

THE BATTALION OPINION

United state of Texas Republic of Texas militia paints frightening picture of Texas

Columnist



Jeremy Valdez
Senior
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Standing in the rocky West Texas canyons near Fort Davis, Richard McLaren looks more like a science teacher on a field trip than a revolutionary on a crusade to liberate Texas. He is the ambassador of the Republic of Texas, a group of earnest but misguided patriots who believe Texas was never legally annexed to the United States.

However, the similarities between the Republic and admitted militia groups are disturbing. Members of the Republic consider all federal employees to be foreign agents with no jurisdiction in Texas. The compound they call their "embassy" is protected by heavily armed defense forces. McLaren said, "between 15 and 50 citizens of the Republic guard the embassy at any given time."

There's an element of duplicity in the Republic's stance toward militias. Even though McLaren and the Republic may spend today trying to distance themselves from the militia movement, they'll welcome armed militia support tomorrow if a standoff with the federal government begins. The fear of a Freeman-style standoff has the embassy's neighbors nervous and frustrated. For more than a month, they have not received mail at their residences. The Postal Service has stopped delivery to the resort area, claiming the Republic's defense forces pose a danger to mail carriers. Online press releases give the

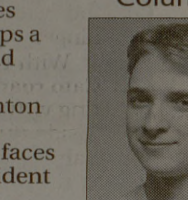
Republic an opportunity to complain about how, among other things, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service rounded up 600 illegal aliens in the Houston area, some who were "sovereign citizens of the Republic." Another press release announces an alliance between the Republic and a group claiming to be the "Empire Washitaw de Dugdah-moundyah" of northern Louisiana. Many who view these documents get a "you must be kidding" feeling, as though they were reading the musings of a bunch of adults trying to start a club to rival the Elks Lodge. This feeling evaporated for me personally after I spoke with a seriously sober McLaren in the presence of two armed bodyguards. The members of the Republic weren't joking. But McLaren can't truly reconcile with the deals the Republic makes with two of their personal devils: lawyers and foreign economic interests. McLaren forecasts a bleak future for the American legal system. "Lawyers and judges have reached an all-time low of corruption. God help them if this thing ever breaks out into armed conflict," he said. "I doubt if that group of people will be around long, because everyone knows who has caused the problems."

The Republic has employed McLaren not only as an ambassador, but as a legal expert. He can use international law to file liens and letters of reprisal against the state of Texas and private citizens who have wronged the Republic in some way. The Republic has filed liens on \$93 trillion worth of state property. So if the Republic has the opportunity to heed Shakespeare's advice "to kill all the lawyers," it is likely they will replace them with their own brand of legalists. And although McLaren claims 87 percent of Texas' wealth and resources leave the soil never to return, the Republic uses legal processes to lay claim to the land and personal assets of its enemies so it can sell them on the international market. The fatal flaw by the Republic of Texas is that it is a more reactive movement away from a corrupted federal government than a proactive return to the virtuous and just status of Texan sovereignty. The rugged beauty of the Fort Davis mountains frames an intriguing tale which can be rather humorous, if you leave out the part about the devoted men with guns.



Voter apathy leads to corruption on campus and capital hill

Columnist



Glenn Janik
Sophomore
Political science major

The public's lack of attention to politics enables politicians to take steps a more attentive public would prevent. We've all seen the newspaper headlines: "Clinton sells White House access to highest bidder," "First Lady faces possible indictment," "President forced to plea sex case in Supreme Court."

In Aggeland, most of us could not care less who killed Vince Foster, how Hillary Clinton made \$100,000 in the futures market or if Asian foreign policy is influenced by political donations. It seems the country has turned a deaf ear to the existence of the president, and the political scene of America continues to become a darker, more cynical realm. Public expectation is the main factor contributing to public apathy regarding these scandals. United States citizens have a low expectation of the president. A CNN/Time poll taken before the last presidential election showed 61 percent of respondents had "serious concerns" about Clinton's

