

The Harvard School of Corruption

Student election scandal handled poorly by University, hurts reputation

For more than 350 years, Harvard University has prided itself on being the oldest and, in its estimation, the most prestigious institution of higher learning in America. Its graduates have included six presidents, such as John Adams and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Over the past three centuries, it has awarded honorary degrees to people such as Benjamin Franklin, Albert Einstein and Tennessee Williams. The university seal prominently features the Latin word "Veritas," meaning "truth." In short, the university has become synonymous in American society with excellence, ambition and respectability.



NICHOLAS ROZNOVSKY

But like so many other fabled bastions of virtue and excellence, the foundations of Harvard University seem to be crumbling in reality. The University, which has boasted of its integrity since its founding in 1636, has a crisis on its hands.

The current student body president and vice president have been accused of violating campaign spending limits and using their personal contacts at the University to gain an unfair advantage over their competitors. Additionally, Harvard Vice President John A. Burton has admitted to stealing materials from another student organization for use in his campaign last semester.

The black eye caused by the corruption of Harvard's student body elections

will not be concealed by ivy-covered walls or fancy Latin phrases. Instead of leaning upon its reputation, Harvard should actually stand up for what is right and remove the students who have broken campaign regulations.

At any other university in the nation, proof of illegal spending, improper campaigning tactics and outright theft would have been enough to remove students from the offices they reached in such an unscrupulous manner. At Harvard, though, it is apparently not that big a deal. In fact, certain members of the administration seem to have had at least some part in the improprieties of the December 1999 elections.

At the heart of the controversy are campaign buttons and lemonade. Although the entire affair sounds at first like a petty junior high election squabble, Harvard's inability to deal with it has allowed the fiasco to become a predicament which threatens the legitimacy of Harvard's student government.

University election commissioners were able to look the other way as Burton and his running mate, now President Fentrice Driskell, spent more than the \$100 limit on campaign expenditures established by Harvard student body election guidelines. Commissioners were also able to ignore the fact that Driskell-Burton fliers appeared in the mailboxes of every freshman on campus in direct violation of Harvard's ban on such campaigning.

When other candidates brought up these concerns before the conclusion of the election, the Election Commission chose not to investigate.

Only on the very last day of voting did the Election Commission choose to begin looking into the allegations. Their investigation did not stop them from proclaiming Driskell and Burton the winners. Right about now, they are probably wishing they had stopped.

Since the election, it has been revealed that the campaign wrote off several campaign expenditures, including lemonade provided by a Harvard dining hall, as contributions-in-kind. In reality, the lemonade and the other expenditures in question were omitted because they would have pushed the campaign over the \$100 limit.

The most startling development has been the discovery of the source of the campaign's buttons. These two were left off the campaign expenditure report since the campaign claimed that they were donated by the campus Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Transgendered, and Supporters' Alliance (BGLTSA). Only when the group's leaders said they made no such donation did Burton admit to taking them without permission from the group's office late one night. The buttons were then relabeled with Driskell-Burton stickers and distributed to the student body. At no time did Burton offer the BGLTSA any sort of reimbursement or even ask if he could have the buttons.

Burton ignored calls for his resignation by a large number of the student council members and the previous student body president.

As he told Harvard's university newspaper, *The Crimson*, "It could be the end of the world, and I would not resign."

A movement calling for Burton's impeachment failed to garner the two-thirds support from the student council necessary to remove Burton from office.

Despite clear evidence that the sitting student body vice president committed numerous campaign violations, he remains in office.

Perhaps it is politics as usual. The other recent notable impeachment turned out to be a popularity contest as well.

