

# Opinion

## Overdose of tradition, school spirit harms everyone



CHRIS HUFFINES

However, many times students become so red-ass they ignore important things in favor of tradition. Cut, Stack, student organizations and the rest become much more fun than class and learning.

But this overemphasis on tradition is bad. An analogy will help make the point.

The hormone testosterone is naturally found in every human being in varying levels. Testosterone is necessary for a great many vital bodily functions. It is nature at work.

Similarly, every student at A&M is dedicated to tradition to some degree. That is also nature at work.

Accurate, precise infusions of testosterone or testosterone-like substances, in the form of steroid shots, are used to achieve many

medical benefits in the treatment of allergies, inflammation, itching, hives and asthma.

However, prolonged steroid use outside the care of a doctor can lead to many disturbing side effects such as acne, hair loss, hypertension, nausea, cataracts, seizures, heart attacks, testicular shrinkage and/or impotence.

Similarly, in accurate, precise infusions like Midnight Yell, E-Walk, and bone-crushing football victories, tradition is a great thing. It leads to benefits like A&M's small-town atmosphere, A&M's status as the friendliest campus anywhere and the engineering marvel that is the Fightin' Texas Aggie Bonfire.

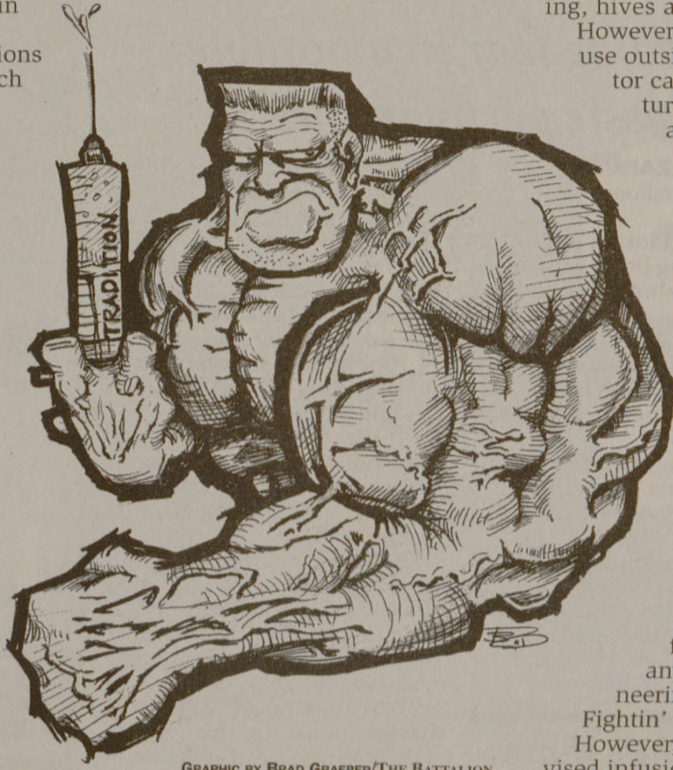
However, prolonged, unsupervised infusions of tradition have led to such bad side effects as the browbeating tactics of Howdy Ags!, the useless "new tradition" of Maroon Out and the feeling one gets speaking to certain Corps fish that they don't actually know why they are following the Corps' party line.

And, just like using anabolic steroids to increase muscle size leads to very serious problems later down the road, the short-sighted overuse of tradition will lead to very serious problems long after this year's freshmen have graduated.

Bonfire pot profanity was an excellent example of this progression. Only after the University threatened to take over Bonfire did Bonfire leadership realize what was being done was not tradition.

Being red-ass is a great thing. Embracing and believing in the traditions of Texas A&M make for a University any student should be proud to attend. It is only when tradition takes on too big of a status that the problems begin to arise.

Chris Huffines is a junior speech communication major.



GRAPHIC BY BRAD GRAEBER/THE BATTALION

## Labels hurt race relations



MANISHA PAREKH

Asian-American. African-American. Hispanic-American. Native American. For \$100, can anyone define what those titles mean, exactly?

No, go on, take a minute or two to think it over. Sorry, time is up. The correct question is: What are politically-correct ways to continue labeling and stereotyping different ethnic and racial groups?

Political correctness. It seems to be a disease that is ravaging the English language.

