

# AMERICA *the meek*

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is the United States enters the new century, it is set a dangerous precedent following through threats and promises to its citizens and nations. In doing it risks losing prestige influence, both at home and abroad.

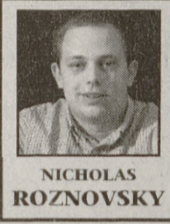
A look at the past few years will painfully point out that the United States government no longer feels justified in using its powers as the preeminent legal authority in this country. Instead of utilizing the tools that have been provided for effectively govern the nation, those holding power in Washington now seem to be more concerned with not stepping on anyone's toes.

Perhaps the most recent and glaring example of this is the Elian Gonzalez debacle. Excessive immigration laws and a series of court rulings say the boy must go back to his native Cuba since he has no legal standing in the United States. Instead, the government has spent the past weeks negotiating with his exiled family in Miami who refuse to turn him over to his father.

The government is advocating this course of action to avoid the possibility of mass protest and revolt in the anti-Castro "Little Havana" section of Miami.

While the circumvention of mass lawlessness is an admirable goal, the United States cannot afford to ignore its own laws and legal system to keep the angry mobs happy. If the laws are truly unjust, the people will see to it that they are changed. It is not the job of the government to selectively enforce the laws of this nation in an attempt to placate certain segments of the populace.

The same immigration laws which send thousands of indigent children back to Mexico each year should also apply to a small Cuban boy who never even made it into American waters before his rescue. Six years ago, America was able to send Haitians away from its shores without court hearings and rulings.



NICHOLAS ROZNOVSKY

ings. Why can it now not send a child back with his father on a jet plane?

This "Let's Make A Deal" attitude seems to be running unfettered throughout the Justice Department which also felt the obligation to needlessly negotiate with Microsoft before a ruling from a federal judge on whether the corporation had violated anti-trust laws could be made. Only the last-minute failure of the talks between Microsoft and the government allowed the judge to release his findings and, to no one's great surprise, rule that Microsoft had indeed acted illegally in creating its vast empire.

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Now the company faces penalties which will be imposed upon it by a court of law. Microsoft will not get to choose its own sentence as it, and the government, wanted it to do. Fortunately, in this instance, the government was unable to negotiate a way for Microsoft to avoid facing its just punishment.

Similarly, the government has backed down from a confrontation with the tobacco industry, choosing to settle out of court rather than prosecute the case in federal court.

While the government can claim financial victory over the tobacco barons, the giant corporations continue to produce their deadly product without regulation. If the actions of these companies were so wrong as to require such financial restitution, why are they still being done? Is it the job of the government to collect economic windfalls from the crimes of corporations or to protect its constituency and promote the common good?

How can the United States claim to be a world leader when it repeatedly condemns the People's Republic of China for violating the human rights of its citizens and then rewards it with a favorable trading status? Why is the United States funneling billions of dollars in aid to Russia when they are choosing to rebuild their military instead of paying their part of construction costs for the International Space Station?

There is something lacking in today's federal government — a backbone. The same government which once invaded Panama to arrest a single man and had the fearlessness to stare down the Soviet Union can now no longer finish a sentence condemning the actions of another nation without sending it billions of dollars in aid. The federal government can no longer try those violating its laws without pandering to

them. It cannot enforce the nation's laws out of fear of angering portions of the populace.

With all due respect to Teddy Roosevelt, it no longer matters how softly we speak or how big a stick we carry — America no longer has the spine to defend itself or what it believes in anyway.

Nicholas Roznovsky is a junior political science major.



GABRIEL RUENES/THE BATTALION

road closures and construction of the West Campus garage will be completed by the end of the year," said Peter Schulte, a senior information technology major. "Even the University knows what impact the road closures will have."

Student Body President Lane, a senior political science major, must approve the bill before it is officially passed.

"I feel that before a decision on this bill, the issues addressed by this bill should be considered," Lane said. "I don't feel that all the questions have been answered."

A bill proposing that a new road be created across Aggie Field and a bill supporting a Resolution of the Student Association proposal to build parking racks outside of the North Campus garage were also approved.

The Student Senate approved two new student committees, the Lupe Medina and the Student Leaders of the Conference.

Prairie View continues to mourn

PRAIRIE VIEW (AP)—A student who was killed in a shooting on campus last year was a victim of a hate crime, according to a report from the FBI. The student was a member of the Black Student Union and was killed by a white student who was a member of the White Student Union.

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Complete education provided by ESL classes

In response to Melissa Bedsole's April 19 column, I must be honest, I'm not sure how the English as a Second Language classes are designed for elementary schools, but I am skeptical to believe that they only teach math and history skills.

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## Spring is in the air... BUT NO FANS ARE IN THE STANDS

long time. The Men and Women's Big 12 Swimming and Diving Championships were held at the aquatic facilities within a few weeks of each other. If students passed by on their way to the treadmill or weight machines, they might have doubted A&M completed because of the obvious lack of crowd support in the bleachers.

Out at A&M's athletic wasteland, a diamond in the rough appears. Standing beyond Reed Arena is the shining new tennis facility that showcases some of the greatest talent Aggieland has ever seen. The most common spectators at Aggie tennis matches are older local citizens who hope to improve their backhands by learning visually. A warning to wealthy alumni, however: the parking lot is not paved and the Cadillac might get a bit dusty.

