

Knowledge is power

Age of misinformation causes clouded minds, reveals half-truths about society

Students carry around a large store of knowledge. Each new generation is reeducated on a wider range of topics. Unfortunately, among all these Americans have an assortment of myths, inaccuracies and misinformation. With increased concern about biased textbooks and revisionist history, Aggies need to put effort into sifting stories and facts that have taken for granted. The misinformation varies in significance, including the urban legend (like the fatal effects of the Beatles and Pop Rocks), the established myth (like the story of Ross sewing the original American flag) and the forgotten or confused fact. On Thanksgiving night as bonfire blazed, one of the Yell Leaders worked the crowd, shouting, "Lord Jesus Christ said it best in the book of Psalms..." Actually, the Lord Jesus Christ has very speaking roles in the book of Psalms. What's more, while the cited verse does proclaim that "I will cut off the horns of the wicked, it goes on to point out He will exalt the horns of the righteous." Many pieces of misinformation come from rehashed discussions. Though Christmas is observed in late December, Christ was definitely born in Winter — and most scholars agree the event occurred about 4 B.C. Most everyone has seen the small images of Buddha, but few people realize Buddhists do not worship the figures or Buddha himself. In fact, Buddhists have no "god" other than perhaps the inner self. This topic could be explored forever. Students have all sorts of religious views, but there are more universal subjects where Aggies still contribute a confused state. A recent poll of Americans showed only a small percentage knew the Constitution was rati-



DAVE JOHNSTON
columnist

fied in 1788, and was written mostly by Madison. Of course, some inaccuracies are a result of trying to simplify thousands of years of human history into a few years of education. When George Washington is afforded only a paragraph in many history books, it's difficult to convey an accurate description of George Washington Carver.

For example, generations have been taught that Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle*, is an attack on the Chicago meat-packing industry. Actually, less than half of the book is dedicated to a description of the stockyards.

The whole work is a promotion of the Socialist agenda. The book begins by using the backdrop of the stockyards as it follows the life of an immigrant, showing how it is impossible to survive under the "evil" capitalist system.

The main character cannot make it in the meat industry as an honest worker, nor as a hobo, thief, or corrupt politician. Finally, when he joins the Socialist Party, his life turns around and he lives happily ever after. It seems much easier for educators to label the book a muckraker's attempt to destroy the meat-packing industry.

Americans have little room to complain, however. Few people take time to read. Most publishers actually lose money by producing literature. Instead of good, crafted literary works, the market prefers easy-to-read "brain candy" books.

Steven Spielberg's upcoming film, *Amistad* is based on a novel written several years ago. Now as the movie is released, a novelization of the screenplay has arrived at bookstores. Instead of releasing a paperback edition of the original novel, marketers have opted instead to write a new, simpler, less artistic version.

This relaxed attitude toward mental exercise leads to spoon-fed education and an ocean of misinformation. It is time for Aggies and students everywhere to take responsibility to improve the quality of their personal library of knowledge.

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Concealed gun-carry permits destroy citizens' rights

Laws that forbid the carrying of arms... discriminate only those who are neither inclined nor determined to commit crimes... Such laws make things worse for the assaulted and better for the assailants; they serve to encourage rather than prevent homicides, for an unarmed man may be attacked with greater confidence than an armed man." - Thomas Jefferson



DONNY FERGUSON
columnist

(CCW) permits and allow peaceful citizens to exercise their Second Amendment rights without government meddling.

CCW permits lend themselves to abuse by government officials. In Oregon, one man was denied a CCW permit, not because he was a dangerous felon, but because he was the editor of a pro-life newsletter.

In an appeal, the judge ruled even though the revocation was unjustifiable, the abortion issue was "a volatile one," and those holding pro-life views should not own weapons.

In 1991, Bonnie Elmasri tried to buy a gun to protect herself and her two children from the husband who repeatedly threatened to kill her, and told there was a 48 hour waiting period. Sadly, Bonnie and her two children were murdered the next day, still waiting for government permission to defend her family.

