

Is the Corps in need of change?

A former cadet and a non-reg discuss the current state of the Corps of Cadets

CADET

The controversy that has resulted from a police investigation into photos of alleged hazing in the Corps of Cadets has blown the circumstances of the incident out of proportion. It is unfortunate that a childish prank on the part of a handful of immature cadets has sparked a debate that is resulting in inane and ridiculous accusations against the Corps.



MARIANO CASTILLO

The Corps, also called The Keepers of the Spirit, is the most recognized student organization on campus, and is just as relevant to the University today as it was in 1876.

The Corps has a wound exposed, and neither the cadets themselves nor the rest of the University community are quite sure how to react. Ridiculous suggestions to disband or revamp the Corps and the silly defense of "if you're not in the Corps you cannot understand" equally waste space in letters to the editor and online forums.

Many outsiders are hastily passing judgment against the Corps and overlooking the pivotal role the Corps has in A&M's history and future. The incident, a stupid prank gone public, has left the Corps understandably red-faced, but that is no reason for critics to discredit the fact that for the thousands of cadets that have walked Final Review, the Corps was the most rewarding experience of their lives. This is a challenge for current cadets to show they can handle themselves with dignity and grace under fire, and to prove their critics wrong with their actions.

With New Student Conferences in full swing, the most important aspect to consider is the effect that bickering between Corps and non-Corps members is having on incoming freshmen who are considering joining A&M's oldest student organization.

Members of the Class of 2006 and their parents should feel confident in the opportunities the Corps offers. Every incoming freshman needs to know that now, during its time of crisis, the Corps needs a strong pool of fish who demonstrate leadership potential.

Many years ago, Gen. O.R. Simpson offered some words of advice to incoming freshmen in the article, "Should I Join the Corps?" His reasons were compelling, and his language was clear and insightful. Texas A&M and the world have changed dramatically since Gen. Simpson wrote his article, but his five main reasons still ring true.

Simpson said you should join the Corps: "If you would like to become one of a small, close knit group of freshmen in your outfit."

"If you want to be in a study environment where you have the opportunity to do your very best academically — which, after all, is why you came to A&M in the first place."

"If you like to compete — in the classroom or on the playing field."

"If you are willing to be a follower for a while observing and following proven leaders."

"If you want to be a part of an organization with great pride and high standards."

The heated debate over the alleged hazing is a reminder that life in the Corps is not easy. The Corps needs freshmen of strong character, who want to sharpen their leadership skills in an organization that is not designed to be easy.

Cadets have been successful in many facets of campus life, and parents should not let a stupid prank dissuade them from supporting their sons and daughters' interest in the Corps. For all of the criticism the Corps receives for the mistakes of a few of its members, the Corps is the best hands-on leadership lab in the state. Just ask the outgoing University president, or his vice president for student affairs. Or the student body president, or any of the five yell leaders. Or ask any of the hundreds of current and former cadets as they pass by on campus. The Corps of Cadets has a history of training some of our nation's best leaders, and will continue to do so long into the future.

Mariano Castillo is a former member of the Corps of Cadets.

NON-REG

One photo. Just one photo, yet it has created a definite divide on the Texas A&M campus. On one hand are those who support the actions of the Corps of Cadets and despise *The Battalion* for violating its privacy during a moment of good, clean fun. On the other hand are those who see the photos as acts of hazing for which the offending cadets should be punished. Frankly, it is difficult to see how anyone who had the unfortunate experience of seeing these pictures could see these actions as anything other than hazing.



RICHARD BRAY

The only requirements under the law Brazos County Attorney Jim Kuboviak named for criminal hazing were that the actions had to have taken place against the victim's will or that it must have caused physical or emotional pain, and judging from the victim's facial expressions in some of the photos, he was in some degree of pain. In all likelihood, the process of removing the duct tape resulted in physical pain as well.

However, Kuboviak found no basis for criminal hazing charges. Although such news is discouraging, it is important that the A&M community remembers why some form of punishment is necessary in the first place. The primary purpose is not to force discipline upon the cadets for their brutal stupidity, but to issue a warning to future generations of cadets who feel a similar urge.

The problem is that the Corps has cultivated an atmosphere which not only allows such delinquent behavior, but also encourages it by allowing each generation of new cadets to be accosted by the previous generation. As a result, they learn such primal behavior, and some emulate it, not realizing that actions such as the ones captured in the photographs may constitute assault.

Not only are cadets allowed to abuse each other, but they have also developed a mentality which claims that the rest of campus, especially *The Battalion*, does not understand their method of shaping young men. As a result, a great number of them are all too anxious to place blame on anyone but themselves, as evidenced by the anger at *The Battalion's* coverage of both the alleged hazing and the cadet arrested for child pornography. This atmosphere does not encourage the Corps to correct their weaknesses, but merely allows them to place blame elsewhere.

