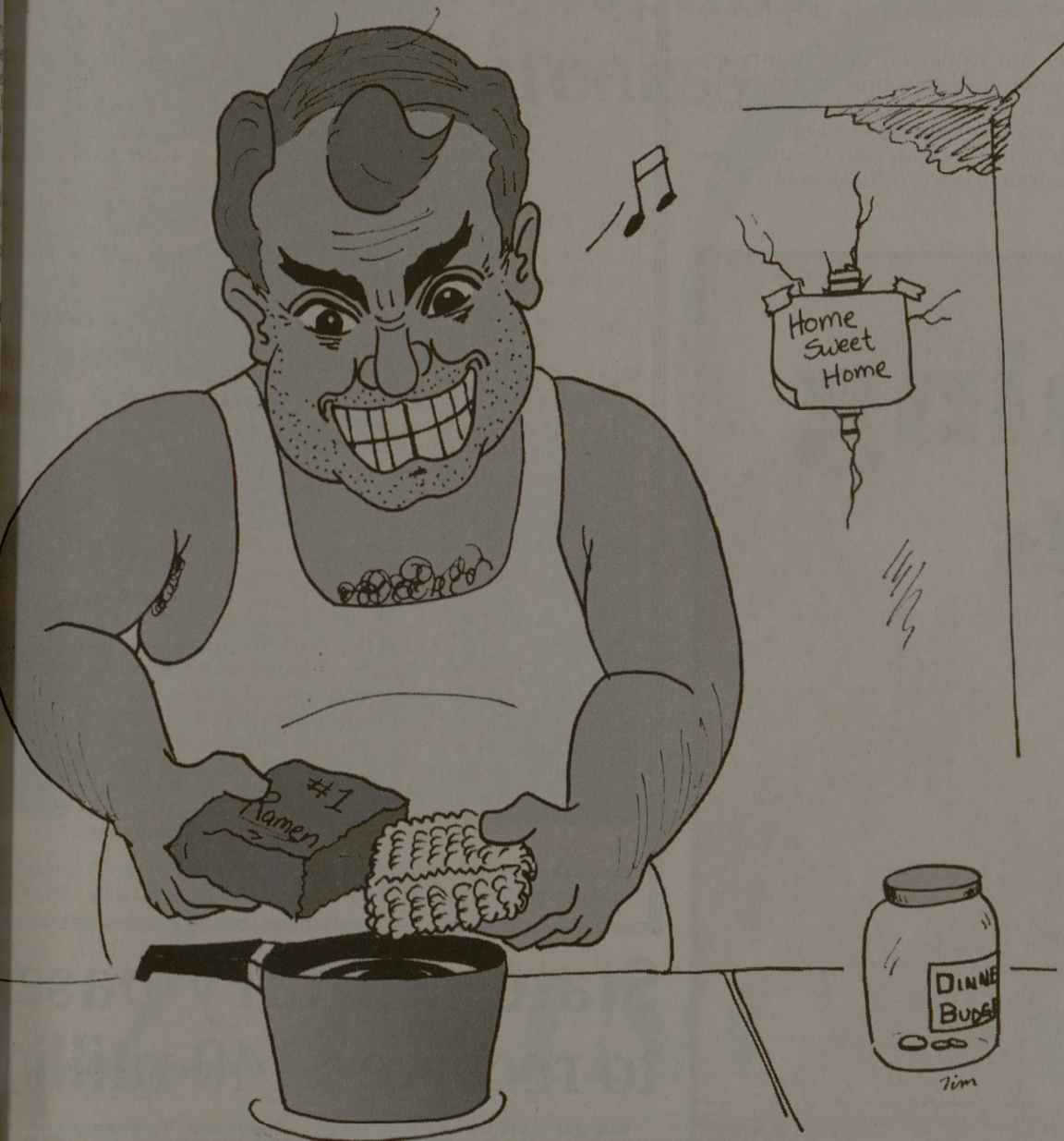


# For richer or poorer

## Texas A&M students should reap the benefits of collegiate poverty



People who are content with life are "rich." Anyone who believes that hasn't been living off ramen noodles.

While in college, many Texas A&M students will experience poverty. Tuition is expensive, and Mom isn't around to pay for groceries, laundry and occasional entertainment. But there are many reasons why being poor now will make students stronger in the future.

First of all, it helps students learn to make sacrifices. They can't have everything they want because they can't afford it. When Joe Aggie's friends are going to the movies on Friday night, he has to stay home. And little by little, Joe Aggie becomes less selfish and materialistic because he is making sacrifices.