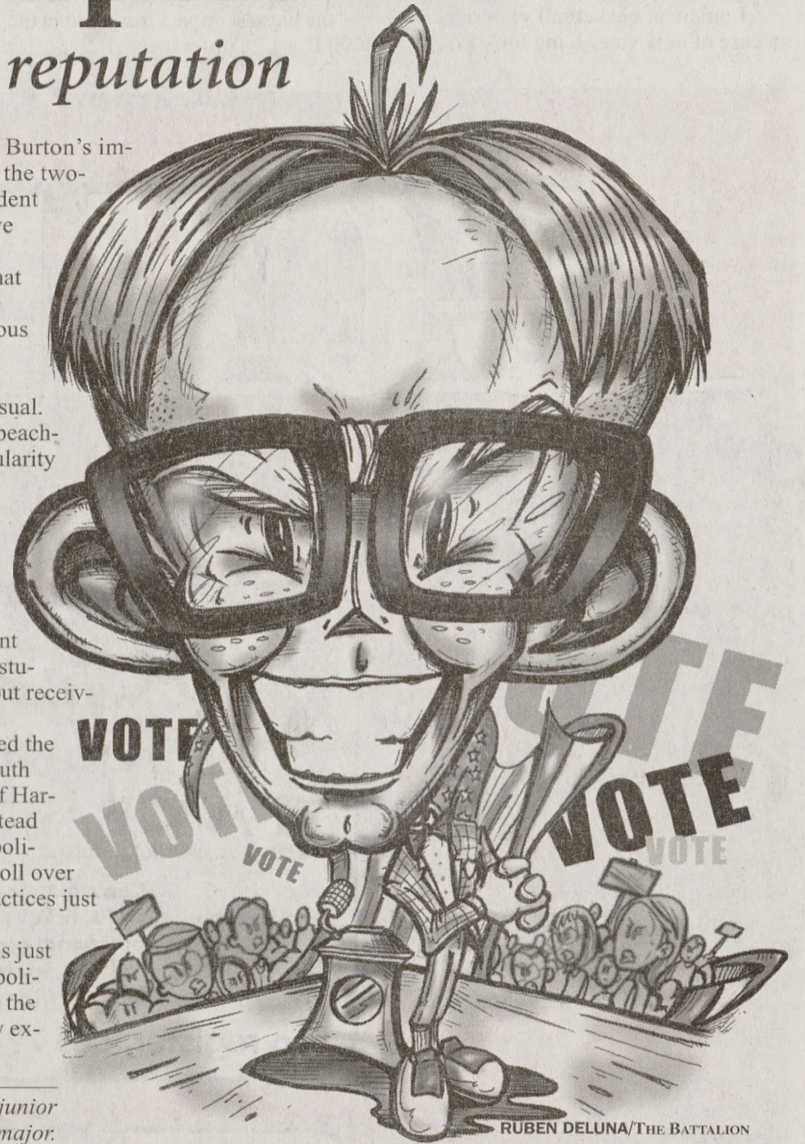
The entire "Buttgate" affair, as it has become known on the Harvard campus, has disillusioned many students and rightfully so.

The University and its student government have allowed a student to break the rules without receiving an iota of penalization.

In doing so, they destroyed the myth of respectability and truth which has graced the halls of Harvard for 3 1/2 centuries. Instead of standing up for ethics in politics, Harvard has chosen to roll over and accept dirty political practices just like the rest of America.

It turns out that Harvard is just another cesspool of corrupt politics and moral depravity like the rest of America, albeit a very expensive one.

Nicholas Roznovsky is a junior political science major.



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

CPS struggles to meet its own goals

All too often, there are news stories about children who have been beaten or otherwise physically abused. Occasionally, a story makes the news because the parent who injured the child was a previous offender who had just regained custody of his or her child. For example, a recent Texas case involved a young child who arrived at the hospital with serious injuries after being reunited with her parent. The child had been removed from the home and placed with a foster family. The child was returned to the parent after an extended period of time, after which the parent supposedly no longer presented a danger to the child. Judging from the injuries the child sustained, someone took a very wrong turn in returning custody to the parent.



JESSICA CRUTCHER

With every case that is brought to light, one wonders how many more have gone unnoticed, as well as why the legal system does not take more extensive measures to protect children.

Both Child Protective Services (CPS) and the Texas legal system control the fate of children in Texas. CPS is an organization stemming from "a concern for the care of children." But good intentions are useless without the means to carry out said intentions. CPS are often understaffed, and the case workers are underpaid. The Texas legal system will not cut down on child abuse until it imposes tougher penalties on offenders and greatly increases funding for CPS.

Many people criticize CPS for being overly intrusive on families. But the philosophy behind the organization actually leans toward doing everything possible to keep families together except in extreme circumstances.

The philosophical base for CPS states "CPS should intervene only when the parents request assistance or fail ... to meet the needs of their children adequately."

It also stipulates CPS intervention should be "sensitive to culture, values, religion, and other

individual differences." Agencies should "intervene in the least intrusive manner possible."

