

White trash on the highway

The Klan's latest publicity stunt should not have to be tolerated by the rest of America



ANN HART

A Missouri legislator wants to name a stretch of highway for Rosa Parks, the courageous woman who began the civil disobedience phase of the Civil Rights movement. Ho hum, that is nice. But wait. It is not the naming of the highway that makes this story interesting. It is the particular stretch of highway being named that makes this a notable event.

In 1994, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) asked the state highway department in Missouri (MoDOT) for permission to "Adopt a Highway." MoDOT, to their credit, asked a federal court to allow them to refuse. The federal court found that it was illegal to do so. Signs were made and posted on the highway saying, "The next 1 mile maintained by the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan." The signs were immediately stolen.

Then, after causing all this controversy, the KKK failed to maintain the highway. And now, to protest the Klan's highway adoption, Missouri Senator William L. Clay Jr. and his supporters want to name that particular highway for Rosa Parks. In the words of Theodore Roosevelt, "Bully for them."

The Klan, like any other hate group, wants its presence known. The prospect of slipping into obscurity terrifies them, so they do whatever it takes to stay in the limelight. The purpose of the organization is to promote a set of values that the organization's members holds. Proselytizing is the name of the KKK's game — spread hate far and wide.

Fortunately for the American public, the

Klan's is a set of values not shared by a wide population. The Klan's presence is tolerated, but for many, the sight of a Knight in his regalia is disgusting, or even frightening. In major cities it is not uncommon to see one of them in downtown traffic, handing out fliers. The KKK spreads their hateful message, while the public tries very hard not to fan the flames of intolerance by engaging in unproductive activities

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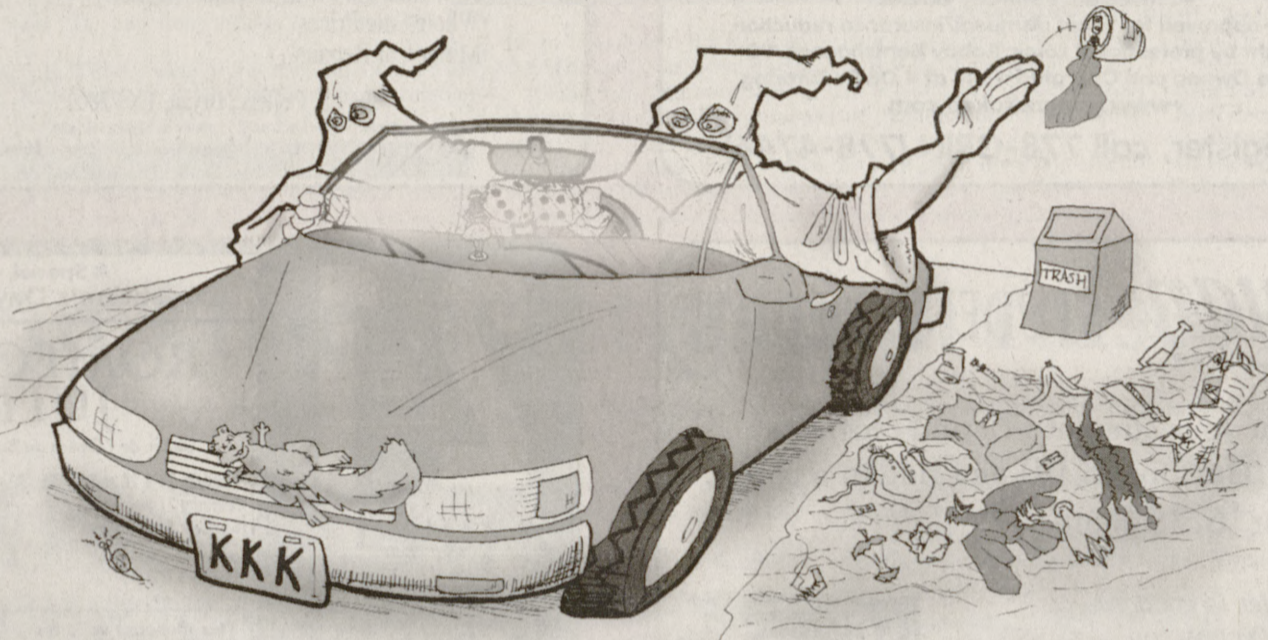
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The Klan's presence promotes racial friction, and many persons of all colors find it offensive. If the Missouri State Legislature wants to offend the Klan on behalf of those people, three cheers for them.

Unfortunately, Americans are so careful about protecting free speech that at times they inflict upon themselves the burden of tolerating what approaches the intolerable, such as the Klan's inflammatory rhetoric that offends a vast number of citizens. While this tolerance may be necessary Constitutionally, there is no reason for those offended citizens to take these affronts lying down.

In this instance, the renaming of the highway was calculated to offend the sensibilities of a group whose very existence offends the sensibilities of many. What goes around comes around. Perhaps societal pressures can accomplish what the Constitution forbids the government to do: silence an offensive party.

