

Safe and sound or full of hot air?

Airbags and other car safety devices cause injuries, need improvement

April Fool's Day has arrived, but when it comes to car safety, there is no room for lighter — especially when an individual becomes trapped behind his/her steering wheel by pressure of an air bag.

Asst. Opinion Editor



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However, it was deduced from "five cases of air bag injuries treated at the University of California, Los Angeles, ophthalmology trauma center" that air bags can be extremely harmful to the eyes of those involved in car accidents.

"In one case, a woman became legally blind in one eye," the AP report said. "In another case, a woman's contact lenses broke and she needed surgery to repair a detached retina in her right eye and a torn retina in her left eye."

With such evidence collected, it seems drivers need not worry as much about drunk drivers swerving across double white lines as they should about the chance of their air bags releasing and causing bodily harm.

But air bags are not the only concern for drivers who have "safe" cars. Seat belts, a car's first staple of safety, also have been known to injure drivers. These canvas-strapped protectors with metal fasteners have proven to be troublesome over the past decade.

Each year, cases of car accidents involving seat belt afflictions are reported across the nation. Individuals whose cars flip over have a high chance for their seat belts to lock or become jammed, entrapping them within the confines of their cars. In many circumstances, such incidents can lead to paralysis or even death.

Furthermore, no one wants to imagine a situation where a car has flipped over, the driver has been killed and an infant

remains entangled in its car seat. The shock of what can happen when a car accident involves seat belts is almost as bad as the accident itself.

Amid these instances, the numerous campaign advertisements, slogans and bumper stickers proclaiming "Buckle up, it's the law" seem to lose relevance. To be safe, perhaps the best thing drivers can do is to not wear seat belts.

But then again, no one wants to pay extravagant ticket prices for not wearing a seat belt. Remember, it is against the law to drive or travel in a motor vehicle without seat belt protection, although it is ultimately a double-edged sword decision for individuals — either be protected with a seat belt, or risk falling victim to a car accident and becoming permanently snared to the seat.

For now, people will have to settle for air bags and

seat belts as safety measures against car accident injury. While both of these devices have proven to be effective in vehicular mishaps, air bags and seat belts could use much improvement.

As the automobile industry continues to grow and prosper, each year the public will be delivered with new tinker toys, such as voice-activated cruise control, power-door locking once the engine is started and seats that adjust to body formation whenever a new driver enters the car. Still, manufacturing companies need to take a closer look at the basics.

Although the seat belt and air bag were originally invented to protect individuals from injury or death, their design, development and usage must advance if they are to continue functioning as safety devices.



Aggies react harshly to critical comments, fail to deal with problems

For years I have been aware of the arrogance that has crippled Texas A&M, but have just recently realized how intolerant Aggies are of a little criticism.

Guest Columnist



Dave House
 Senior environmental design major

Unfortunately the Aggie Band felt it was appropriate to respond to this constructive criticism in a childish and unprofessional manner.

The Aggie Band reacted harshly, and failed to live up to the reputation of excellence they claim to uphold. During a basketball game, a group of band members approached Burch, harassing him in a way that compelled a reporter from The Austin American Statesman to mention the incident in his story on the game.

But what the heck, it's free exposure, and leave it to the "keepers of the spirit" to find any way possible to get A&M's name in the papers. This isn't the only example of people's

harsh reactions to criticism of A&M in publications like The Battalion, or Texas Monthly. It seems that instead of doing what they can to correct the situation, everyone would rather kill the messenger.

It appears that A&M has a reputation that nobody can criticize. This is not because A&M is above the rest and is perfect, as all would love to believe. It is simply because people are afraid. There is a perceived standard that every student at A&M must act, dress, and think the same way. If anyone has a belief that is in violation of this standard, then the A&M Gestapo will come and whisk them away, never to be seen again.

Imagine how great this world would be if every independent thought was immediately countered with an intense beating. People all over the world might mindlessly wander the

streets, their eyes glazed over, jabbering phrases like "howdy" and "see ya when it burns." Then everyone could promptly proceed to cut down every tree in sight and burn them in a field as an excuse to drink beer and "express our burning desire" to live in mediocrity.

It is sad that a university once loved and revered is actually run by robots who constantly feel the need to inform all non-conformist free thinkers that "Highway 6 runs both ways," and tyrants in camouflage patrol the campus in attempts to stifle the efforts of people who actually seek change.

