

## EDITORIAL

### CULTURE, DIVERSITY AT INTERNATIONAL WEEK

An array of international student organizations will provide students with an enlightening and proactive display of cultures this week at Texas A&M's annual International Week. *The Battalion* commends the efforts of the international student organizations, and encourages all students to participate in International Week.

By implementing cultural awareness in a social environment where Aggies can interact with fellow Aggies of different cultures, International Week takes giant strides toward promoting a campus that is aware and appreciative of diversity, as opposed to one of ignorance and intolerance.

International Week 2002 features various festivities, such as cultural displays, an international talent show and an international buffet that provide students with a coveted awareness and knowledge of differing cultures that cannot always be learned in the classroom.

The activities this week wisely place an emphasis on the interaction of students in a relaxed, celebratory manner instead of the didactic manner many are accustomed to in the classroom. In addition, the events are all moderately priced or free of charge.

Students should make an effort to take part in the enjoyable and informative events of International Week that the University and the international student organizations have coordinated. Through the free-flow of differing ideas and cultures the events promote, students will learn about world perspectives and encourage further discussion of these new perspectives with others. Only in this manner will Texas A&M and our society move toward a state of "Unity and Diversity," the theme for International Week 2002.

## THE BATTALION

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# A political game?

## America goes too far

## Nation's actions justified



BRIENNE PORTER

In the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the 19th Olympic Winter Games has sparked a highly-charged debate. When the United States wanted to display the tattered American flag from the World Trade Center in the opening ceremonies, many people debated whether the Olympics had turned from the Greek-envisioned games of sportsmanship, honor and glory to a political arena. Gone is the friendly competition among countries. In its place, the modern Olympics have become a political creature causing the true idea of the ancient Olympics to vanish under the guise of politics.

**Gone is the friendly competition among countries.**

It is hard to pinpoint the beginning of the end. Many point to the 1936 Olympics held in Germany, when Hitler refused to recognize American track and field star Jesse Owens because he was black. Yet, the change could have been in the 1968 Summer Games in Mexico City when protesters were fired upon by police. It could have been in 1972, when Israeli athletes were killed in Munich or in the 1976 Montreal games when African nations boycotted the games. It could have been as recent as 1980, when the United States boycotted the Moscow games because of the USSR invasion of Afghanistan and when in return the Soviet block boycotted the 1984 Summer Games in Los Angeles.

One of the most recent examples of the Olympics

becoming political is the debate of whether the World Trade Center flag should have been included in the opening ceremonies. By putting such prominence on the World Trade Center attacks, many other countries' tragedies and similar attacks are ignored. The Olympic Games are an international event. If prominence is placed on one country's tragedy, it should be placed on all countries' tragedies. In a *Newsday* article, American luger, Ashley Hayden, said, "We need to remember this is the Olympic Games, an international event." To advocate the American tragedy is to ignore the tragedies facing other nations.

In the same *Newsday* article, cross-country skier Nina Kemppel said it best: "The Olympics should be beyond politics. It should celebrate the lone bobsled team from Mexico as well as the Americans," she said.

Another example of the continuing amount of politics in the Olympics is the pairs skating scandal. The idea that countries are pressuring judges to vote for one couple over the other is appalling and goes against the original views of the Olympics. Now, the best competitor does not necessarily win. It is better to say the one who has the most judges pressured into voting for them will win.

Whether it is the placement of a flag or the inconsistencies in judging, the Olympics have changed from a friendly competition among nations to a very political event. It does not matter whose politics it is; these politics have no place in the Olympics. The Olympics are a time to celebrate the athleticism of individuals from across the world, not to celebrate any country's political strength.

*Brienne Porter is a senior political science major.*



JENNIFER LOZANO

On Feb. 8, regardless of their nationality, 55,000 spectators and 5,000 ceremony participants were left in respectful silence after the controversial tattered U.S. flag that was recovered from the World Trade Center rubble was carried at the opening ceremony for the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. Despite the extensive controversy and debate sparked by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), a moving yet tasteful and respectful tribute to America in which the symbolic flag made its appearance was a success.

According to the official Website for the 2002 Winter Olympics, the IOC was concerned with the flag causing excessive nationalism at an event designed to promote international unity. Basically, it was attempting to keep politics out of what became to be the highest-rated Olympic opening ceremony ever. However, when the ice skating bribery scandal occurred and reports later surfaced revealing confidential minutes of the IOC over the past three decades that were decidedly anti-American, it became evident that despite efforts, politics would rear its ugly head.

