

South Africa fights for survival

Far removed from the world of academia, football games and beer, there is a place where once hopeful youth have surrendered their will to live. They struggle against an incomprehensible illness that has killed millions of fellow citizens in the prime of their lives. The place is South Africa and the illness is AIDS. For years, South Africans have painfully sat by and watched as this disease has rapidly spread throughout their nation before any real government action was taken.



JENNIFER LOZANO

Today, plagued with problems exacerbated by poverty and desperation, South Africa is filled with destitute communities where it has been estimated as many as 5,500 people die of AIDS every day.

In recent years, the media has brought public attention to the tragedy in South Africa. Millions of dollars from the United States have been pumped into a South African AIDS initiative. This terrible disease can be fought.

However, more community-based AIDS prevention programs designed to change sexual behavior must be implemented. In a nation where one-fifth of the adult population is already infected by AIDS, an attempt to change behavior must run deeper than encouraging condom use.

HIV transmission often occurs inside marriages or regular partnerships, where condom use is hard to introduce or maintain. Instead, more effort should be put into encouraging people to delay sex, to reduce their number of sexual partners and to practice marital fidelity. Too many poor communities still lack the education they deserve and are living in silent fear of a disease that is prevalent in their community.

Today, South Africa's most visible HIV-prevention campaign is misguided. The high-profile campaign consists of "Madison Avenue-style" HIV-prevention targeted at the youth of South Africa. According to *The Washington Post*, these colorful billboards carry "cryptic word pairs" such as "Your Body/Anybody, Climax/Anticlimax or Drop Dead Gorgeous/The Drop."

To make things worse, these billboards are written in English rather than the local language. Not even containing the word "AIDS," these billboards only reinforce the communities' inability to speak openly about the dangers of AIDS. These billboards are part of the "loveLife" campaign funded by the Kaiser Family Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the South African government.

Scattered generously throughout the continent, these billboards make an attempt to stimulate "frank communication" and "the ability to make better choices" within the youth community. According to *The Washington Post*, instead of sparking open communication about AIDS, "many dismiss it as confusingly vague."

Some are outraged by the misallocation of public and private resources, especially when many community-based organizations are struggling to survive.

"In the African culture, it is a taboo to talk about sex," said Joel Arimadri Tivua, coordinator of the AIDS program at Uganda's Kuluva Hospital. This belief can be found at the heart of Africa's AIDS pandemic, and it clearly highlights why this aspect of the loveLife AIDS-prevention campaign is not working.

What is needed is the strong backing of religious, civic and other grass-roots communities working together with committed political and institutional support to promote behavior changes. These are the same successful strategies used in Uganda, which, according to *Sojourners Magazine*, "had the highest number of reported AIDS cases in Africa in the late 1990s," but has steadily declined since then.

Open communication about the transfer of AIDS, abstinence, marital fidelity and safe sex are more likely to confront the crisis at its roots than the cryptic messages emblazoned on billboards throughout South Africa.

The ineffectiveness of South Africa's current AIDS prevention campaign is painfully obvious in the small, rural communities such as Mogwase, where "every weekend there's another funeral," according to one 18-year-old boy. In Mogwase, and many other devastated communities, despair has become the common response to these tragedies. This does not mean that people should give in to AIDS or on AIDS prevention plans. In Uganda, HIV among pregnant women dropped from 21 percent in 1991 to 10 percent in 1998.

A solution in the form of behavior changes can happen. "The solution will come from the community," Tivua said. But for now, a deep fear and silence remains imbedded in these impoverished communities and much of South Africa. Much more must be done to break the silence and stop the spread of AIDS before it is too late.

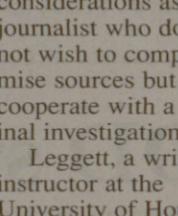
Jennifer Lozano is a junior English major.

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CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW

Vanessa Leggett currently is in a federal detention center for refusing to turn over her notes of a sensational Houston homicide case. This unfortunate episode provides yet another example of how the FBI has abused its power. She should be freed immediately and should be treated with the same considerations as a journalist who does not wish to compromise sources but must cooperate with a criminal investigation.

Leggett, a writing instructor at the University of Houston, was imprisoned July 20 of this year after being found in contempt of court. Federal prosecutors asked her to give up all of her notes, tapes and material related to a 1997 murder.



JONATHAN JONES

Based on their dealings with Leggett, the federal government is deciding improperly which journalists count more than others. The FBI is setting a disturbing trend by not having to prove a reporter's information is directly relevant to their case.

Leggett had begun to research the killing of Doris Angleton, the wife of a wealthy former bookie, with the intentions of writing a book. Texas state prosecutors focused their attention on the victim's husband, Robert Angleton, and his brother Roger. It was thought that Roger was hired by his brother to kill his wife, thus preventing her from collecting millions in a divorce settlement. Leggett interviewed Roger in prison before he committed suicide and left a note claiming he had murdered Doris and framed his brother to extort money. Robert Angleton was acquitted of capital murder at a trial in which Leggett handed over copies of her notes and taped interviews upon reaching an agreement that the materials would be returned. The information was not admitted at trial, and she never testified.

Some of the materials were handed over to federal officials who are now conducting an investigation into the crime and seeking to bring federal charges on Angleton related to the death of his wife. Leggett refused to become a paid informant of the FBI, who then responded with a demand that she turn over any information she has to

properly cooperated with state authorities, she should not be unfairly harassed into turning over her notes.

