

EDITORIAL NOT FORTHCOMING

Earlier this week, the Texas A&M Presidential Search Advisory Committee announced a short list of three candidates to replace Dr. Ray M. Bowen. The search committee will send its recommendations to the A&M System Board of Regents. Unfortunately, the committee has been less than forthcoming thus far to the Aggie community.

Reports have surfaced that an additional two candidates will be added to the short list. In the place of a straight answer is tricky, technical wordplay that neither denies or confirms that there may be other candidates. This is unacceptable. If the committee is still searching or intending to recommend further candidates to the Board of Regents, why was the short list released?

The A&M presidential search advisory committee should clear up confusion about its choices immediately. If there are in fact other candidates the Board wishes to recommend to the Regents, the list should not have been released on Tuesday. To do so is misleading and a disservice to the candidates and the A&M community.

Determining who will lead one of the largest public research universities in the country is a difficult and important task. Background checks, personal and professional evaluations and debate about who is best for the job should not be a public process. The committee should include and add as many applicants as it wishes, but when candidates are named with a strong sense of finality, the issue should be settled. If this is not the case, what is the harm in saying so? The A&M presidential search advisory committee should end the rumors immediately. To not be upfront is unfair to Aggies and the previously-named candidates. The committee should end the rumors — the integrity of the vital role in choosing the next president is at stake.

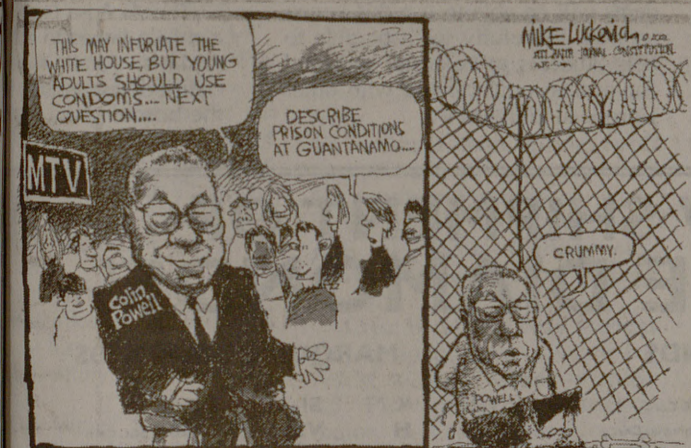
THE BATTALION

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MAIL CALL

Free speech at its finest — politics

In response to Rolando Garcia's March 21 article:

Caytie Sarandis, election commissioner, was quoted as saying, "Not one of my candidates has approached me concerning the issue of First Amendment rights." These are not her candidates, and this is not her election. Last time I checked these candidates were running for student government positions. Sarandis also said, "the commission can regulate how SGA chooses its leaders without the First Amendment constraints that may apply to the university. I find it hard to believe that the SGA is above the Constitution of the United States of America. This is a public university and this is still America."

My interpretation of "Who's your daddy? Me," is that Dubberly wants to be a father figure, and that if elected he will watch over his constituents and protect us. This quote "Pimpin' for the best damn class...," pimps are also protectors of their constituents. And if we want his protection we just have to vote for him. I fully support Dubberly's decision not to take down his flyers. I am also disappointed that more than 30 of the 125 candidates in the election altered their materials for Sarandis' approval. I would proudly vote for anyone who will stand up for his own rights, because he will most definitely stand up for mine.

Henry Thomas
Class of 2004

The truth behind Big Event

In response to Richard Bray's March 21 column:

The main goal of the Big Event is to say thank you to the entire Bryan and College Station community for having the patience and courtesy to put up with all of the long lines and traffic nightmares caused by 45,000 Aggies. Both those who are financially stable and those who are economically disadvantaged feel those detrimental side effects, and thus anyone of any economic background is eligible to have students come out to their residence and have some work done for them.

Although some Aggies feel that the Big Event is not aimed at helping out those in the community that are from an economically disadvantaged background, it in fact is. The Big Event specifically targets several areas in BCS that really need to be cleaned up, and sends committee members out to those areas to hand out job request forms to door-to-door residents.

Big Event is aimed at everyone in the Bryan-College Station community, but we slightly skew it towards those who live in depressed areas. Big Event encourages community service for all of Bryan-College Station and we will help out any resident who asks for it.

Matt Brennan
Big Event Committee Member
Class of 2002

A guiltless society

Arabs cannot deny involvement in 9-11 attacks



JONATHAN JONES

A recent poll offers a revealing look at the other side of President George W. Bush's war on terrorism.

A USA Today/CNN/Gallup Poll asked Muslims in nine Islamic countries a series of questions concerning the tragic events of Sept. 11 and the U.S. response to it. Some of the results are disappointing, but not necessarily surprising. After all, one only has to view translations of Arabic newspapers or television programming, even among U.S. allies such as Egypt, to learn about the elaborate Zionist and American conspiracies against Muslims. Over the past six months, European leaders have questioned and complained about everything from how the prisoners are treated to the direction and increasing scope of the effort to root out dangerous terrorist cells. Now there is evidence of the extent to which many in the Arab world are simply out of touch with reality. But America must continue to do what is right.