Laws requiring permits discriminate against the law-abiding and threaten the lives of honest citizens. 93% of felons either steal guns or buy them illegally, exempting themselves from CCW permits. Only law-abiding citizens obtain weapons regulated by these government measures, and they are often the unfortunate victims of what can happen when government

begins regulating Constitutional rights.

The power to license a right is the power to destroy a right. When New York City began registering long guns (rifles and shotguns) in the mid-1960s, officials promised concerned citizens they would never use the lists to confiscate guns from honest citizens. However, in 1991 the city banned and began taking those same guns from law-abiding citizens.

When states begin compiling lists of everyone who owns guns, the door is open for frightening Gestapo-style crackdowns on gun owners, exactly as Adolf Hitler did when he pioneered modern gun control methods in his efforts to persecute and massacre Jews.

Jews for the Preservation of Firearms, in their comprehensive study, "Lethal Laws: 'Gun Control' is the Key to Genocide" have proven over and over again that gun registration inevitably leads to confiscation, and in many cases, the widespread oppression of millions, such as in the Soviet Union, China, Cambodia and Nazi Germany. Registering concealed carriers violates basic civil liberties and contradicts everything the Constitution embodies.

Considering the inherent risks and

dangers in imposing unconstitutional rules on the use of concealed firearms, states should adopt a Vermont-style CCW law. Vermont allows law-abiding citizens to fully exercise their God-given right to keep and bear arms without seeking a government permit.

As a result, Vermont has the lowest crime rate in the nation. In fact, when Florida adopted CCW laws in 1987, their murder rate plummeted 22% while the rest of the nation's rose 14%. Of those who got permits, only 0.006% committed any sort of crime in the following years. Concealed carry laws promote safety and effectively fight crime.

CCW states lower their murder rates by 33% and robberies by 37%. Abolishing CCW permits will allow honest, peaceful citizens to prevent violent crimes, as three of five felons agree "a criminal is not going to mess around with a victim he knows in armed" and 57% "are more worried about meeting an armed victim than they are about running into the police."

In fact, armed citizens shoot and kill twice as many criminals as do the police, 1527 to 600. Interestingly, of those killed by police, 11% are innocent, while only 2% of those shot by

citizens are.

Concealed carry permits are dangerous, discriminatory and unconstitutional. Government cannot register or license a right, and when government does, the confiscation of guns from peaceful people and their oppression follows.

Allowing citizens to carry concealed firearms stops crime, makes the streets safer and restores a sense of law and order. Despite the wild-eyed claims of gun control advocates, armed citizens rarely commit crime or shoot and kill innocent people (the police are five times more likely to do so.)

States across the nation should follow Vermont's lead and abolish CCW permits. After two centuries of assault on the constitutional rights of honest people, the time has come to reaffirm our Second Amendment rights, fight crime and make our nation safer.

Our Founding Fathers, with their firsthand knowledge of government oppression, believed citizens should be allowed to carry concealed without getting the government's permission. Concealed carry permits are simply licenses for trouble.

Donny Ferguson is a junior political science major.



MAIL CALL

Political correctness often proves absurd

In response to Zac Dietrich's article, "329":
Zac, I don't think Chris was trying to escape the fears of his elementary school days when he wrote his column about the failure of the school to provide escorts for males as well as females. On the contrary, I think he was using a rare and sometimes pearls literary technique called sarcasm. You seem to have missed the point. Chris was simply trying to point out the fact that equality is so politically correct it is many times absurd, as is the case of males escorting other males. I do not think he is a homosexual craving the company of another male. He was merely trying to make a rational thought about the

subject of equality, something that nowadays misses the mark by far. Today's definition of equality is many times more lopsided than a two headed coin.

Equality often overlooks the plight of the Anglo-saxon male. We seem to have an enormous number of people who believe that they have been treated unfairly, and to emphasize how ludicrous some objections are Chris felt he should voice the bigotry of the escort system, which is only biased in the eyes of p.c. freaks.