Her hearing was closed to the public and the transcripts sealed. That was also wrong and unnecessary. This is a high-profile case that will influence the way journalists and law enforcement interact. Mike DeGuerin, Leggett's attorney, said, "It's one thing to incarcerate a member of the press for not doing what the government wants. But to do it in secret and threaten to jail her lawyer for talking about the details is outrageous."

The way the FBI is handling this case is overly aggressive and improper. The government should not decide who falls within the boundaries of a professional journalist. Leggett was gathering information with the intention of making news available to the public, thus functioning as a journalist. The attorney general should approve a subpoena and follow the proper procedures if Leggett's information is such a necessity. She has been treated unfairly by the federal government. *The Washington Post* reports Leggett could be jailed indefinitely until she relents. Amateur and professional journalists everywhere should be cautious of a government that abuses its power.

Jonathan Jones is a senior political science major.

U.S. government should remember the First Amendment, release journalist

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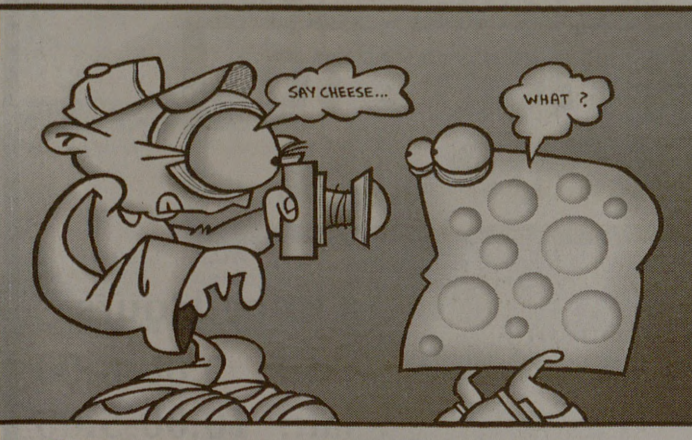
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CARTOON OF THE DAY



This cartoon in no way suggests any offensive posture towards the many brilliant cultures of cheese

THE UN-CARTOONIST ©

Parking garage inconveniences

In response to the Amanda Smith's Sept. 5 article:

Ever since this school decided to start construction on the West Campus Parking Garage, there has been a barricade lining the perimeter of the Student Recreation Center. The vast majority of students are now inconvenienced.

It takes me an extra 45 minutes to work out because I have to walk all the way around the gates and enter the Rec Center near Reed Arena. Sometimes, I have been known to get mad at small details, but the fact that the school has not created a pathway to the Rec Center from main campus makes me furious.

If 1,000 students work out on a daily basis, then Texas A&M administrators are wasting 750 student hours per day because we have to walk around so much construction. That is almost nine years of student time being wasted each semester. Maybe the decision-makers at A&M really do not care about our schedules and making resources convenient for us.

Matthew Deeke Class of 2003

McDonald's is totally to blame

In response to Melissa Bedsole's Sept. 5 column:

Six years of lying, deceit and scandal under McDonald's wing and notorious name, but blaming McDonald's for advertising games that are impossible to win is "childish and silly." That was the point of view from Bedsole's article on Wednesday. McDonald's should have been more involved in the distributing of the winning game pieces.

I agree with Bedsole that the announcement of these competitions being fixed is disappointing, but it is not about to make me cry. I am sure after class a large majority of Ags will head out towards the golden arches and it will be crowded as usual. I know these same people just finished reading the article about the great Monopoly scandal. I honestly cannot say that during these completions I ate every meal at McDonald's in search of the winning St. James Place that would help me become the owner of a Polar jet ski. If you picked up my floor mats, you may find a Reading R.R. or a Marvin Gardens

game piece left over from a year ago. We go to fast food place because they fit in our tight budgets because of other expenses such as utilities, books and rent.

Mark Ingle Class of 2005

Established religion lacks individuality

In response to Tim Dyll's Sept. 6 column:

I find it amusing, and rather annoying that Tim Dyll would be so sensational in an article that spends time speaking out against sensationalism. To support his argument that lack of religion is making the United States a bad place, Dyll used data from the United States Census Bureau that says violent crime is way up over where it was 40 years ago. The FBI and the Dept. of Justice, however, have released their statistics showing that violent crime is on a steady decline and is at its lowest point in 20 years. If only one figure is correct, who should a person believe? My money would go on the guys who actually deal with crime.

I also disagree with Dyll's assertion that religion is the solution

to the problems that America has. If he's so concerned about family and such, shouldn't he be advocating that parents spend the time with their children providing guidance? Sitting in church is all well and good, but they should be interacting with their children. That should be the top priority. After all, it would be selfish for parents to try to "save themselves" at church instead of teaching their kids by spending time with them.

Finally, I have to say that perhaps the lower churchgoing rate is a sign that people are beginning to stand up and think for themselves. It could be a sign that people today are better educated, more strongly principled, and generally more self-validated than they used to be. To me this would be a great sign for the future as better leaders will come out of this group with the spine to break away from establishment religion.

I believe that Dyll's article was very sensational, and his pessimistic forecast for America ignores a great many signs that the country is looking better than ever. It's funny that while he is preaching against media sensationalism he follows their lead exactly with his article.

MAIL CALL

Chris Carlin Class of 2003