Indeed, the members of the KKK have every right to believe as they do and to belong to an association of persons who share those beliefs. And the people of Missouri have every right to call their highways whatever names they choose. The Constitution makes it clear that it is unlawful for the government to silence the Klan; it does not say that persons who disagree with the group must do so in silence. Here's to equal offense for all.



GABRIEL RUENES/THE BATTALION

Ann Hart is a senior English major.

State budgets reflect misguided plans

The performance of Texas public schools as rated by the Quality Counts 2000 Education Week Survey revealed unacceptably low marks. Of all the unsatisfactory grades the Texas School System received, the D in "improving teacher quality" topped off the report. However, it is unjust to put all the blame on the teachers' disabilities.



JESSICA CRUTCHER

Texas Schools part 3 of 3

State funds should be spent on improving schools, teacher's salaries

Texas public school teachers are given poor resources with which to teach their students as well as being grossly underpaid. Critics of public schools can call it again, "said" for better teachers and higher salaries until the sky falls in, but a solution requires government action. The Texas government has adequate financial resources, however they are not spending them on education. Texas spent only \$37.23 on education out of every \$1000 of state wealth in 1997, according to the Quality Counts Survey. Texas will be unable to remedy the situation in its public schools until it increases educational spending. The state can best achieve this, not by tax increases, but by reallocating current resources.

Texas does not have as much money to spend as most states. According to the Center for Public Policy Priorities, it was 49th in per capita general revenue in 1997. But the main problem is not the amount money coming in but how the state government is spending it.

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Not surprisingly, Texas received a C- for allocation of resources in the latest Quality Counts Survey. According to a recent Census Bureau report, states across the nation used an average of 31 percent of their expenditures on education. Texas, on the other hand, used only 21 percent of its expenditures on education. Low spending is acceptable only when acceptable results in the classroom are obtained. Texas' performance does not fall in the "acceptable" category.

Texas politicians need to reconsider priorities when preparing state budgets. Texas was ranked 25th in per capita spending on corrections and law enforcements but only 35th in per capita education spending by the Center for Public Policy Priorities. Apparently, Texas lawmakers seem to consider effective jails

more important than effective schooling. But research shows that most convicts have lower levels of education. Perhaps if Texas would spend more money ensuring a quality education for its youth, it would have to spend less money incarcerating them.

The youth of Texas are its future. But without a quality education, the youth of today will have no future. Texas is currently sending its youth into the world unprepared to deal efficiently with reality. The decreasing value of the high school diploma forces students to either go to college or accept a dead end job that pays close to minimum wage. But Texas high school students are not properly prepared to attend college either. Students graduate with no idea how to study for higher education and are greatly unprepared in comparison with students from other states. However, the public school system is helpless without more funding.

The Texas educational system is caught in a deadly circle. Students must be held accountable for their grades, but they cannot be expected to learn without qualified and well-paid teachers. If qualified teachers are not paid accordingly and given appropriate resources and benefits, they will go to another school — out of Texas. Before anything can improve, the amount of government resources spent on education must be increased.

Jessica Crutcher is a sophomore journalism major.

With new year, the world takes steps toward peace

Approximately one out of every 50 generations experiences a change of the millennium. The arrival of the year 2000 brought new hopes and dreams for all people including Pope John Paul II, the spiritual leader of the Roman Catholic Church. His dream and goal is to unite all people of the Christian faith. With the change of the millennium and the beginning of the Great Jubilee year, Pope John Paul II began his work toward achieving his dream.

According to the Catholic Church, once every 25 years the Jubilee occurs, marked with reconciliation, redemption and pilgrimages. The pope used the Jubilee year as a platform to unify Christians. One of the ceremonies to bring people together was the symbolic opening of the last holy door at St. Paul's Basilica. The holy door is a focal point to remind believers that Christ is the Lord. Those in attendance included the spiritual leader of the Anglican Church and representatives of the Orthodox and Methodist churches. Previously Alexy II, the patriarch of Moscow, had disregarded these types of meetings with the pope. These people are not expected to be found at St. Paul's in Rome. This effort is a great start to destroying intolerance among the different Christian denominations.

The path to religious tolerance has had many tragedies. Since the first division of the church nearly a thousand years ago, when the Orthodox Church split from the Catholic Church in Rome, there have been holy wars fought by people protecting and spreading their beliefs. From the Crusades to the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, blood was shed in the name of the Christian God and intolerance has been widespread. The work to stop these horrifying conflicts came from a broad spectrum of people, including the pope. Many look to the pope with respect and listen when he speaks, regardless of their denomination. With the head of the Catholic Church wanting to unite all people — not as Catholics or Protestants but as Christians — many look to this new millennium with the hope of a promising future free of religious intolerance.