I think that if you had the opportunity to talk to him you would find that he is probably as conservative as you or I. I guess the old phrase of "read between the lines" is more than appropriate here.

Blake McGehee
Class of '01

'If you prick me, doth I not bleed maroon?'

In my years at Texas A&M, I have seen many things come and go with the seasons and with the semesters. We have watched our teams through good and bad, and we have built and burned the bonfire. In fact, if you remember, we built it twice one year...together. We have watched the school we

love move into the next century.

One thing that has never changed is our diversity. This diversity has made Mail Call a forum for presenting our differing opinions.

It is not the opinions that I wish to address. It is the process by which we choose to display them.

The world progresses via the decisions we make by weighing the implications of all of the alternatives. Mail Call is, in theory, an avenue to let us know these alternative opinions. Why, then, do so many of us use it as a tool to prove others wrong? If we stop and think before we submit our opinions to the viewing of others, we may find that the opinions we are trying to discredit are merely other options.

There are really no wrong answers. I have read five years of opinions based on all types of issues. Some have been emotional while others seemed to be on an intellectual level.

I have heard many threats to extradite others to "that school" in Austin. I have also heard many issues brought forth that could have been better addressed in a different way than was used.

Are we not all Aggies? The Corps. Non-regs. SB. Frat-daddy. Gay. Straight. Liberal. Conservative. These are only words. Take the time to learn who your oppo-

nent is before you start to play. We may find that they really are not our opponent after all. Most importantly, remember that our letters of rebuttal sometimes do nothing more than further the distances between us all.

If you wish to discredit me for what I have just written, e-mail me. I would rather be discredited directly than be discredited based on an assumption that was made about me based on a few paragraphs.

Erin J Machac
Class of '97

Album review offends Bush fan

In response to Travis Irby's December 4th Music Review:

This is my own opinion and I speak totally for myself in saying I don't appreciate Travis Irby's horrid review of Bush's remix album, *Deconstructed*. I can't believe this was allowed to be printed as a music review.

I was very insulted by Travis when he called Bush "alterna-posers" and said they have "lame guitar riffs, shoddy lyrics and irritating vocals". Travis, you may not be very interested in Bush, but that doesn't mean that we die-hard fans should be "institutionalized" or that we should be "getting help" for liking Bush.

There are so many types of music, and I don't like some of those types, but I wouldn't disrespect the listeners by writing garbage about them and their favorite bands. Also, Bush has fans of many ages, not just "teenage girls with braces".

To the Battalion—get a better music reviewer and the next time one of your writers wants to print insulting trash, please post it on the Opinion Page where it belongs.

Katie Brown
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Stereotypes plague environmentalists

It is unfortunate and misleading that Mr. Ferguson chose to write about an extreme group and portrayed them as the norm for citizens who are concerned about our planet. It is misleading to take an extreme faction of the environmental movement and portray it as the mainstream sentiment of people concerned about the Earth. Of course, I've come to expect such narrow-minded anthropocentric propaganda from Mr. Ferguson on a weekly basis.

To compare environmentalists to "the Hezbolla" is outrageous. The Hezbolla is a Mid-East terrorist group who is known for bombing

Jewish elementary schools in Israel. My Grandmother is concerned about our Earth's natural resources—does that make her a terrorist? Of course not. To stereotype people who are concerned about our environment as "resurrecting visions of KGB raids" is ridiculous. More average and decent people are concerned about clean air and water than you think.

Critics of environmental laws claim that large numbers of jobs are lost due to environmental regulations. However, the United States Department of Labor revealed that 0.1% of the jobs lost in the U.S. were due to environmental regulations. In fact, environmental protection is a major growth industry that creates new jobs. Each year, the \$200 billion a year international environmental industry grows each year at about 5-6%, and is expected to increase by the year 2000.

History shows that the most important changes brought about by humans come from the bottom up, not from the top down. In other words, if average Americans support a clean environment from the bottom up, then I give them a lot more support than the political-minded types such as Mr. Ferguson.

Thomas Muse
Class of '99