Recently, my savings account began running low. My rent went up, and my bills became more difficult to pay. I realized I couldn't go shoe shopping every time I got a paycheck. I had to learn to save. I had to learn to say no when my friends asked me to go to the movies. I had to part with some books and CDs I still enjoyed so I could have enough money to put gas in my car.

But I do not feel sorry for myself. Experiences such as these make us stronger. They teach us not to be materialistic. Sure, it's embarrassing that I don't have a television or a stereo in

my apartment. But I've also learned I don't need those things. I have very few possessions, but I have everything I need.

In the nonfiction novel *Mutant Message*, author Marlo Morgan tells about how she spent months traveling on a "walkabout" with the Aborigines. She had nothing — no clothing, no food, nothing. She survived by eating plants and bugs. OK, no one has any right to complain about ramen noodles unless they've made a meal out of dragonflies and lizards.

Immediately after I finished reading this book, I loaded up six boxes of items I no longer used and donated them to a thrift store. As much as I enjoy seeing prom and homecoming dresses hanging in the closet, I surrendered the fantasy and told myself there would never be another occasion on which I would need to wear them.

College students may be "poor," but they sure do have a lot of junk. My apartment looks like it's been burglarized, but I still have plenty of things I don't use.

The poverty college students are experiencing now is good preparation for the poverty they will experience later in life. Hi, reality check — things don't get easier when you have to support yourself, a spouse and children. Students should just get used to being poor and focus on the positive aspects. When I was a child, my mother would not allow me to watch cartoons. Everyone thought it was some form of child abuse — but not Mom. She believes if one is watching television, they are preventing themselves from doing something productive such as reading a book.

The fact I was deprived of television for most of my childhood has made it easy for me to deprive myself of it now. Sure, "Seinfeld" is funny and entertaining, but I'd much rather read a book or write something. Poverty has allowed me to be productive.

And every college student should have at least one part-time job while in school. It's hard to get everything done, but once again, students must learn to make sacrifices. Those who have had everything handed to them on a silver platter all their lives have got to suck it up and tell themselves Ma and Pa aren't going to pay for their groceries when they're 30 years old. In fact, Ma and Pa shouldn't be paying for their groceries when they're 20.

Poverty is all about responsibility. So many students choose a major just because they're going to make loads of money doing it (hmm... engineering, maybe).

Students should find something that drives them, something they have a passion for, something they love. They may become wealthy doing what they love. But they may not.

No one wants to eat ramen noodles for the rest of their lives. No one is going to be "rich" just because they are content with life. Being content doesn't pay utilities.

However, people who have experienced poverty are a little bit wiser, a little less selfish and a lot less materialistic.

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# Pretentious summer music festivals lack diversity

The hills, at least at the Woodlands Pavilion and South Park Meadows, are alive with the sound of every conceivable type of music concert and festival; needless to say, you will find a lot of diversity in College Station.



STEVEN GYESZLY  
columnist

From the "too-stoned-to-realize-erry's-dead" theme of the Further festival, to the "resurrected-from-the-grave" (more commonly known as the VHI play list) Chicago Hall & Oates extravaganza, each of these festivals cater to genre-specific musical tastes. Yet despite each of the distinct themes, all of the summer music festivals, from H.O.R.D.E to the Smokin' Grooves tour, have something in common: their flaws.

One key problem of these festivals is their cost. Tickets, which start at \$25, merely allow concertgoers to be just one of 20,000 people fighting for standing space with a decent view of the stage. Concert promoters say the high cost of general admission is a good value considering the numerous musical acts. However, out of the bands playing, concertgoers and their friends probably do not care about the first two filler bands and will have to skip two other bands sets while waiting in line at the port-o-pots.

Yet the high prices do not stop at the entrance gates. Taking their cue from the 7-11 guide to pricing, concert festivals charge \$5 for a cup of warm beer and \$3 for a small

bottle of water, dehydration be damned. Of course, do not forget the souvenirs. Where else but at a summer music festival can you buy a "two-washes-and-it's-a-rag" concert T-shirts for \$30 and a cheap bead necklace for \$20?

Another problem with summer music festivals is their lack of diversity. Though the first two Lollapaloozas did have their flaws, the organizers did try to bring together various types of music in one setting. Granted, the interplay between various types of music groups did not always work out, but it did introduce different genres of music to concertgoers who might otherwise not be exposed to bands such as The Jesus & Mary Chain.

No one goes to church for the music, and no one attends a music festival for the morality lecture.

Unfortunately, exposure to different types of music will not happen with the strictly gentrified music festivals of this summer.

It may be a fantastic feeling to play the air guitar with thousands of other Ozzy Osbourne-worshipping fanatics at this summer's Ozfest '98. The downside is having three other Ozzy-wannabe bands playing beforehand who sound the same, only worse. Instead of hours of repetitive pseudo-gothic symbolism, wouldn't it be better to contrast the headliner with a band

like Reverend Horton Heat or a re-united Public Enemy?