character. These concerns, however, failed to deter most from voting for the incumbent. Comedian Chris Rock is one supporter. "Clinton has real problems — that's why I'm voting for him," Rock said. While Rock's point is tongue-in-cheek, it demonstrates that much of America has accepted Clinton's character flaws and chooses to ignore his scandals. His charm and ability to relate to the American people overcome his shortcomings in the eyes of voters. Those who listen to the allegations against Clinton often get lost in the details. The scandal involving Clinton and Asian campaign donors is serious enough to merit a \$6.5 million congressional investigation. The scandal involves an Indonesian bank and its interactions with

commerce department officials, resulting policy changes and the subsequent coverage by the Democratic National Committee. Even the most avid Rush Limbaugh listener is buried in this avalanche of details. It becomes easier to change the radio station, or look for a more interesting opinion article. Then there is the "this does not affect my life" attitude, which individuals spout as an excuse for not paying attention to Clinton's problems. Students may wonder how renting the Lincoln bedroom to campaign contributors affects Joe Aggie. The answer is tax dollars. But eventually, someone will hire a staff, launch an investigation and issue a report. While most of us could not care less about taxes, the real effect from these scandals is the "O.J." syndrome. Unless the

scandal involves the murder of your wife, your beauty-pageant winning children or your pets, no one will care. The media and the public eye cling to the most lurid and glamorous stories, leaving the political actions to C-Span. Clinton will continue to struggle these next four years. The first lady may face criminal indictment, former cabinet officials may face jail sentences and the president may be forced into claiming executive privilege to save his job. The country could easily be thrown into a constitutional turmoil, but cynicism will continue and the political world will remain under its dark cloud. How will our campus and the rest of the country react? Hopefully, individuals with the sense and compassion it takes to make a stand on these issues will step forth.

Editorial Round-up

The following are a sample of editorials from around the state.

Waco Tribune-Herald on cleaning house at FBI: Both Congress and President Clinton need to demand that FBI Director Louis J. Freeh clean house at the nation's top law enforcement agency. The public, not to mention the nation's entire justice system, requires that FBI operations be above reproach. Instead, over the last several years, the FBI has been found guilty of a series of confidence-shaking scandals. In the past several days, it has revealed that the FBI is punting a high-ranking scientist who for years attempted to defame the FBI administration to clean up sloppy and slanted lab work. The whistle-blower, Dr. Fredrick Whitehurst, finally got the Inspector General's office to investigate his claims. A final report that will be released later this month upheld all the claims made by Whitehurst. Whitehurst claims that sloppy lab work not only botches evidence examinations, but the FBI also has slanted the outcome of investigations to assist prosecutors. These charges could impact the Oklahoma City bombing case as well as force a re-examination of the World Trade Center bombing, to mention just a few of the cases possibly impacted by this latest FBI scandal. It's time for Congress and the president to demand the removal of the last vestiges of the closed-shop, good-old-boy network at the FBI. If the FBI can't be trusted, can any government agency be trusted?

Fort Worth Star-Telegram on House ethics committee:

Look at it this way: would YOU accept a position on the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct? Not if you get out of it, considering the recent history of the ethics committee. Yet the only way that the House can repair its machinery for enforcing rules and ethical standards is to find better people than some of those who helped make the Newt Gingrich episode such a tragedy for the House as a institution — and then leave them alone. The heightened partisanship in the House spread to the ethics committee in a way it never had before during the last two years. Just as Speaker Gingrich and Minority Leader Dick Gephardt don't speak to each other, so did Chairwoman Nancy L. Johnson, R-Conn., and ranking minority member Jim McDermott, D-Wash., not consult with each other as previous ethics committee leaders had. As Majority Leader Dick Armey, R-Irving, and Gephardt approach the moment when they must appoint the rest of the committee (it has only one member, Rep. James V. Hansen, R-Utah), there is a question whether the committee idea can still work in a House noted more for bared teeth than for camaraderie. Perhaps it can, if members are found who revere the House as an institution more than they worship partisan positions. Even then the ethics committee must be used as intended — as the judge of questions involving House rules and the ethics of House membership rather than as a arena for political attacks, partisan advantage and the whole "gotcha" atmosphere into