Many non-Catholics performed various tasks from readers to deacons during the service that included the pontiff's cry for unity. The pope had saved the last Jubilee door for a time when all Christian denominations could attend. With this extra effort and this wish for unity, Pope John Paul II even spoke about not being the head of the new non-denominational Christian faith. He does not want people to feel that he wants to convert everyone to Catholicism but that he wants everyone to join as Christians with only one label — Christian. Many Catholics feel that the pope is weakening the church by his willingness to end the denominational division. They hold to the Catholic name and to the idea that they are the one true church. Other denominations are also unwilling to compromise and mold their beliefs to one uniform Christian doctrine. With major differences in church doctrine, many critics feel that the pope's message is just a public relations stunt to bring more people to the Catholic Church. If the dream of unity is to become reality, issues such as female priesthood must now be addressed. In November of last year, many religious leaders, including the Dalai Lama, met at the Sea of Galilee to discuss the path to peace among the world's religions. Their goal was to urge their followers not to use religion as a reason for separation. The faiths represented at this historic gathering included Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. The leaders wanted to expand the belief of religious tolerance to all. Also there has been progress in other parts of the world. The Nigeria Inter-Religious Council convened on January 27 of this year to initiate a peace plan to stop the conflicts and killings among the different religious faiths. The world has spent too many years fighting holy wars. This is a new era and a new time. By working together these senseless killings can be ended. It sends a message of progress and unity when the head of the oldest Christian denomination is willing to not lead the new church. Pope John Paul II opened the door of hope when he invited other Christians to join in the opening of that symbolic door. The door is no longer just a symbol of the Jubilee year in the Roman Catholic Church, but it is a symbol of the chance to end age-old animosities and wars in the name of a greater good. When leaders from the Pentecostal, Anglican and Orthodox churches attended this historic gathering in the heart of Roman Catholicism, a place where they are not usually seen, it sent a message to all people — whether Christian or not — that the world is ready for religious tolerance and the chance for peace. The world should take notice that not just one man wants this peace but people everywhere. Not just the world, but communities and small towns need to strive for this type of tolerance, for this is where the real work happens. If it can happen at St. Paul's Basilica in Rome, it can happen in anyone's backyard.



BRIENNE PORTER

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Brienne Porter is a freshman chemical engineering major.

Bush's holiness overrated

The mere suggestion that Governor Bush is doing as Jesus would is both offensive and misguided. Cornell makes reference to Governor Bush's "respect for the sanctity of life," but I highly doubt that such respect would entail presiding over the sheer number of executions that Bush does. And such a respect for life's sanctity is certainly not demonstrated by daring to mock those who he has condemned to death as he did to Karla Fay Tucker, in an interview to journalist Tucker Carlson in Talk magazine.

And the moral comparison between Bush and Clinton is almost as listasteful. If the governor were repentant, why was he so quick to issue himself a new Texas driver's license upon entering office, thereby expunging his previous driving record?

Further, why does he still avoid the issue of cocaine use. Worse yet, he continues to lock so many away in prisons for the mere crime of narcotics possession, a crime that Cornell herself claims is sufficiently dressed by repentance (lest we also forget, the above referenced Tucker was also a born again Christian). And to assert that Governor Bush doesn't lie simply seems absurd. Is there any other reason that

someone would have to sue him to have his draft and enlistment records made public?

To claim that the governor does what Jesus might do is not sequitur in the extreme. Bush is hardly an exemplary Christian. I'd be hard pressed to find Bush an exemplary example of anything but a hypocrite.

Nick Rangel Graduate Student

Students defend positive impact

Students are often insensitive to the community, however, the financial impact on the community is not to be neglected. While it is true that the B-CS community is infested with students, and with the students come requisite annoyances such as noise and irresponsible driving.

However with these minor hiccups, come the financial benefits to Brazos Valley. Without Texas A&M, the B-CS Community would be nothing more than Brenham, Hempstead, or perhaps East Bernard. What do these communities have in common? Economically, they are marginal, but more importantly, they all have severe problems with juvenile delinquency.

In Hempstead there was a scandal involving nearly the entire cheerleading squad becoming pregnant.

In Brenham, the youth are the prime contributors to the crime rate. In East Bernard, many of the kids are animal torturers, with a most recent example being the violent slaying of a cat at the bats of the East Bernard Baseball Team.

Alcoholism and unemployment are rampant. Texas A&M provides thousands of jobs, and a more enlightened citizenry. I think that kids in B-CS could do worse than to model themselves after the intelligent high-achievers of Texas A&M. If we have a problem with delinquency of youth, at least our delinquents are educated.

Brian Dear Class of '01

Dustin Qualls Class of '00

The Big Event does not only "exhibit good intentions," but produces great results as well. Countless notes and letters of appreciation flood our office regularly from all parts of the community.

We are currently expanding and developing The Big Event to many other universities as well. To say "most students reside here and move on without considering the effect their presence had on College Station residents" is absurd. Given that approximately 5,000 students participate in The Big Event every year, one could see that the students here really do care.

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
College Station, TX
77843-1111

Campus Mail: 1111
Fax: (409) 845-2647
E-mail: battletters@hotmail.com