In the name of equality and fairness, we have allowed our language to become a garbled mess of names and titles that perpetuate stereotypes, instead of erasing them.

Political correctness has allowed us to label people without fear of being called racist. It has kept us from focusing on the qualities that we, as a people, share, and pushed the goal of equality farther away from our reach.

After all, what do these titles actually mean? According to the Webster's New World College Dictionary, African-American means "having ancestors from sub-Saharan Africa; black American."

According to that definition, we should all be considered African-Americans, since, due to anthropological evidence, our common ancestors originated in Africa.

Okay, so perhaps calling everyone African-American is a bit much, but surely Egyptians, Libyans and other North Africans should be called African-Americans. But, wait, they are called Arab-Americans. How does that work? And why are only black Americans called African-Americans if Africa is made up of many racial groups?

It seems that African-American is simply the modern way to label someone a black person, Negro or Afro-American.

What is an Asian-American? Someone who comes from Asia. Which means that person could hail from Korea, China, India, Russia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Pakistan, Mongolia, Japan or a variety of other countries. Those are a lot of different cultures and peoples to describe with one, vague term like Asian-American.

It kind of renders the term meaningless, doesn't it? It appears that Asian-American simply means "someone who is not white or black or Hispanic." These PC terms are simply new ways to say the same old, Archie Bunker-like thing.

But what is the harm in that? They are only words, and words are not supposed to hurt you. However, because most white people who live in America call themselves American while minority groups cling to their individual labels, the words can hurt.

Studies by cognitive psychologists show labels can affect the way people judge others, even if they have never met. Those who call themselves Americans all belong to one, big in-group. The African-, Asian- and Hispanic-Americans, because of the emphasis on African, Asian or Hispanic, belong to the out-group. And social psychologists have come to realize what kind of effect that identification has on individual's behavior.

It can lead to prejudice against out-group members and favoritism for in-group members. Political correctness can get beyond the fact the new, PC labels are simply that: labels, just like they were decades ago.

So what should be done? Should Americans all mush together and give up all their differences in order to eliminate prejudice? No. Differences are good. They make people individuals and allow them to create new ideas.

Heritages should not be forsaken in order to reach equality. Instead, we need to focus on including all people in understanding our similarities and differences. Only then will our similarities and differences have any meaning. But when it comes down to labels, which are meaningless, it is time to let go.

Manisha Parekh is a junior psychology & journalism major.

### MAIL CALL

#### Christian students duly criticised

In response to the Sept. 9 mail call:

In opposition to the past two mail calls, I would like to say that I agree with Baley's column.

I thought it was very ignorant of my mail call to begin with "men" and then proceed to Christianity. Not all Christians are Bible-beating fanatics, though I can't blame those who don't know what a good thing we found and only want to do it with others.

Never see pagans or atheists trying to share their word. It is not all that great considering the lack of desire to spread religion/mentality.

I agree that everyone knows to have fun, but in the long run the fun we had in college will matter. It is all about who you rely on, trust in and fall back on now until eternity, and God can meet that need.

Just because you do not believe in heaven and hell doesn't mean they do not exist or that you exempt from going to either. It is definitely worth your time to look into it; what is there to see?

Anyone who is a Christian has been point been on the non-believing side and can testify that life is better walking with Christ. Yet how can non-believers get an accurate or credible comment about Christianity when they haven't experienced it?

Mariah Melcher  
Class of '02

#### Emblematic uniforms not harm image

In response to Steven Gyeszly's 9 column:

Life is all we need in the world today... more whiners. We need to stop being overly sensitive.

Have you ever visited Disney World, or even Astroworld for that matter? Each showcase in their parks has different cultural themes, and employees wear "traditional" dress from their culture.

Now, I do not know if you have been to Disney World before, at any given time up to 70 percent of the patronage can be composed of people from foreign lands a lot of which are from the same area being showcased.

Have you visited Disney quite a few times and everyone seemed to be having fun. They did not seem to be feeling like exploited victims of "cultural intolerance." The International Food Court is not from being considered cultural property. Managers are just trying to make life here on campus more interesting for everyone. Good news we need it.

In response to that intelligent comment about Beanie-Wee, jogging pants and wife-beater shirts, congratulations on your oh-so-smart wit. Since when

has that been "traditional" dress of Americans? Unfortunately, the closest to "traditional" dress we have here goes back to the Old West, but we really do not have one because we are a nation of immigrants from everywhere.