In order to change this atmosphere, the Corps must be more strict in its admissions policies. Admittedly, the Corps does not have a wealth of applicants from which to choose, and to be selective would cause its numbers to dwindle. But, to continue to allow sub-par applicants into the organization only serves to embarrass the Corps and the University.

What is amazing is that despite the cultural environment which contributed to the alleged hazing incident, there are many among the Corps' who recognize that the cadets who engaged in this behavior deserve whatever punishment they might receive. These actions were merely the blunders of a small minority and do not accurately represent the maturity or mindset of the entire Corps.

However, every time a cadet acts in a manner unbecoming of their position as leaders on this campus, it will be in the news. As the self-proclaimed Keepers of the Spirit, cadets must be willing to shoulder this responsibility and accept it.

Some are not prepared for such responsibility. Whether it is due to a lack of emotional strength, a lack of maturity or a simple case of good old-fashioned stupidity, some individuals do not belong among the Corps of Cadets. These individuals sully the name of an organization that is virtually synonymous with Texas A&M, and their membership in the Corps does not strengthen the organization with their numbers but actually serves to weaken it.

In order to prevent such embarrassing behavior from repeating itself, the Corps must have more stringent guidelines in who it accepts. While its population would decrease, it would consist of only the elite who deserve such honor. If the Corps is not cleansed of its sub-par cadets, the entire organization will be tarnished beyond repair, to the detriment of both the Corps and the University.

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RUBEN DELUNA • THE BATTALION

Nickelodeon program taught proper values

Topic of homosexuality on children's channel taught tolerance and respect

Last week, Nickelodeon, as a part of their "Nick News" series, aired a special television program that had many conservative family groups upset. The program, "My Family Is Different," featured nine adolescents discussing the issue of homosexual parenting and the treatment of children from gay or lesbian families.



JENELLE WILSON

Conservative organizations such as the Traditional Values Coalition and Concerned Women For America now feel that parents cannot trust the network, and Nickelodeon is no longer a "safe harbor" for children. They claim the television program promoted homosexuality.

It did not. The show only promoted respect and tolerance. The Traditional Values Coalition (TVC) worked for weeks to force Nickelodeon to cancel the show, even though it was originally invited to appear. Andrea Lafferty, the TVC director, stated that because this issue pertains to such a small percentage of children, it is "very clear what Nickelodeon's agenda is."

Due to the social stigma associated with homosexual parenting, it is difficult to know exactly how many children are growing up with gay or lesbian parents. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, the number is estimated to be

anywhere between one and nine million. Despite the assertions of more traditional groups that the subject matter is not appropriate for children, with millions of America's youth living in homosexual families, the issue must be talked about in a respectful manner.

Linda Ellerbee, the show's host, producer and writer, did just that.

The nine adolescents featured on the program ranged from 12 to 15 years of age. They varied in ethnic background, race and religion. Three of the nine were from a homosexual family. Three homosexual adults were also present during the taping: talk show host Rosie O'Donnell, Mark French, a principal from Minnesota, and Tom Ryan, a New York City firefighter.

The show began with the story of a 12-year-old girl named Sarah who is from a two-mother household. Sarah's story was a perfect example of what the show is trying to prevent. During the show, she said she goes to school thinking "what am I going to hear about myself today?" She has lied about who her mother's partner is in fear of being teased about her family's makeup. She is afraid of the cruel words thrown at her.

Despite their differences and individual opinions on homosexual parenting, all of the kids on the program agreed that hate, discrimination and intolerance are unacceptable. They stated that they would defend a peer with homosexual parents if they were being teased.

The show allowed adult opponents of homosexuality and

homosexual parenting to voice their opinions as well. Reverend Jerry Falwell, who partially blamed homosexuals for the Sept. 11 attacks, appeared on the show. He joined the nine adolescents in saying children of gay and lesbian parents should not be discriminated against.

The award-winning "Nick News" series is designed to raise awareness for adolescents, and homosexual parenting is simply another controversial issue the series has addressed. Programs have aired about AIDS, racism, the Sept. 11 attacks, the backlash against Muslims and the condition of children in Afghanistan.

Not every child in the United States comes from a "traditional" two-parent family, and Americans should not simply ignore the ones that do not. Linda Ellerbee is also planning more "My Family Is Different" programs discussing kids from interracial families and those effected by divorce.

Nickelodeon was right in not bowing to the pressure from the conservative family groups that tried to stop the program from airing. The show did not address whether homosexuality is morally or socially right or wrong.

It was not propaganda; it was not about sex. It was simply about tolerance and respect, and many adults could learn from what these kids had to say.

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