A&M is not perfect by any means, and neither are the students or faculty. Our fearless leader we all follow with admiration and faithfulness is an epileptic dog, and we all stand at football games honoring some guy who once stood and was thus thought to be

cool and "spirited." Let's face it, A&M is not the University it used to be. It is ever-changing and should be able to adapt with these changes. No longer is A&M an all-white, all-male and all-military school. It is now a university that "prides itself in diversity," and it cannot be run by 3,000 cadets who feel it is their responsibility to dictate the feelings and attitudes toward the rest of their fellow students. Surely there is a little room for change and criticism. Maybe the University that prides itself in "diversity" should stray from the path and see what else is out there, instead of continuously droning on blindly, desperately trying to protect its conservative reputation. The University should tackle its problems, not someone who simply points them out.

Racist conversations, hiring practices shock Northern student

Few people in this town seem to think that racism exists here, but in the two months I've lived here, I've seen more racism than I ever saw in my six years in Minneapolis. That's not to say there isn't racism in Minneapolis or in the North — there's plenty, and it's disturbing. But the racism I've witnessed at Texas A&M is even more frightening because of its seemingly widespread acceptance.

Guest Columnist



Brian Vastag
 journalism graduate student

tion turned to stories about the "bad parts" of Houston. When I asked where they are and why they're bad, someone said that "crime is high." Another person said, "The people are scary." Then someone said the "bad parts" were primarily black neighborhoods.

An uncomfortable silence ensued. Nobody wanted to talk about it.

When a friend of mine moved to town, her real estate agent told her that College Station was a much better place to live than

Bryan. When my friend asked why, the agent explained there were problems at Bryan High School. Puzzled, my friend asked around and received 15 evasive responses before someone told her, "Most of the black people live in Bryan." An acquaintance of mine worked in the Student Affairs Office last year. Upon returning from a lunch date with an African-American, a co-worker told her, "If you want anyone to talk to you in this office, don't date black guys." At the Employee Benefits Office, I counted 10 black office workers and one white worker. At Blocker Hall, I saw six Hispanic or African-American custodians and

one white custodian. At the Wehner Building there's a similar ratio. Food service workers also tend to be black or Hispanic. Either the Caucasian janitors and hash-slingers are hiding, or minorities dominate A&M's low-wage jobs. During the first week of classes I couldn't shake the feeling that driving 1,200 miles South was the equivalent to driving backwards 40 years, arriving in Texas when the "separate but equal" doctrine seemed like a good idea. Then, on a drive to Houston (don't worry, I wasn't going into the black neighborhoods — I had been warned about them), I discovered Prairie View A&M. Upon

stopping to ask directions, I noticed virtually all students were black. Back in College Station, virtually all of the students are white. The registrar's office confirmed the random sampling. In College Station, 3 percent of students are black (compared to 12 percent for the United States as a whole). At Prairie View, the black population is 86 percent. The registrar said Prairie View was formed as "the black university" two years after A&M was founded, back when "separate but equal" wasn't just a catchy phrase. When I asked the registrar why the campuses are still segregated, she said it is tradition. It

may be tradition, but this is also institutional racism and sanctioned segregation. Institutional racism is much subtler than cross-burnings and hangings, but it's still real, and it's still wrong. Institutional racism promotes separate societies and unequal treatment. But because there isn't one racist or some outrageous act to point to, it's harder to see and easier to ignore. See the racial disparities around you and ask why they exist. If it makes you uncomfortable, good — you're on the right track. Stop walking around with blinders and realize racism is alive and well at Texas A&M.

MIKE LUCKOVICH ATLANTA CONSTITUTION



MAIL CALL

Negro anthem fails to earn respect

It seems that every year at least one person is upset that the "Negro National Anthem" is not recognized, or given as much respect, as the "Star-Spangled Banner." Mosadi Porter was "slightly offended" when several people failed to remove their caps for the anthem. Porter went on to say the "Negro National Anthem" deserves as much respect as our national anthem. What Porter needs to realize is that the "Negro National Anthem" does not mean anything to a lot of people, including myself, so we are not going to show respect, much less the respect given to our national anthem.

So, in the future, Porter should show the "Negro National Anthem" as much respect as he wants, but do not expect everyone else to do the same.
 Brendan O'Reilly
 Class of '99

UT fan offers views on Aggie hospitality

I made my yearly trip down to the A&M campus when our Lady Longhorns beat your Lady Aggies by 21 points. I believe the series now stands at 45-7 for us. There were, however, several things which make me wonder about what is taught at your institution. 1. When Aggies come to the Irwin Center, they get seats near the floor

level. At G. Rollie White Coliseum, Longhorn fans need oxygen masks. 2. Longhorn fans wearing game jerseys were consistently served only after Aggies were, regardless of where we were in line. Isn't our money the same color? 3. Does your mascot have her rabies and distemper shots? What is that mangy mutt doing biting one of our players during the game? Maybe next year we should have Bevo stomp a player when we score a touchdown. Remember, in the real world, dogs are put to sleep for biting people. At least you could buy a muzzle.
 Pete Schloss
 University of Texas student

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