If Disney, a world-class establishment geared toward home-spun family values, deems it acceptable to have cultural themes and require employees to dress accordingly, then I do not see why our University should feel any different. I assure you they are met by a much larger influx of foreign peoples than Texas A&M is.

Jennifer Driscoll  
Class of '00

#### Moral relativism misrepresented

In response to Josh Maskow's Sept. 9 column:

Josh Maskow's uninformed characterization of moral relativism requires response.

Moral relativism simply means that moral principles cannot be conceived as separate from the surrounding cultural, social and political contexts which give rise to these principles. Maskow's characterization, which amounts to "do whatever you feel like doing," does not follow.

Therefore, a one-size-fits-all blanket standard of morality is not representative of the way societies actually operate. Even such seemingly basic behaviors as how we perceive time itself is highly contingent upon these cultural contexts.

Furthermore, the claim that moral relativism and secular humanism lead to Nazism and fascism is irresponsible at best and slanderous at worst.

First of all, secular humanism affirms the worth of each human individual. So, why would the secular humanist or cultural relativist tolerate any totalitarian regime where human dignity is trampled? The answer is quite simple: he would not.

If one takes it upon themselves to writing a scathing indictment of an opposing worldview such as Maskow did, it would do that person well to research and present an informed opinion.

Matt Rosin  
Class of '99

## Al Gore not ready for high office

### String of embarrassments mar vice presidency

Poor Al Gore. He has spent the last six years grooming himself for the presidency only to see his future campaign besmirched by Clinton's admitted infidelity.



STEWART PATTON

In the sound-bite culture that is America, any campaign speech by Gore will surely trigger a memory of Clinton's *mea culpa* in the minds of voters.

Republican candidates in congressional races throughout the country are already campaigning against Clinton's adultery and public misleading.

Understandably, Democratic candidates are trying to separate themselves from the taint of adultery in the White House by opposing the president's actions more vehemently than their Republican counterparts.

For example, House Democrat leader Richard Gephardt has called the president's behavior "reprehensible" while Republican Newt Gingrich has only referred to it as "a human mistake."

For Al Gore, however, here is the rub: after winning two elections as Clinton's running mate, Gore simply cannot follow suit by railing against the administration in which he has had a part. For better or for worse, Gore must stand by his man.

Since Gore is stuck between his desire to win the presidency and his duty to his friend, Americans should take the high road and evaluate Gore on his own merits.

Americans should not let Clinton's mistakes stop them from taking a good, hard look at Gore's

politics and his plans for the future when analyzing the candidates for the presidency.

Therefore, despite the fact that Gore is an environmental wacko and a complete flake, he should receive the same careful scrutiny that a rational voter would give to any other candidate.

On his personal Website, Gore claims to be committed to progress in such diverse eras as business, technology, foreign policy and crime. One look at his book, *Earth in the Balance*, however, shows that Gore's commitment to these projects is little more than a smoke screen for his environmental fanaticism.

Instead of a desire to bring all of these areas into balance (as the title of his book would indicate), a better list of Gore's interests would be: forcing businesses to adhere to unbearable environmental standards, breaking the back of technological innovators by imposing stringent rules to protect the environment and convincing foreign countries to abandon economic advancement because of possible environmental dangers.

He probably also believes burglary and drug dealing are linked to higher levels of carbon-dioxide emissions.

Do not let your anger over Clinton's lack of an apology cloud your scrutiny of the coming campaign season. Look through the pea soup of rhetoric about the president's private life and see Al Gore for the flake he really is.

It is not hard to find examples of Gore's proclivity for saying the wrong thing at the wrong time. While passing a row of busts of our founding fathers at Monticello, Gore asked the tour guide who the men were.

He once called the executive editor of *The Washington Post* to inform him that he printed a picture of Earth "upside down" on the front page. Gore made many victims of Down's syndrome angry by accusing Oliver North of taking political contributions from "the extra-chromosome right wing."

Oh yes, fellow Americans, refrain from allowing Clinton's hanky-panky to change your mind about the right man for the job of president.