Despite indisputable evidence that the majority of the Sept. 11 hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, 86 percent of the Pakistani and 89 percent of the Kuwaiti respondents do not believe Arabs carried out the attacks. The poll found that overall, 77 percent of those in the nine Muslim-majority countries believe that U.S. military action in Afghanistan is morally unjustified. If most of these countries are U.S. allies, who have Americans spilled blood to protect?

The United States spends billions of dollars in defense to provide the country with security, and help ensure global trade, tranquility, and prosperity. In addition, U.S. soldiers have died in three separate incidents in the past decade to better the lives of Muslim people — in Kuwait, Somalia and Bosnia. According to the poll, 41 percent of Kuwaitis have an unfavorable view of the United States.

The United States must do what is right, no matter what

other countries think. That means stopping those who want to bring devastating harm to America before they get the opportunity. Religious fanatics blew up the World Trade Center and attacked the U.S.S. Cole, the Pentagon and several American embassies. The Muslim writer Amir Taheri wrote last October in *The Wall Street Journal*, "when pressed hard, some Muslim leaders admit that bin Laden is 'part of Islam,' but try to minimize his place. Dalil Boubakeur, a French Muslim leader, says that bin Laden does not represent more than 1 percent of Muslims. Some comfort. That 1 percent means almost 13 million people."

America is, of course, far from perfect. The U.S. military is far stronger than any other nation, yet there is no effort to use that awesome force to conquer and rule the rest of the world. It is highly unlikely that any of the countries in President Bush's "axis of evil," or any totalitarian nation that might sympathize with them, would wield such power with such restraint.

If it is arrogant to say most of the respondents to the poll are wrong and

seriously misguided, fine. Taheri believes that, "the Muslim world today is full of bigotry, fanaticism, hypocrisy and plain ignorance — all of which create a breeding ground for criminals like bin Laden." There are many good reasons to continue the war on terror, despite other opinions. The safety of the United States, and those suffering under stifling societies like the former Taliban, depend on it. And the moral objections must end. Many in the Muslim world, perhaps a large majority, do not care for the United States. It is the world's most effective protector of democracy, freedom and liberty. Let them continue in delusion, if they so wish. But when McDonald's golden arches rise over Kabul, the Afghans will be clearly on the road to recovery. Overall, U.S. influence and protection of free and democratic countries is a necessary part of global security.

Jonathan Jones is a senior political science major.



ADRIAN CALCANEO • THE BATTALION

A home for the homeless

Gay or not, parents will provide love for orphans



MELISSA FRIED

During last week's "Primetime" interview between Diane Sawyer and Rosie O'Donnell, there was little talk about the moral implications of homosexuality. Instead, the interview centered around a more public issue: the personal interests of the 568,000 children floating through America's foster care system and a particular little boy, Bert, in Florida. Bert was nine weeks old when Steve Lofton and Roger Croteau took him home. Like the previous three children they took into their foster care, Bert was HIV positive and not wanted by other families because of the stigma and fear of AIDS. Ten years later, Bert no longer tests positive for HIV and is deemed "fit for adoption." Lofton and Croteau, the only parents Bert has ever known, want to adopt him. But, by Florida law, they cannot, because they are gay. Although some Florida lawmakers suggest otherwise, being gay does not make someone a bad parent.

While there are many contrasting opinions of what makes good parents, there is a universal agreement that all parents should provide their children with love, protection, guidance and stability.

Unfortunately, rather than considering the life of a child passed through the circulatory mess of the foster care system, the current debate focuses on whether gay couples are able to provide children with the same caring and healthy family life that the "traditional" family unit provides.

Any parent, gay or straight, willing to assume the responsibility of a foster or an adoptive parent role, is someone to be commended rather than condemned. Often, as with Lofton and Croteau, these couples take home a child no one else wants. Lofton and Croteau's altruistic ways have provided Bert a steady home life — one that is uncommon to other children still being cycled door-to-door. Every morning they help Bert and his siblings get ready for school, and in the evening they help them with homework and prepare them for bed before the entire routine starts over. Florida lawmakers are wrong to believe that a heterosexual couple could better perform these universal, parental tasks.

There also is the ever-popular argument that children of

homosexual parents are more likely to become homosexual themselves. This consensus, found among groups such as The American Psychological Association, the National Council for Adoptable Children and the Child Welfare League of America, is not true. The argument that children of gay couples will lead a certain sexual lifestyle is like saying children of bankers will be bankers or children of prostitutes will be prostitutes. By making such a blanket statement, we are not giving children enough credit. Children attend school, watch TV and read books. Each medium portrays the "social

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norms" and reinforces the ideas of society at large. True, the child will be exposed and less sensitive to an alternative lifestyle, but if the parent has created a stable and caring environment, the parent's sexual orientation plays no harmful role in the development of the child.

It is wrong for a child to be subjected to the anguish of the foster care system when there are families available who are capable and willing to take them into their home for the love and attention that they deserve. It is doubly wrong for Florida politicians to allow their own homophobia to prevent children from being placed in a home, especially when other heterosexual families have cast them back into a system they are desperately trying to escape.

"I don't think America knows what a gay parent looks like: I am the gay parent." And thus begins Rosie O'Donnell's crusade to save a little boy she hardly knows, but, with three adopted children of her own, whose circumstances she can understand.

Melissa Fried is a freshman international studies major.