which Washington (both parties are guilty) has descended

Austin American-Statesman on America Online gridlock: America Online Inc. admitted to the world that it was selling the bear's skin before the bear was caught and promised a fair recompense to its frustrated subscribers. Anyone who believes the problems with AOL are over hasn't been calling. A busy signal is still a frequent reply to AOL calls, and notification that the Internet is inaccessible is not uncommon if you can connect. AOL prefers to characterize the flap as a to-be-expected glitch created by the surging interest in online services and Internet access as millions more Americans journey into cyberspace each week. But that is not the case. America Online brought on the trouble through aggressive marketing — marketing attorneys general in several states said amounted to a deceptive business practice. Saber rattling by those attorneys general (including Dan Morales, Texas attorney general) is why the company quickly acquiesced to demands that it halt its advertising, repay subscribers and admit the truth in future ads: the truth that you can expect difficulties getting into AOL and the Internet. As interesting as the online world may be, the fact is that profit has been elusive in cyberspace. AOL was pushing harder than it should have been — legally and morally — in order to increase subscribers, hoping to attract advertisers and build revenue. And they stepped over the line of good business practice.

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Texas A&M University
MAIL CALL

Free thought aids in spiritual growth

Mr. Platt's letter to The Battalion on Jan. 30 is much appreciated. Hopefully, it provided stimulus for those seeking truth to do so more fervently. His disagreement centered around Ms. Phillip's implications that "the only viable religion is Christianity" and that "free thought inhibits one's spiritual awakening." I write to voice the biblical assessment of these two issues. First, Christianity is not the only viable religion. Viable is defined as "able to grow." Many other religions-Buddhism, Islam, Taoism — exist and flourish in different parts of the world. Despite the growth of various religions, there is and can be only one truth concerning our pursuit of the Deity. That truth is Jesus Christ. Only He bridges the canyon between corrupt man and a Holy God. Free thought does not inhibit, but rather stimulates, one's spiritual awakening. The French philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote in the 17th Century that we all have a God-shaped vacuum in our souls. Therefore, if our mind is free and our hearts honest, the eye of our soul will be awakened to Jesus who is the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus does not "encourage discord between Christian and non-Christian students" but rather communicates a love for all people because we are created in God's image. This love of Jesus draws people together. It even calls one to love those who reject the Truth. Mr. Platt is right: "It is possible for all faiths to co-exist and indeed thrive together." The Truth, on the other hand, stands alone and cannot permit lies.

Chris Sneller
Class of '97
Accompanied by 8 signatures

Racist remarks alienate student

I was orphaned in Korea as a boy and adopted into a Mexican-American family in 1975. Anthropologically speaking, culturally that is, I am an "American." I came to Texas A&M for its academic excellence in Mechanical Engineering. When I decided to apply and attend, I had no idea that racism was so prevalent here. Here, in short, is the day I was rejected as an "Aggie": I was crossing University, going to McDonald's, and two "Aggies" leaned out their car window and yelled, "You F**cking F**ggot Chink." On that day, I stopped being an "Aggie." That happened last fall, about one month after I was at T-Camp. After T-Camp, I was pumped! Wow! I was part of a great university. I had enthusiasm, went to yell practice, to the football games, Silver Taps, but not to Bonfire. By that time, I was no longer an "Aggie." Now, that was the first time that that had happened to me. What I did not do was to return the profanity and hatred, for I am not an "Aggie." This same event happened to me for the fourth time tonight. I can't wait until I graduate and get out of this "wonderful" town called Aggeland. Please understand that I don't think that 100 percent of the students here are racists. But, that percentage, in my opinion, is increasing steadily as my negative experiences increase. I've met many wonderful people here and have many friends, but I am not accepted at A&M because I have a stereotypical appearance. It is my strong suggestion to add "... and not be a bigot ..." to the "Aggie Code of Honor."

Kevin Barrios
Class of '97

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or fewer and include the author's name, class, and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 013 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to: The Battalion - Mail Call 013 Reed McDonald Texas A&M University College Station, TX 77843-1111 Campus Mail: 1111 Fax: (409) 845-2647 E-mail: Batt@tamvm1.tamu.edu For more details on letter policy, please call 845-3313 and direct your question to the opinion editor.