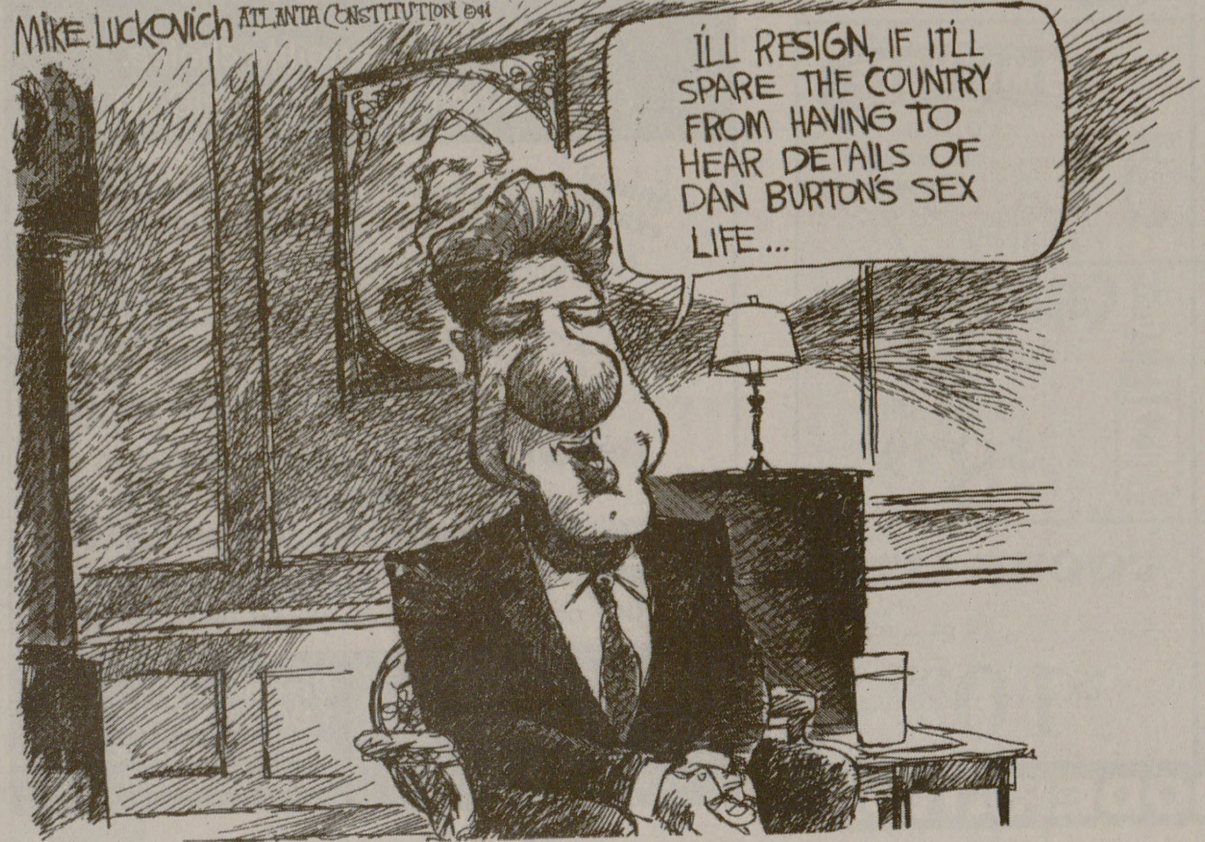
Mr. and Mrs. Delgadillo of San Antonio, Tx., got a first-hand look at the raw innards of Gore. In a letter to the vice president, they implored him to save the Texas Eagle, the Amtrak train they ride to visit their children in St. Louis and Chicago.

"Thank you for your letter regarding the protection of the Texas eagle," Gore replied. "I share your view that the urgent problem of species extinction and the conservation of biological diversity should be addressed. . . I look forward to working with you for the future of our planet."

Sounds like Gore should join the Army of the Twelve Monkeys instead of becoming commander-in-chief of the U.S. Armed Forces.

When scrutinizing the candidates in the coming campaign season, Americans must ignore the fact Clinton engaged in lewd acts in close proximity to Al Gore's office. You can now feel fully justified in not voting for Gore based solely on his own faults and not because of his connection with Clinton's ugly stain on the American presidency.

Stewart Patton is a senior sociology major.



The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less 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