Ideally, these guidelines are a wonderful basis for helping families stay functional. But there are times when more aggressive intervention is needed. CPS should be given the means to conduct more thorough investigations, and in many cases be more "intrusive" to ensure the safety of children. The problem is that CPS are often legally and financially prevented from badly needed action.

The problem is not with CPS, but with what they are given to work with. According to Janece Keetch, public information officer for CPS in Austin, Texas has recently granted

The Texas legal system will not cut down on child abuse until it imposes tougher penalties on offenders and greatly increases funds for CPS.

CPS enough funding to hire more case workers. But they are still sorely understaffed. The average case load for a case worker is 24 investigations per month, according to Keetch. The Child Welfare League of America recommends 12 cases a month — the average case load is twice this amount. Keetch stated the new funding would help bring the number of investigations per worker down slightly, but the number would still not drop to the recommended 12 per month.

The salary currently offered to case workers hardly makes the career choice financially rewarding. Entry level positions at CPS range from \$27,540 to \$31,068 annually depending on experience. It is improbable to expect the most qualified case workers to stay in this position unless higher salaries are

offered, no matter how sympathetic they are to the children's plight.

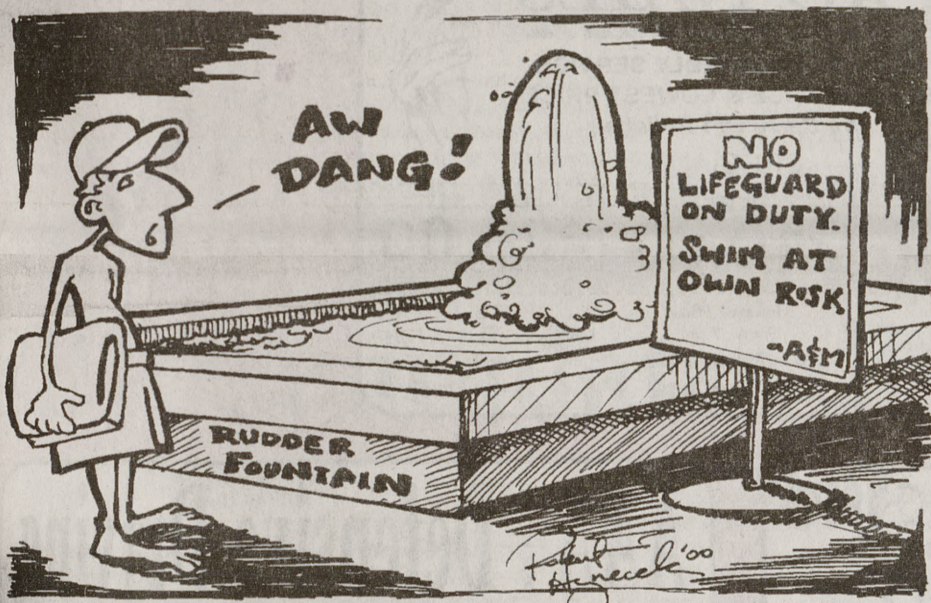
In addition to physical shortcomings, legal shortcomings are enormous. The Texas Family Code, which governs family law, is conveniently vague when it comes to the question of protecting abused children. Chapter 161 of the Family Code (Termination of the Parent Child Relationship) deals extensively with the issue of abandonment or neglect of the child's personal welfare, but is less thorough when dealing with other questions of abuse. The code states that grounds for termination of the parent child relationship include if the parent has "been convicted or placed on community supervision ... for being criminally responsible for the death or serious injury of a child." But what about less extreme forms of abuse that are child abuse nonetheless? The family code is not explicit in the consequences, although it does state repeatedly that termination may be appropriate if it "is in the best interest of the child."

By being this vague, Texas has left the door open for potential child abusers to get off relatively unscathed. "The best interests of the child" are being left up to too many various parties, and convicted child abusers are therefore being let off easy. The parent in the recent case described above should never have been allowed to regain custody of the child in the first place.

But CPS should by no means be criticized for being ineffective. The real fault lies not in the case workers, who are overworked and underpaid, but in Texas legislators who find it more important to raise taxes than to protect the youth of Texas from harm.

Before people will see any reduction of child abuse, tougher penalties and more thorough searches must be required for every child abuse case. This will be made possible through adjustments in the current family code, and higher funding for Child Protective Services.

Jessica Crutcher is a sophomore journalism major.



