

Do something Lack of student activism should be corrected



MARIANO CASTILLO

But they do not give the subject anymore thought. College students cannot afford to forget they can be catalysts for change and are capable of making their voices heard. The longer students wait to lift their heads and look around, the longer the international stereotype of American students as ignorant and selfish will linger. It is this stereotype that makes people think of the U.S. education system as low-quality and keeps foreign journalists busy criticizing decisions made by American politicians and businessmen.

"College students cannot afford to forget they can be catalysts for change."

The less college students speak, the more power they lose. A decade ago, Texas A&M could not have made such restricting rules as notifying parents of an individual's alcohol violations because of the opposition students would have mounted. Instead, this year, dissenting voices were limited to just that — a group of students disagreeing with the policy but accepting it anyway. Most students agree moving away to college is a step toward independence and that the alcohol policy is a step backward from that goal. But other than a few letters printed in *The Battalion*, no one in a position of authority truly listened or even acknowledged students' views.

Despite forums held for students to voice their concerns, a compromise or any other productive outcome is rarely reached.

Activism does not necessarily mean chaining oneself, naked, to a lamppost waving "Die PTTS" signs or taking members of the Board of Regents hostage. Martin Luther set off the Protestant Reformation simply by nailing the right set of complaints on the right door. All it takes is the proper level of initiative and a clear idea of what students deserve.

Judging by current trends, college life is simply a continuation of high school. College students nowadays are expected to go to class and accept whatever rules and regulations are passed by people who have little — if any — direct contact with students. Students are not being trained as leaders, but rather bred as followers.

A real pulse can be felt at schools where students take the initiative to take action to support their opinions. For example, at Duke University, students made a stand on sweatshops by requiring all collegiate-product licensees to set a minimum worker age and submit themselves to unannounced visits by a Duke inspector.

College is the best time to make a difference and learn to stand up for what one believes in.

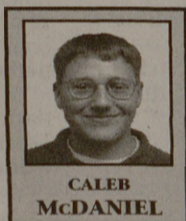
College students can be an influential group, but only if the fire that led the protests in the '60s returns to our culture. Do what is best instead of what is expected.

Mariano Castillo is a sophomore international studies major.



ERIC ANDRAOS/THE BATTALION

Bush lacks foreign policy know-how



CALEB MCDANIEL



Misspelling the word "potato" should be a for-geable offense. Mislabeled the East Timorese as East Timorians is somewhat less trivial. Nevertheless, while pundits and public opinion lambasted Dan Quayle in 1988 for writing a fateful "e" on school chalkboard, Americans seem mightfully unconcerned with George W. Bush's inability to call foreign peoples by their proper names.

Thus far in the race for the White House, Bush has revealed and even revealed in his ignorance about a variety of international affairs. Quayle's inability to spell the name of a root effectively barred him from future political success, but Bush's apparent inability to speak on the roots of foreign situations has done nothing to slow his rapid rise as the Republican frontrunner.

This irony must be reversed. Thinking Americans must begin to call Bush's loose grasp on diplomacy into question.

More than ever before, the United States needs a chief executive with the ability to read lightly on the scattered eggshells of international relations. Volatile ethnic conflicts, continuing fallout from the breakup of the Soviet Union and rising rogue dictators must be dealt with by prudent and practiced politicians.

But wisdom on these matters can only belong to diplomats who know their stuff. And Bush has proven he is not a member of this select group.

Referring to the East Timorese as East Timorians is not disastrous in and of itself, but it is symptomatic of a larger gap in his knowledge. Bush has an un-abashed habit of deferring to his advisers on all foreign matters.

"I may not be able to tell you exactly the nuances of the East Timorian [sic] situation," Bush told *The New York Times* several weeks ago. But rest assured, he said he would "ask the people who've had experience."

The favored presidential hopeful has used this ploy to play down a variety of international situations. Most recently, after Republican senators carelessly thumbed their noses at a Nuclear Test-Ban treaty last Tuesday, Bush released a statement the next day saying he would have no formal statement on the vote until he had consulted with advisers. The promised press release came Thursday, but it merely re-hashed the party line.

Perhaps Bush's habitual reliance on advisers for foreign-policy opinions would be excusable if he intended to educate himself on international issues before moving into the Oval Office.

But it is clear the governor has no such plans. Bush thinks it is permissible for the

chief executive to perpetually trust foreign affairs to a small coterie of policy gurus. As he told Maureen Dowd of the *Times*, all a president needs to know is which foreign-policy advisers to trust and which to "kiss off."

There are two foreseeable problems with this pass-the-buck policy. First, with a constantly changing global landscape, America needs a president who knows his way around. It does not need a chief diplomat who flounders out of his depth across any body of water wider than the Rio Grande.

