Oakland decision, the

6,000-member Linguistic Society of America adopted a resolution backing the use of Ebonics as a bridge to standard English at their annual conference in Chicago.

In light of the historical and linguistic foundation of Ebonics, educators should be more open in acknowledging the dialect to better educate African-American students.

For too long, it seems the learning process of many urban blacks has been stymied by the sheer rejection or rebuke of their speech pattern. It is essential to strengthen the ties of communication between teacher and pupils by integrating vernacular language into the curriculum to help broaden the grasp, understanding and application of English and other disciplines.

In order to forge a relationship with a student, one must initialize a form of communication similar to his own, otherwise signals will cross and great difficulty will be encountered in the learning process.

Twenty years ago, linguist William Stewart of the Center for Applied Linguistics, initiated a program in Ebonics in an inner-city neighborhood. Stewart and his cohorts tape-recorded and transcribed Ebonic phrases, then produced booklets using the same words and phrases. The booklets were used in a successful literacy program for young children. Stewart attributed the children's rapid learning to the elimination of the translational step of the process.

According to Stewart, children who speak a dialect different from English have to translate from print to sound, then from sound to the words they use in their everyday lives. Employing Ebonics, the children bypassed the second translation and were able to grasp the reading samples more effectively. This impromptu study demonstrates the potential for Ebonics in maximizing the learning of urban students.

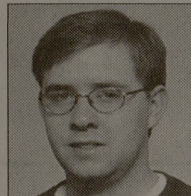
The underlying theme of the technique is to make curriculum and teaching methods relevant, therefore becoming comprehensible and appealing to students. Linguists and a growing number of educators attest, Ebonics can be a plausible method to encourage greater comprehension of standard English.

"We need to stop making excuses for not teaching"

A Bronx, New York School teacher

Students on Academic Probation should be aware and take advantage of University assistance

Columnist



Brandon Hausenfluck
 Senior Journalism major

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Everyone goes through a time in life when several questions go unanswered. At times, we feel we are being kicked while we are down. But the good thing is, there are ways to address these problems at this university.

A&M has done an excellent job of developing resources designed to handle almost any problem a student may encounter.

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main purpose is to assist students in making decisions which can affect their future.

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Students need to meet with their adviser immediately if they are having problems.

Difficulties in school can be attributed to many things. One may be having trouble in a math course because of an undiagnosed learning disability in that area. The individual may also be suffering from a serious depressive episode. No matter what the case, students at A&M need to understand academic careers can be improved.

If students fail academically without

ing some of the available resources, it is no one's fault but their own.

Support Services for Students with Disabilities, in the Koldus Building, offers assistance to students who register with a legally recognized disability.

They offer a variety of services including untimed exams in a distraction free environment. Support Services also assists students with physical disabilities.

The Student Counseling Service, in Henderson Hall, houses the Learning Skills Center, where students can work at improving their study habits. Students interested can sign up for a course that emphasizes improvement in different learning strategies, such as time management and memory enhancement. The center also offers career and psychological

counseling as well as testing by licensed psychologists.

Students can contact the Center for Academic Enhancement in the Blocker Building to receive supplemental instruction, academic assistance or use the independent study laboratory.

The Department of Student Life in the Beutal Health Center offers alcohol and drug education programs which cover the whole gamut of alcohol education and awareness. The Women's Programs Service in the Koldus Building also helps female students cope with unexpected pregnancy, rape and

other unfortunate situations.

These are just a few resources available to A&M students that are paid for by tuition fees.

Moreover, if a student has a legal problem they can get advice at Student Legal Services in the A2 Lounge on Northside adjacent to Hughes hall. Students can meet with a full-time licensed attorney to discuss questions regarding any legal concern they may have. A student conflict and resolutions service is offered for students who need a neutral mediator to help solve their problems.

The primary goal for students on this campus is to earn a degree from A&M and be competitive in the job market. It is crucial for some students to seek help if things are not going the right way.

One should never neglect to take advantage of resources which can help them improve. Especially at A&M, where academic help is abundant.

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