The sad thing about A&M is that sometimes tradition can be harmful. Granted, it is a definite positive that Olsen Field boasts some of the highest attendance numbers in collegiate baseball. However, most students do not actively support other spring ath-

letic events such as softball, tennis, track and field, golf, swimming and diving and basketball during the overlapping schedule. These sports deserve to be included in the list of the Aggie traditions.

At any level of competition, athletes need and desire the support of spectators. The physical presence and vocal encouragement of fans drive them to play harder, give them added incentive to win and contribute to the advantage of the home crowd. From Little League to pro sports, players acknowledge the benefits of having spectators at their events whether they are family, friends or strangers — Aggie athletes deserve no less.

As a group, Aggies seem to choose one sport per semester and adopt it as the one to attend. In the fall, the overwhelming favorite is football, and springtime brings afternoons and evenings at Olsen (and occasionally Reed Arena). However, other sports that may post even higher in the rankings and exhibit some great athletes are passed by in favor of the "popular" sports. For instance, when the men's and women's tennis teams played Pepper-

dine several weeks ago, a record was set for attendance with only about 600 people. Granted, this is an improvement from past years, but the truth is that if A&M had a No. 2 nationally-ranked baseball team, Olsen could not sell tickets quickly enough.

Aggie athletics may not be ranked in the top 10 in all sports, but each team has its share of outstanding athletes. The men's tennis team is currently ranked 9th in the polls, the highest ever in school history. The team is led by many strong athletes, including A&M's No. 2 nationally ranked player, Shuon Madden. The softball team boasts standouts junior pitcher Amy Vining, with a record of 15-9, and freshman catcher Selena Collins, who has a batting average of .365. The men's swimming and diving team recently sent nine athletes to the NCAA Championships and earned a 17th place finish. The long list continues.

The fact remains that students need to give these other spring sports, and the Aggies way play them, a chance. They deserve the spectator support as much as the Aggie baseball team does, and their games, matches and meets are just as exciting as sitting out in the right field bleachers of Olsen. Baseball may be the adopted springtime favorite of Aggieland, but students need to make an effort to include other spring sports in the tradition and start singing the new song, "Take me out to the tennis match, take me out to the track..."

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RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

## VIEW POINTS

Habitual offender deserves sentence

The term "five finger discount" is often used to refer to misdemeanor shoplifting in convenience stores. Usually, perpetrators of such small, seemingly harmless crimes are not even caught. When they are, either a fine or very minimal jail time is the sentence. However, for one Tyler man, known to the public by his last name, Payne, a small act of pilfering earned him 16 years in prison. Although his lift of a Snickers candy bar was the tenth theft on Payne's record, the sentence seems too harsh to many. Long-awaited criminal justice is being internationally decry.

Payne is a habitual offender, a kleptomaniac, and was tried as such. His misdemeanor offense of stealing one Snickers bar was heightened to a felony offense by District Attorney Skeen in Tyler. Felony theft carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. At the time of the crime, Payne was already on parole for a previous felony theft. Skeen's critics take issue with his extension of Payne's crime into a felony. Although he only stole a candy bar, he was tried as a habitual offender, which opened the door to felony theft. District Attorney Skeen's action is an attempt to crack down on habitual offenders who do not fear the justice system because they are already familiar with its leniency.

Those who argue with stretching justice fail to consider that a line must be drawn somewhere. How many times should criminals like Payne be allowed to steal before being punished to the full extent of the law?

No matter how big or small the items they steal are, someone pays a price. Payne has to finally be that someone. All thieves should know that they will face consequences for their crimes.

Maybe Payne is being used as an example. Maybe the district attorney went easy on the person that appeared right before Payne in court, and Payne's tenth offense was the last straw. Either way, as a habitual offender he deserved his sentence. The next time he had a chocolate craving, he may have been willing to use a gun to satisfy it. Minor sentences have not been effective in the past. Perhaps a major one will.

Registration woes continue this year

Texas A&M University's course registration system is completely inefficient. Once again, one must give the administration kudos for finding the most archaic, ineffective way to complete a task.

The problem begins with early registration. Athletes, honors students and student workers are included. Athletes and honors students automatically get to register early while student workers have the perk of standing in line between the designated hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., with enough paperwork to gain citizenship, just to prove they have a job.

This should not be a big deal. After all, the students have a whole week and a half to get the paperwork together and turn it in. Student workers have plenty of spare time. Right? But the administration seems to have forgotten something. Guess what student workers do between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. — they work and go to school! Instead of making busy student workers stand in line with paperwork, why not let student workers register online. The manpower previously used for filing student workers' paperwork could then be used to verify students' claims to employment.

Next, there is the matter of standard registration. Students look forward to spending four hours listening to a busy signal, only to find out all the classes they needed are full, with the same enthusiasm Bill Gates must feel when paying his taxes.

And, by the way, who had the bright idea of scheduling registration so close to finals? It would not be that difficult to push it back a couple of weeks. There is a reason why college students' suicide rates are so high.

Students' lives are difficult enough without having to deal with outdated methods of student registration. It does not take Einstein to realize that 3,000 people trying to access the same phone number simultaneously will not be successful.

Texas A&M's administration needs to wake up, smell the coffee and say "hello" to the new millennium. A more efficient registration system is necessary. The sooner the administration begins to care, the better.

Summer Hicks is a senior English major.

Veronica Hernandez Class of '00

## MAIL CALL

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

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Fax: (409) 845-2647  
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