This can be seen most acutely in what the *Houston Chronicle* has called "perhaps the most serious judging scandal in the modern history of the games."

One of the nine judges of the couples ice skating competition was put under "a certain pressure" by officials of the French skating federation to vote in favor of the Russian pair. To add insult to injury, in the midst of the bribery scandal, the *San Jose Mercury News* quoted a member of the mainly European board saying, "the IOC does not have to justify itself to the United States." Another member of the board

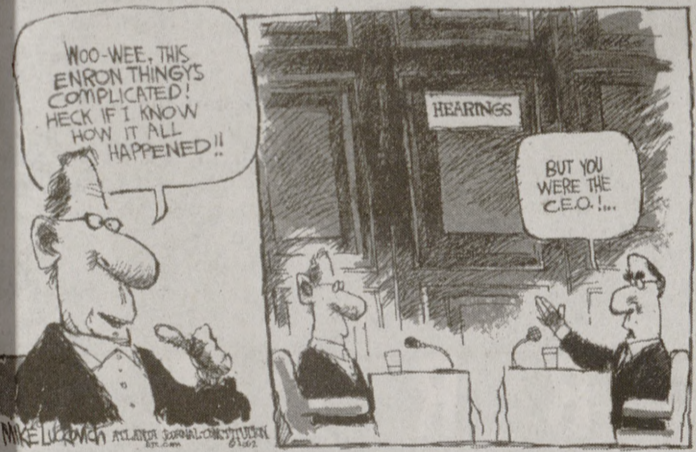
was quoted making jokes about the implications of the bribery ever coming to a head. These are the same people who were against the appearance of the World Trade Center flag because of its political implications.

The events of Sept. 11 had ramifications that affect many nations other than the United States. Members from 80 different countries were present at the trade center when it was attacked. When the terrorists chose to attack the World Trade Center, their decision literally affected the entire world. All biases aside, one has to be reasonable and acknowledge that the American political and economic hegemony is not to be toyed with. When something of great magnitude affects the United States, the breadth of its damages will not end with the United States. For these reasons, the appearance of the American flag was justified. Hosting the games gives more leniency in light of recent tragic events that have taken place on our soil.

**A moving, yet tasteful, tribute to America was a success.**

Citizens always push for "policies" that are conducive to personal advancement; it is Darwinian. This is not to say the United States should stop trying to make things fair in society and digress to a primal form of existence. Humans were also given free will and use this innate right to discern the varying degrees of politics that are acceptable in liveliness. The ice skating bribery scandal was a good example of politics in the Olympics running amok, while the carrying of the World Trade Center American flag at the opening ceremonies was an innocent expression of the resilience of a nation.

*Jennifer Lozano is a junior English major.*



### MAIL CALL

#### Free speech will offend, regardless

response to Emily Peters' Feb. article:

I never thought I would hear a Texas A&M University professor make the claim that a college newspaper should be shut down. The same First Amendment that protects the Uncartoonist so protects professors who offend, say, the Bush family, happened here in 1998-99. It so protects organizers of V-Day against religious zealots troubled by sexual expression by women. It protected advocates for civil rights against white supremacists who sought to chill a free press, as in *New York Times v. Sullivan*. It protects dissenters against American policies in the Middle East and Afghanistan. As Justice Brandeis wrote in *Whitney v. California* (1927), "To urge, self-reliant men, with confidence in the power of reason and fearless reasoning applied through the processes of popular government, no danger arising from speech can be deemed clear and present, unless the incidence of the evil apprehended is so imminent that it may befall before there is opportunity for full discussion. If

there be time to expose through discussion the falsehood and fallacies, to avert the evil by the processes of education, the remedy to be applied is more speech, not enforced silence." Insofar as the cartoon in question has enabled us to have a vigorous discussion about racial stereotyping or the ambiguity of visual symbols it has, on balance, been a good thing.

To demand silence only shoves resentments underground, where they ultimately do more damage. Guaranteeing a university environment free of potential "offense" also guarantees a university environment free of education as well.

James Arnt Aune  
Associate Professor  
Speech Communications

"When you're white, you don't have to think much about race," Lott said. "It is the norm, you take it for granted. They don't have to worry about racial stereotypes. That is the diseased white mind." I'd like to applaud the unbiased, well informed opinion of the 'diseased white mind'. I would protest it instead, but I'm white and not allowed to.

Jeff Allen  
Class of 2004