Along with the high costs and indistinguishable acts, summer music festivals are pretentious. Of all the promoters and bands who performed at the recent Tibetan Freedom Festival, how many actually give a damn about what is happening in Tibet, or even know where Tibet is? And even if musicians do care, how exactly does promoting a new album help?

The only thing worse than making a mockery of a culture is using the suffering of others to sell tickets.

No one goes to church for the music, and no one attends a music festival for the morality lecture.

Another example of this pretension is the Lilith Fair. The traveling music festival has been described by promoters as an "audible expression of femininity." That is like describing a Blues Traveler concert as a way to promote dialogue on overweight lead singers with a harmonica fetish.

Sarah McLachlan can cover all the Joni Mitchell songs she wants, but the reality is the Lilith Fair, like every other music festival, is about filling the amphitheater, no matter what the cause of the week is.

Summertime and live music are perfect complements of each other and touring music festivals are quick to take advantage of this fact. But because of high costs, a lack of diversity and the pretension involved, summer music festivals have become more exploitation than enjoyment.

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# Americans won't sacrifice nicotine

Is it okay to murder for the cause of freedom? Can one use unjust means to achieve justice? Is it ethical to use lies to achieve something good?

These are the questions that usually get left to goatee-sporting, sandal-wearing, philosophical types. But thanks to the American Medical Association (AMA), it is now a question that all Americans can ponder. See, the AMA is telling a little lie to accomplish a noble goal — ridding the United States of cigarette smoking.

Last Thursday, the AMA released a statement that calls on tobacco companies to remove the nicotine from tobacco within five to 10 years.

"We know that cigarette companies can remove nicotine from tobacco. They've already done it through a process similar to that which is used to take caffeine out of coffee," Dr. Ronald M. Davis, chairman of the AMA's Council on Scientific Affairs, said in an interview with the Associated Press.

Cigarettes without nicotine? One might as well remove the apple pie from America, the cheese from the cheeseburger, the Texas from Texas A&M.

Frankly, the United States will win the World Cup before tobacco companies take the nicotine out of cigarettes. Nicotine is the reason people smoke cigarettes. In its own internal memos, everybody's favorite tobacco company, Phillip Morris, described cigarettes as nicotine delivery devices.

Smokers smoke to get their nicotine fix. If smokers were in it for the smoke, any old smoke would do. One would see smokers lining up to stick their heads inside barbecue pits. But one doesn't often see smokers taking a drag off of a hot mesquite grill.

The AMA's proposal is based on the lie that removing the nicotine from tobacco is intended to help smokers recover from their addiction. The AMA says most smokers want to quit, and removing nicotine from the picture will allow them to do so.

Of course, the AMA's demand neglects the fact that people quit smoking everyday even though nicotine remains in cigarettes. Cigarette smoking may be an addiction, but it is also a choice. People chose to smoke or not to

smoke. The real truth is that removing nicotine from tobacco is not an attempt to help smokers kick the habit, but another stab at killing the cigarette industry.

Indeed, this country would be a lot healthier without cigarettes. Using deception as a means to that end, however, is questionable.

There are two kinds of people in this world — those who want a pack of cigarettes in the hands of every 5-year-old in America, and those who are not tobacco company executives.

That is not an entirely unfair exaggeration. According to the Coalition for Workers' Health Care Funds, a coalition that represents union-sponsored health care funds, Phillip Morris, arranged the placement of smoking scenes in *The Muppet Movie* and *Who Killed Roger Rabbit* in order to target children. That is correct, even Kermit the Frog is in the pocket of Big Tobacco.

So, there is no doubt who the bad guys are in this fight. Anyone whose goal is to get kindergartners smoking must have horns on their head and a forked tail coming out of their end.

What happens, though, when the good guys employ questionable tactics, when they are the ones in the black hats?

What happens is the good guys lose the moral high ground. The good guys, however, need all the help they can get in the struggle against Big Tobacco. Obviously, tobacco companies fight dirty — they market cancer sticks to kids. But Tobacco companies also fight hard.

The blanketing \$40 million advertising campaign launched by tobacco companies had as much to do with the recent failure of the Senate's tobacco bill as did Trent Lott's lack of nerve. Furthermore, the tobacco lobby has long been known as one of the fiercest lobbying forces on Capitol Hill.

Tobacco has been a part of this country since its very beginning. Americans are not completely sure they want to give it up.

If tobacco's opponents use questionable means to fight it, Americans are bound to lose faith in the good guys as their cause goes up in smoke.

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