One shudders to think of a president who, if China invaded Taiwan, would call up Beijing on the hotline and say things like "kiss off."

The second problem with Bush's foreign policy — or his conspicuous lack thereof — is the ideology of the advisers he is so eager to trust.

Admittedly, Bush has assembled an impressive array of seasoned foreign policy veterans. Most of them — like Condoleezza Rice, Dick Cheney and Brent Scowcroft — are holdovers from the presidential administration of his father.

But their former job titles also make Bush's advisers holdovers from a different diplomatic era. As Cold War veterans, Scowcroft and company see an international balance of power as the United States' most critical objective.

From such a perspective, any policy action which jeopardizes U.S. power must be eschewed. Translated, this approach to foreign policy means a Bush administration

would only favor external U.S. action when America's vital interests are at stake. Such a stance is not as isolationist as right-wing extremists in the Republican Party would like it to be, but it will practically exclude humanitarian missions and conscientious decision-making.

A realist policy would continue rosy relations with China out of economic interest, even as human-rights abuses continue to worsen.

And it may very well signal a return to the days when the United States gladly supported illegitimate and unjust political regimes for the sake of stability. Snowcroft hinted as much when he reportedly objected to the Clinton intervention in Kosovo.

According to *The New Republic* magazine, Snowcroft said demonizing Milosevic "led us astray" because "Milosevic happens to be the strongest of the thugs down there."

This type of realpolitik may have worked during the Cold War, but it is increasingly stale. Of course, given Bush's ignorance of foreign affairs, Snowcroft's boss has no way of knowing his advisory team is comprised of diplomatic relics. Because Bush is relying on antiquated advisers, it will be difficult for him to adapt to a changing world order.

The next president of the United States will have to make sure the diplomatic buck stops at his desk. So if Bush continues to handle foreign issues like hot "potatoes," his campaign will quickly head south.

Caleb McDaniel is a junior history major.

MAIL CALL

Sexual orientation not cause of assault

In response to Rolando Garcia's Oct. 18 article.

While I do agree this University is very conservative and not a very hospitable place for homosexuals, I do not believe the attack on Boyle was based on homosexuality.

The only "evidence" presented in the article that this attack was based on sexual preference was Boyle's own comments that "her sexual orientation was probably the motive behind the attack" and that she knew "he saw the gay rainbow sticker, and that's why he punched me."

There is no mention of a police report or other document stating why this incident occurred. There isn't even any evidence of what the man said. If this were truly a homosexual attack, then some of his comments would have been printed.

I am not condoning what occurred. But a little more evidence next time rather than rumors would be nice.

I read with interest the letter about how pro-life fliers were being torn down. I would like to point out this is not a new occurrence at A&M; it is simply rare for a conservative group to have their fliers destroyed.

As a member of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Aggies and as an individual, I have posted fliers on campus. Fellow posters and I have observed faculty members removing our legal fliers.

Apparently, some students on this campus have decided to take it upon themselves to determine what their fellow students should see. They've smeared windows in front of anti-Bonfire signs, ripped down fliers posted by non-mainstream groups and tried to rub out chalk signs.

I guess it took an attack on a conservative group to bring out the 122 people who didn't protest any of the other acts of vandalism. Having postings destroyed is not new—it's just a new experience for you. If people don't stand up to students when they rip down other peoples' signs, they shouldn't expect anyone to shed any tears when theirs vanish, too.

Jake Range
Class of '01
Accompanied by 3 signatures

Amy Miller
Graduate student

Readers react to pro-life fliers incident

In response to Amber Matchen's Oct. 18 mail call.

I would like to apologize on behalf of all pro-choice advocates for the misdirected venting of those students who tore down the fliers. This kind of behavior is not indicative of all pro-choice believers.

I am sure most pro-life advocates would not like to be known as "abortion doctor-killing, bombing extremists." The sad fact is too often an entire group is judged by the loud and misguided actions of a few.

I would also like to correct the one-sided and skewed view of Planned Parenthood given in Matchen's letter. Planned Parenthood's motto is "every child a wanted child."

They have educational outreach programs. They attempt to give people options and educational material. Beyond that, it is the woman's decision, as it should be.

Most pro-choice advocates would love for each person considering abortion to look at both sides.

Q-drop restrictions might be good idea

In response to the Oct. 19 editorial.

In some ways, I think it is good Dr. Anthony wants to restrict the amount of Q-drops that seem to be very frequent in his department.

Not all classes are meant to be a piece of cake. If chemical engineering were easy, there would be about a million engineering graduates each semester. In my opinion, some classes are designed to be hard, to test your ability to be what you want to be.

It would make me feel better knowing an engineer graduated knowing the information he was taught, rather than coasting by in a class with an easy professor who just gave out grades.

Mervin Bazile
Graduate Student

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:
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Texas A&M University
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