Baptist Church's motives questionable, stunt-like

Some people never grow up. Unfortunately, these would-be Peter Pans tend to impose on the unsuspecting masses. Worse yet, some of them rise to relatively eminent heights of power and prestige. It is here that they are able to do the most damage — and sometimes make the biggest fools of themselves. Take, for example, Gregory J. Dixon, pastor of the Indianapolis Baptist Temple. In an interview with *The New York Times*, he declared, "We are subject only to the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ," and to prove it, the church quit paying its employees' payroll taxes 12 years ago. The IRS received a judgment against the church for taxes, penalties and interest of \$5.9 million this past July. Because Dixon has refused to cooperate, the IRS has only one avenue left to collect the money — foreclosure. The pastor is adamant in his refusal to work with the IRS toward any agreement or compromise.



ANN HART

According to Dixon's logic, the church need only obey the precepts of Christ. This logic is dangerous. Christ did not have much to say about street drugs, but few take his silence on the subject for license. Sadly for Dixon, Christ did make one memorable statement regarding taxes: "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." It is hard to understand how Dixon could overlook that.

Perhaps this is a publicity stunt. The longer the Indianapolis Baptist Temple fights the IRS on this the more people will hear of the church. Like a child who wishes to be the center of attention, Dixon is playing this to the hilt. The headlines will be sensational: "Government Entity Crushes Christians." Dixon's camp would love it. Conservative radio talk shows and right-wing paramilitary organizations already do. The Michigan Militia has pledged to help the church resist foreclosure. Essentially, they are threatening civil war if the church is not given its own way. That ought to get lots of publicity and make more than a few Baptists unhappy.

The church itself is not taxed on the property it

owns, nor on the income it receives. The church is being taxed only in its capacity as an employer. Dixon is refusing to cooperate with the government in paying taxes that are legitimately owed by and on the behalf of the employees in question. No one asks the other inhabitants of this country if they want their employers to pay their taxes. No one asks the employers if they want to pay.

This is not civil disobedience, either. Civil disobedience depends on defying an unjust law. Income brackets and tax loopholes aside, the tax code is enforced uniformly throughout the nation. One would be hard pressed to call the support of a legal government an unjust obligation. Dixon and his thousand-member congregation are doing much more harm than good with their meaningless protest against the government. The government of the United States is a legally constituted government that bases its authority on the consent of the people it governs. Whether or not they believe it in Indiana, the government is in authority over them, and generally, it is not wise to toy with it. In reality, through this protest, Dixon is teaching the members of his flock that there is no legitimate earthly authority. This is clearly not the message most people get from the gospel, nor is it likely to be the belief the Baptist Church wishes to inculcate in its members. The Baptist Church probably does not wish to promote itself as the "Church of the Bad Attitude," but if they force the IRS to foreclose on their property, that is exactly the image the events will project.

A new discovery in biblical interpretation is not what brought this about. Few will believe that God is sitting on the preacher's shoulder whispering instructions and among the group with the fewest believers will be some real authorities — judges.

Dixon may deny their authority over him, but it can be reasonably assumed that he will not be able to get the walls of the prison he will live in when their "disputed" authority incarcerates him. Of course, the cynic hears his shouts of glee at the thought of getting to be a martyr. Could sainthood be far behind? Oops, wrong church.

Ann Hart is a senior English major.

MAIL CALL

English proficiency tests needed Students show disrespect for library

In response to Melissa Bedsole's March 20 column.

Bedsole's column hit home with me better than any article I've ever read in a newspaper at any level. I hardly ever read the campus newspaper, but after reading her column, I certainly will have to start.

Speaking on behalf of myself and my circle of friends, the idea of English proficiency testing for college professors and T.A.s is beautiful. The current situation that we are faced with is ridiculous. We are paying money to struggle through lectures given by instructors that cannot speak English well enough for us to understand.

One thing that we all agree upon is that most of the instructors in question are absolutely brilliant. What does it matter, though, if they cannot convey their message to us? I hope, for the sake of college students everywhere, that the Missouri state senate bill is passed and that all other public universities follow suit.

John Jackson
Class of '01

Why do some students steal from the library? Doing research in the Evans library can be very tedious and discouraging, especially when someone has torn out the articles you need.

There are several copy machines on each floor so that anyone and everyone can use the library resources whenever they need them. The library belongs to all of us, and it is our job to make sure the library resources remain intact and free of damage so that Aggies for years to come can make use of them.

Dusty Stoddard
Class of '02

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